**Prologue**

January 3, May 4, September 3

*Seeking his workers in a multitude of people, the Lord calls out to us and lifts his voice again: “Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?” (Ps.33[34]:13). If you hear this and your answer is “I do,” God then directs these words to you: if you desire true and eternal life, “keep your tongue free from vicious talk and your lips from all deceit; turn away from evil and do good; let peace be your quest and aim” (Ps.33[34]:14-15). Once you have done this, my “eyes will be upon you and my ears will listen for your prayers; and even before you ask me, I will say to you: “Here I am” (Isa.58:9). What, dear monks, is more delightful than this voice of the Lord calling to us? See how the Lord in his love shows us the way of life. Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see him “who has called us to his kingdom” (1 Thess.2:12).*

The rule is a call to compassion, to honesty, to goodness, to peace, to love. In these our humanity sings. In these the divine life manifests through us. In these the gentle action of God changes us into that which we already are: images of Divine Love. Our wounds are healed into transfiguration. The compassion of Christ takes us over, naturally turning attention outwards. Self-honesty becomes a welcome priority. At our best we cannot help but act from the good that lives within. Peace and love are the gifts we grow in as we are healed into forgetting ourselves.

As we negotiate this pilgrimage alone and together, we discover ourselves growing in harmony with the God-life. We discover the loving attentiveness of God, an attentiveness that was always there. A living of the rule harmonises us into a hearing of the silent voice of God; a voice that is mercy, kindness, love; a voice that can guide us into the freedom and love of our hearts for life.

The rule has space in it for the practice of meditation because both the rule and meditation are about the same thing: self-forgetting into love. Not a quietist love, a feel good and do nothing. Love here and now is only love if it is *loving*. Love is faith *and* good works. Action can flow from the communion we all share with God. Be conscious of this communion even as you act.

The divine life is always for the good, always simply there ready to draw the attentive, the hearer into the eternal life within us and all. This life is our delight, it is our fulfilment. In it is our freedom of being, a freedom from over-thinking, a freedom from anxiety.

True spirituality is a practical discipline, one that we do not complete. It is always being practiced. We never arrive at the fullness of it in this life; we are never perfect in living it. Practice. The practice is life. Divine love and kindness is discovered in the practice and is infused in the practice.

To practice is to grow in the divine life as we act. Then action becomes an expression of the divine nature we all share with Christ. And over time our humanity is divinised. The Rule is a practical guide to the divinisation of humanity in community. This graceful and gradual becoming happens as we do it together. We come to share the divine nature.

Through these, the greatest and precious promises have been given to us, so that through them you should share the divine nature and escape from the corruption that is in the world through disordered passion. With this in view, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, goodness with understanding, understanding with self-control, self-control with perseverance, perseverance with devotion, devotion with fraternal love, and fraternal affection with love. (2 Peter 1:4-7, RNJB).