

Spring 2000

Sustainable living: A case study of nuns and their beliefs, attitudes and practices

Mary Catherine Clipson
University of New Hampshire, Durham

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation>

Recommended Citation

Clipson, Mary Catherine, "Sustainable living: A case study of nuns and their beliefs, attitudes and practices" (2000). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 2115.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/2115>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

**SUSTAINABLE LIVING – A CASE STUDY OF NUNS
AND THEIR BELIEFS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES**

BY

MARY CATHERINE CLIPSON

B.A., Marquette University, 1987

M.A., Boston University, 1991

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Natural Resources

May, 2000

UMI Number: 9969200

**Copyright 2000 by
Clipson, Mary Catherine**

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 9969200

Copyright 2000 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

**All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346**

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

c 2000

Mary Catherine Clipson

This dissertation has been examined and approved.



Dissertation Director, Dr. Paul Brockelman,
Professor of Philosophy



Dr. John Carroll, Professor of Environmental
Conservation



Dr. Eberhard Moebius, Professor of Physics
and Earth, Oceans and Space



Dr. Thomas Schram, Associate Professor of Education



Dr. Thomas H. Kelly, Director, Office of Sustainability
Programs

April 19, 2000
Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ix
ABSTRACT.....	xv
CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research Questions.....	1
Rationale for Study.....	2
Researcher Bias.....	6
II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW.....	14
The Emergence of Christian Monasticism.....	14
The Rule of St. Benedict.....	24
Humility.....	27
Stability.....	29
Frugality.....	31
English and American Roman Catholic Monasticism.....	36
Turvey Abbey and its Origins.....	40
Nuns and Monks: A Word About Differences and Similarities.....	43
III. METHODOLOGY: WHAT AM I DOING?.....	45
Starting the Research Process and Negotiating Access.....	45
Principles of Selection.....	50
Recording and Analyzing Data.....	53
Data from Interviews.....	60
Data from Questionnaire.....	66

Data from Ecological Survey	69
Baseline Survey	69
Environmental Resource Assessment	71
Reporting and Evaluating Field-based Research	74
IV. THE CONTEXT AND PEOPLE OF THE PRIORY OF OUR LADY OF PEACE...	77
The Daily Reality	78
Prayer and Rhythm of the Day	79
Work	87
Study	89
Hospitality	91
Giving Voice to That Reality	92
The Community	98
“Living According to the Rule of St. Benedict	100
“ Vita et Pax (Life and Peace) including Liturgy and Ecumenism” ..	106
“Seeking God by Living Out Gospel Values”	114
“Developing Spiritual Awareness of the Unity of All Creation and the Simple Beauty of Everyday Life”	119
Buildings and Landscape	122
Conclusions	131
V. ANALYSIS OF DATA: WHAT I LEARNED	132
“ Leaving Each Other Free”	133
Openness	140
Space to Find One’s True Self	143
Silence	148
A Deep Attraction to Something More	153
Faith and Trust	156
Attachment and Change	160
Ordinariness	163

" A Balanced Life": Rhythm and Regularity.....	167
VI. INTERPRETATION AND SYNTHESIS: SO WHAT?.....	171
Synthesis.....	171
Environmental Indicators.....	175
The Environmental Assessment at Turvey: Whither Indicators.....	180
The Notion of Fear and its Connection to Sustainability.....	186
Good Enough Sustaining Living.....	189
Turvey Abbey and the Outer World.....	196
Whither?.....	199
Endpiece.....	203
GLOSSARY.....	204
Sustainability Terms.....	204
Monastic Terms.....	204
Research Methods Terms.....	208
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	209
Sustainable Living and Ecological Thought.....	209
Monastic Life and History, Women's Studies.....	216
Research Methodology.....	222
APPENDIX.....	224
Map of Europe.....	225
Map of Counties in the United Kingdom.....	226
UNH Human Research Subject Approval Form.....	227
Schedule of Monastic Life.....	228
Questionnaire -- Blank Form.....	229
Questionnaire -- Results.....	236
Baseline Survey -- Blank Form.....	259
Baseline Survey -- Results and Photos.....	260

Ordnance Survey Map of Turvey.....	274
Parish of Turvey Statistics.....	275
Wildlife Trust Records for Turvey Abbey Species.....	277
Soil Survey – Soil Types at Turvey Abbey.....	279
Bedfordshire Natural History Society – Butterfly Records.....	280
Bedfordshire County Checklist – Bird Species at Turvey Abbey.....	281
Letter to Monasteries, July 1996.....	283
Monastic Experience Retreat Information, August 1996.....	284

DEDICATION

**For Paul,
my husband**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is seldom to be seen a more determined woman than the pregnant one. Or so I learned (as did my committee). The living heartbeat of the baby within me has been my muse in the deepest meaning of the word, leading me week by week to the finishing line. My child, whom I already love: thank you for being.

Yet to succeed at this endeavor I have had a network of support throughout the last six, nearly seven, years. There have been many times when I thought I might hang up my hat. It is with genuine gratitude that I acknowledge those who have helped me get to the completion of research, writing, and graduation in May 2000. In particular:

To Dr. Paul Brockelman, my Advisor: Well, we're there! I will miss our reflective and meaning-filled conversations in your office as afternoon changed to twilight changed to darkness. Your friendship, hard work, belief in me, faith in this research, encouragement, support in times of genuine difficulty, and enduring good humor have been there the entire time: thank you. I could not have asked for, or gotten, a better Advisor than you.

To Dr. John Carroll. From the very beginning you have been there as a steadfast guide, teacher, and friend: thank you. To you and your wife, Diana Carroll, the graduate student gatherings of food and discussion at your beautiful home have shown me a glimpse of what a married life of ecological intentionality can be: thank you both.

To Dr. Tom Schram, for your impeccable response time to a draft in need of revision, and for being a real resource and mine of information and guidance in the arena of research design and methodology: thank you.

To Eberhard Moebius, for connecting physics with the mystical, and for a willingness to work in a transdisciplinary way which has been stimulating and enterprising: thank you.

To Dr. Thomas H. Kelly, who joined this ship as the gangplank was being lifted,

I'm glad you came aboard. I hope you will find something that is useful from this research for your Sustainability Programs.

To Dr. Mimi Becker, you have been an advisor and teacher on sustainability, and someone I could count on to talk through the struggles, as a woman, in completing this PhD. Even though you were not able to be there in the final stretch, you are remembered and appreciated.

To all the nuns at the Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey. With receptivity, grace, and care you have supported and allowed this project to happen. I hope that I have accurately and respectfully represented who you are as individuals as well as the essential nature of how you live your lives in monastic community. *Oh Lord open my lips, that I may worthily proclaim your praise.*

To Will Reed and Dr. Albert Fritsch, for your significant contributions to the environmental assessment part of this dissertation: thank you. Your friendship, willingness to assist without compensation, and immediate response times are truly appreciated. And to Will Reed, Nicki Bennet, and Joe Reed, as you move into your second decade of shared community life with others, you continue to inspire me with your lovingness, dedication, insight, and wisdom about what community is: thank you.

To the women known as "The Wild Women" -- Rev. Mary Westfall, Dr. F. Marina Schauffler, and Penelope Morrow (two down two to go!) -- our gatherings in the early days of our program gave a tangible feeling of sisterhood to an often alienating process. It has been a joy to see you succeed and to have you in some way be a part of my success: thank you.

To Sr. Vivian Patenaude, RJM, Sr. Pauline Ayotte, RJM, Sr. Jeannine Cote RJM, and Sr. Denise Renaud RJM and the Sisters of the Religious of Jesus and Mary at Villa Augustina Convent in Goffstown, NH -- your "yes" abides with me still and impacts my life in more ways than you will ever know: thank you.

To Jayne, Danielle, and Tara Gallo; Claire, Denis, Eric, Jeffrey, and Amy

Laurendeau; and Rebecca, John, and Elizabeth Gorra: you have unfailingly been my friends with an open door, a warm bed, and a hot meal which cannot be underestimated in significance: thank you. A special thank you to Jayne, too, who over the seven years of this journey demonstrated friendship by taking a sincere interest in the ideas and spiritual resonances of my research. For your genuine interest: thank you.

To the Sisters at the Monastery of the Precious Blood in Manchester, NH, for allowing me access to do an ethnography on your monastery. This first glimpse into monastic life gave me the impetus to begin this research: thank you.

To Anne Phillips, Inge Page and Alex Levy (and daughter Ilana), Deborah Hirsch Demir, Stephan Harding, Julia Ponsonby, William Thomas, Hilary Nicholson, Kath Dalmeny, and Satish Kumar of Schumacher College, Dartington, Devon, England. Your goodwill and room in Hawthorns for the eight months in 1995-1996 not only gave me time to think out my dissertation topic but introduced me to my husband: a hearty thank you.

Outside the beautiful grounds of Schumacher I have found a sustaining community of love and friendship dotted around the Dartmoor wilderness in the Prayer Group (hugs to Rosalind Brady, Rosie Nanji-Rowe, and Sam Wernham), Book Group, and Circle Group to which I belong. In particular I am grateful for the love and warmth in the home of Sam, Zy and Tam Wernham and Adrian Slocombe: blessings, awareness and deep gratitude for all you are and continue to be.

To our dog, Lily, who gave countless hours of her time sleeping by my feet while I was at my iMac and encouraged me to go for walkies when she knew enough was enough: thank you. To Ben Clipson and Jeremy Bishop; Lily, and my chickens, Leghorn, Soft as Silkie, Hope, and Glory: you are the children and creatures of earth who often go unnamed. Thank you for helping me to remember the meaning of our sustaining living.

In Oxford, I would like to thank Dr. Paul Stack, Dr. Peter Riviere and the good folks of Linacre College (including the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology),

Oxford University who made my time as a Visiting Student there from 1996-1997 a highly rewarding and stimulating time.

To Rob and Bridget Farrands who have shown awesome and indefatigable tenacity in the face of adversity, nurturing me (and Paul) through the highs and lows of infertility treatment and my adventures in becoming Anglicized with a faithfulness, honesty, and clarity that is deeply “there”: thank you.

Of all the scholars I have encountered, there are two I particularly wish to acknowledge. To Fritjof Capra and Thomas Berry, your comments, critiques, and friendship over the years have shown me that a teacher can be a person of intense integrity. Both of you continue to be an inspiration to me: thank you.

A thank you to The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Granite State Management and Resources, Hattie M. Strong Foundation, and Dennis Meadows and The Sasakawa Foundation for your funding support at different times throughout this PhD.

Thank you to Larry Brickner-Wood, Chuck Goeller, and Megan, Danielle, Brady, Paloma, and Allison at the UNH Campus Ministry for your support and good friendship during the last stages of my writing. It was indeed a pleasure to share a home away from home with you.

As well, thank you to Bill and Barbara Totherow who welcomed me to stay in their beautiful cabin by Lake Nippo for two long stays of my writing. Your hospitality was truly generous, and, considering the absence of short-term accommodation at the University for Visiting Students or Scholars, sorely needed.

To my mother, Mary Harmon, and my father, Edmund F. Harmon: thank you for your genuine love and care of me and my brothers during our childhood, especially for giving us an excellent Catholic education. I know you did your best, and continue to do so. To my maternal grandfather, Dr. Earl W. Hayter, thank you for paving the way by doing your Doctorate “way back when.” You were a gentle pioneer. To my other grandparents, Beulah D. (Overman) Hayter, Mary Jane (Noonen) Harmon, and James L. Harmon, I

acknowledge with gratitude and pride the roots you are to me.

To my brother, Edward L. Harmon, thank you for being such a protective and loyal brother. I could not have asked for a more loving and sensitive soul to be my brother. To my sister-in-law Cheryl Harmon, thank you for being such a good friend and e-mail correspondent; you make the eight hour time difference between us melt away. As well, I feel like I finally have what I always asked for for Christmas: a sister.

To my brother, Kevin M. Harmon: you are the most courageous person I know. Thank you for hanging in there with integrity, grit, boundless humor, and independence. You taught me more than anyone that sometimes life, and sustaining life, just finds a way and is the greatest representation of hope there is. Thank you for being "still you."

I would like to acknowledge and thank from the bottom of my heart three very special people. First, Amanda Cole. In January of 1999 I had a severe depressive episode. Mandy was there with her great skill in cognitive therapy to help me sort out my thoughts and eventually my mood, without the use of any drugs. She, more than most people, knows what it means to work sustaining life in an existential sense. Thank you. Bless you.

Second, to Janice Hull and Dr. Mark Stegman and their colleagues at the Centre for Reproductive Medicine of Bristol University. Your compassionate, devoted, and expert care of infertile couples in spite of frequent public disapproval is a heroic act. The three and a half years we spent going through infertility treatment, and the four failed attempts, was as close to an experience of hell as Paul or I have known. Now, feeling the movements of life within, I know the experience of miracle beyond any and all technology. Thank you. Bless you.

And in the end I arrive back at the beginning: I would like to acknowledge and thank Paul Clipson, my husband. You have been there through thick and thin and all the times in between when I wanted to give up -- with challenge, perseverance, and great love. You have personally funded the costs of the entirety of this research for the last

four years, as there was no other funding source who wanted to take it on or believed in me quite like you did (and do). It is the sacrifices you have personally made to see this through with me that have truly allowed it to become a reality. I take your hand and walk side by side with you: this is ours, my love.

ABSTRACT

SUSTAINABLE LIVING – A CASE STUDY OF NUNS AND THEIR BELIEFS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

by

Mary Catherine Clipson

University of New Hampshire, May, 2000

This dissertation is a case study of monastic nuns in the context of sustainable living. The essential core question is: How has the way of life of nuns in a monastic community been a sustaining one. There are six chapters: Introduction, Historical Context and Overview, Methodology, The Context and People of The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Analysis of Data, and Synthesis and Interpretation.

The methodology used to get at the case study is, primarily, participant observation and individual interviews with twelve (of the eighteen) nuns; and secondarily, an ecological assessment of the community and buildings, and a questionnaire sent to 26 monastic communities within England and Wales.

There are four values that are explicitly stated in the literature of Turvey Abbey and that I think are significant in terms of sustainability: “living according to the Rule of St. Benedict”; *Vita et Pax* (life and peace) including liturgy and ecumenism; seeking God by living out Gospel values; and “developing spiritual awareness of the unity of all creation and the simple beauty of everyday life.”

There are nine implicit values that I described: “leaving each other free”, openness, space to find one’s true self, silence, a deep attraction for something more, faith and trust, attachment and change, ordinariness, and “a balanced life”: rhythm and

regularity.

The main conclusion is not to prove or disprove that the life of the nuns of Turvey Abbey is sustainable. Sustainability is a qualitative study of relationships more than a quantitative study of inputs and outputs, though the latter can be a significant aspect of the former. In fact, the essence of the term "sustainable living" is more accurately defined as "sustaining living" -- moving from a goal which has a defined and therefore finite end to a process that is immediate and ongoing.

The nuns have beliefs, attitudes and practices that are relevant to sustaining life, some of which have been in evidence for 1500 years since the origins of Benedictine monastic enclosure. Assessing the buildings and the community of Turvey Abbey, there is no indication of desecration or exploitation in attitude, belief, or practice. In fact, the property of Turvey has a sublime beauty that brings others to transcendence. Transcendence is accepted as a viable (and sustaining) aspect of the natural world, both human and non-human. As a core aspect of the sustaining life process at Turvey Abbey, the nuns are "seeking God." The non-monastic world in "seeking life" may amount to much the same thing, God being equivalent to the life force in secular parlance.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research questions

I began my course of study leading to the Doctorate in Philosophy in August of 1993. In the almost six years since then, research questions have evolved and changed but the essential core question with which I began the dissertation research has remained:

- How has the way of life of nuns in a monastic community been a sustaining one?

This dissertation is a case study of one community of nuns, those of the Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey, England. In Chapter III, I will describe in full what a case study is, why I chose to pursue this methodology and its appropriateness to the study undertaken. For now, however, let it suffice to say that a case study is in itself a comprehensive research strategy. A case study most commonly pursues questions of “how” and “why.”¹ Most of the research questions I have pursued are “how” and “why” questions. These are:

- How do the nuns live?
- Why do they choose to live a self-limiting life?
- How does a monastic community live?
- Do the beliefs, practices, and attitudes of nuns constitute a sustainable way of living? How do we know that?
- Who are nuns? That is, how does their identity as nuns contribute to living sustainably?

I approached answering these questions in a four-fold way -- through

¹ See the Introduction to Robert K. Yin's book, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, Second Edition, London, Sage Publications, Applied Social Research Method Series, Volume 5, 1994.

observation and participant/observation of the nuns of the Priory of Our Lady of Peace across three and a half years; through interviews with twelve of the nuns; through an ecological assessment of the property in which they live; and through a questionnaire sent to 26 comparable communities of nuns. Prior to this I had spent three years living in or visiting other monastic communities, and one year living in or visiting ecologically-centered non-religiously focused communities. This, of course, is not the whole of it. Many books, colleagues, lectures, retreats, nuns from other orders, and dinner guests have provided grist for the mental mill.

But *why* have I chosen this topic? On initial examination Turvey Abbey would seem to exemplify some of the themes I wish to inquire into. That is what has continued in my work since the Preliminary Exams of 1997. What has changed? It's now April of 1999. Primarily, I feel the question is less about "proving" and more about inquiring into how they live sustainably. Now, I would like to explore the rationale for doing this research.

Rationale for Study

The great challenge of our time is building a sustainable society. Studying a group of nuns who represent a tradition which has a strong claim to being called a sustainable society is worth pursuing. Does this group of nuns constitute a "sustainable society"? What does one look like -- what are its characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, and practices?

These questions can be approached at various levels:

- (1) Traditional social science is interested in a society that is 1500 years old, particularly in the West where no other society has lasted so long. As well, Benedictine monastic life is unique and "exotic" compared to mainstream lives.
- (2) Traditional science is interested in resource utility, land use and environmental degradation.
- (3) Religious studies are interested in sustainable belief, and in the Rule of St. Benedict

which has lasted 1500 years in diverse communities throughout the world.

(4) And it is intrinsically interesting to people, across social and educational boundaries.

Traditional scientists and others will continue to debate whether or not the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystems and populations are declining, as can be seen in the polarized debate surrounding global climate change. A rationale for doing this research need not be pinned to such a traditional scientific debate to determine whether or not it is valuable. Nor does this study need to derive its authenticity from the motivation to find out ways "to change our attitudes toward nature so that it is viewed as intrinsically valuable."² This study is not meant to persuade scientists of the religionists' point of view or vice versa. This is not to say that the basis of this study has nothing to say to traditional science or traditional religion because it does. The point is that the sustainability of the monastery is interesting in its own right and not dependent on the state of the world's ecology on the one hand or the state of our belief system on the other. The emphasis is to describe and interpret the reality of the nuns, and allow the reader his or her own response, emotional or behavioral.

The term "sustainability" has many definitions. In this dissertation, by "sustainability" I mean a sustaining way of being involving more than just inputs and outputs. By "a sustaining way of being" I mean a way of living that is enduring and that supports life in all its forms. This sustaining way of life involves change and continuity -- adaptability to new situations while maintaining continuity of meaning and behavior.

That being said, within the discipline of sustainability studies it is important if not vital to include studies of human community in relationship with other humans and with non-human nature. Why? I assert that the human is *intrinsically embedded* in the natural world. There is a strong bias within environmental thinking, and ecological studies, to set apart the human and the study of the human as in some way invalid to

² My words, taken also from the Preliminary Exam.

proper natural resources or environmental research. I take exception to this view. A rationale for this dissertation follows this line of thinking: a monastery can be seen to be an organism. A human organism in whatever level of detail (such as a monastery) is as valuable to understanding sustainability as is studying a non-human organism (such as tree frogs). Studies or attempts to understand or derive meaning from the natural world and sustainability must include at some level human behaviors, thoughts, beliefs because they are involved and cannot be separated out except by degree. The process of research and researching implicitly involves the human impacting on the natural world and vice versa.

The monasteries seem to be examples in our midst of sustainable living by the mere fact that they have been sustained intergenerationally across major societal transformations while surrounded by economies which transform themselves every generation. I would stress the word "sustain" and comment that it is open for analysis whether the communities "have been sustained" or "sustain themselves." This, indeed, is a strand of the present study. The point to be made, however, is that the notion of sustainability which is about longevity, in the evolutionary sense of survival, is to be considered but it is not the only characteristic of sustainable living. The fact that this group of nuns, who belong to the Order of St. Benedict, are individuals within a structure known as the Rule of St. Benedict which has endured largely intact for 1500 years is reason enough to pursue a study on sustainability with regard to them. Yet there is more to say in detail about their lives than the mere fact of their longevity.

Thus, the rationale for doing this research is to describe and interpret *how* the lives of nuns are sustainable, on a continuum of sustainability and unsustainability. The question that moves from the rationale for the study, to the study proper is: What are the beliefs, attitudes and practices the nuns live with, and do they tend to enhance or oppress a biophilic impulse? Biophilia, a term most attributed to Edward O. Wilson,

refers to “the innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes.”³ A “biophilic” tendency is “the urge to affiliate with other forms of life” in the words of E.O. Wilson, or “the passionate love of life and all that is alive” in the words of Erich Fromm.⁴ David Orr in “Love It or Lose It: The Coming Biophilia Revolution” cites two formidable barriers to biophilia involving on the one hand technology and economics and on the other, morality and human purpose. To quote:

...[biophilia] is about the combination of reverence for life and purely rational calculation by which we want to be both efficient and live sufficiently. It is about finding our rightful place on earth and in the community of life; it is about citizenship, duties, obligations, and celebration.... We are still thinking of the [ecological] crisis as a set of problems which are, by definition, solvable with technology and money. In fact, we face a series of dilemmas which can be avoided only through wisdom and a higher more comprehensive level of rationality than we have yet shown. Better technology would certainly help, but our crisis is not fundamentally one of technology: it is one of mind, will, and spirit.⁵

The nuns may have such a “comprehensive level of rationality” which we can learn from, as they do seem to possess a biophilic attitude with structures in place in their lives to enhance it. Women’s monastic life is a valuable subject of inquiry and is under-recorded. It is of intrinsic interest and it can also cast light on wider issues. It does not need to contain “the Answer” to the late twentieth century human predicament for it to be a worthwhile endeavor. And if the light shone into the monastic communities reflects rays that illuminate our own non-monastic communities, so much the better.

In conclusion, this study isn’t about quantification measurements like environmental audits of “sustainability” defined as a balance of inputs and outputs. Rather, this study is an exploration of living sustainably as a way of living that is

³ Taken from the Rationale in the Preliminary Exam. Quote taken from E.O. Wilson in Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson, Editors, *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, Washington D.C., Island Press, 1993.

⁴ As cited by David Orr in his chapter “Love It or Lose It: The Coming Biophilia Revolution”, in Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson, Editors, *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, Washington D.C., Island Press, 1993, p. 416.

⁵ *Ibid*, Orr, p. 430.

enduring and that supports life in all its forms. This sustaining way of life involves change and continuity -- adaptability to new situations while maintaining continuity of meaning and behavior. In this sense, living sustainably is not open to quantitative measurement of inputs and outputs. This is a heuristic study that seeks to articulate those structures and elements -- beliefs, attitudes and behaviors -- of the lives of the nuns of Turvey Abbey that seem to sustain each nun as well as the community as a whole. I believe this research is intrinsically interesting. It doesn't need to be justified by a government initiative (such as Agenda 21), or a scientific proof because it is intrinsically of interest and intuitively significant.

Researcher Bias

The ethnographer ... begins with biases and preconceived notions about how people behave and what they think -- as do researchers in every field.⁶

In truth, I began this study years ago. Though it's hard to pinpoint the exact moment, perhaps it was when, as a five year old, I was baptized with my two younger brothers (aged four and two) by an eccentric old priest called Monsignor O'Day. I can remember the occasion; it was held in St. Mary's Cathedral in downtown Peoria, Illinois. He put salt on my tongue and dripped water over my head, and then my brothers' heads, saying some lovely sounding words while incense floated around. Sometime during the ritual my Uncle Bill and Aunt Joyce were given to me as Godparents and a rush of warmth flooded me. Afterwards, while we had gathered in some part of the Cathedral for a celebratory drink with Monsignor, we had a conversation. I said, "Did you watch Disney?" And, he, bowing down his great girth to approach me seriously replied, "No... Did you watch Firing Line?" At that, my father roared with laughter, and they bantered back and forth in a way born of decades of cultural familiarity.

My father's family were farmers, people who originally emigrated from Ireland before, during, and after the Famine. They wound up in Illinois, and farmed. Generation

⁶ David M. Fetterman, *Ethnography Step by Step*, London, Sage Publications, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 17, 1989, p.11.

after generation, on both my grandfather's side and my grandmother's side, the Harmons, Scanlons, Noonens, and Byrnes farmed. Their graves, over a hundred of them, lie side by side in St. Mary's Cemetery at the end of a country lane in Princeville, Illinois, some with such headstones as, "Born in Tipperary, Died in Princeville, IL." Prior to the tractor and the motorcar, farming families lived a rudimentary self-sufficiency not at all nostalgic in the Jeffersonian agrarian sense. Children worked and played with their siblings and living and non-living things within the landscape, and contact with the outer world was limited. One-room schoolhouses with little more than a dozen pupils and one teacher, market days, and church were the basic sources of non-family interaction. My father's family had a pew at their church, as did each of the other well-established families. Every Sunday they went and sat in the same pew followed periodically by a church social afterwards. The priest maintained a central role in bringing together the disparate families throughout the countryside for Mass, but they also came together for church functions, funerals, weddings, and the like.

I grew up in the city nearest the farm where this all transpired. The farm where my father was born in 1930 is still there, and two of his siblings still work the surrounding land, albeit with a sprawling network of sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters. With the advent of the tractor, motor car, World War II, the post war boom years, the Korean War, and all the changes that ensued from that, for the first time children of my father's generation left their farms to become lawyers, doctors, businesswomen. Some returned, different; some left for good. The rural fabric of the settler time became unwoven.

I grew up only twenty minutes from the farm, but a world apart in experience. The one thing that was a constant was the Roman Catholic church. Gone were the Latin Mass and other pre-Vatican II vestiges, but generations could still share in a common experience that crossed city and rural boundaries. In the 1960s when my mom and dad moved to Peoria to the house my father still lives in, he began to attend St. Thomas

Church and has continued to do so ever since. Even though the specific church building has changed its appearance, the Catholic Mass, structures, and beliefs are recognizably familiar. It is a place that my father knows, and loves, and has found to be a harbor throughout the changes in his life.

And so it has been with me. I live a life unrecognizable to my father, and yet I too am steeped in the rhythm of the same church that he goes to, rain or shine, each Sunday. I attended Catholic schools up to and including my undergraduate education at Marquette University, and have been infused with the teaching, religious education, practice and ethos of numerous nuns, priests, parents, children, and others. My childhood neighborhood was an enclave of Catholics -- all except for a Lutheran friend in high school, and, my mother.

My mother was raised a Methodist but she allowed us to be raised Catholics as my father wanted. Looking back I am aware of the sacrifice she made in doing this and what it must have cost her, but also how much peace it brought me in an otherwise turbulent childhood. My mother did indeed have as much of a thread of religion as my father, but in a quieter, subtler way without much discussion or emotion. She was always at attendance in our Catholic church when I was to receive or do something special -- a May crowning, First Communion, etc. -- sitting in a pew listening silently. She didn't kneel or cross herself as the Catholics do but she was there, consistently.

The themes of change and continuity, of sustainability and societal transformation also emerged in my mother's history. Her own parents, Beulah (Overman) and Dr. Earl W. Hayter shared a common strand with my father's ancestry in moving West and forging a life lived often in isolated areas, with only the bare necessities available. Illness, accidents, fire, tornadoes, electrical storms, crop loss, and humbuggery perpetrated on farmers were constant threats to the early settlers. Dr. Hayter went on to make it his lifetime study documenting facets of the American Midwest in several

books and articles, including *The Troubled Farmer*⁷ and articles on that agent of agricultural revolution, the barbed wire fence. In my grandfather's memoirs he tells this story:

If our attendance at school was interrupted only by weather or work, our attendance at church and Sunday school followed the same pattern. Both our parents were god-fearing people of pioneer protestant background with rudiments of religious education in their homes and churches, and thus were willing to sacrifice a good deal to give us the same. Father had been exposed to more religion than had our mother for his mother was a church-leader and his stepfather an itinerant preacher and part-time lay-preacher and evangelist who rigorously subjected the whole family to indoctrination and raucous demonstrations through his lengthy prayers and Bible readings. At mealtime there was, according to father, a long blessing, followed by protracted readings and ravings while the whole family were on their knees.

Father's religious experiences with his stepfather no doubt made a deep impression on his later attitudes and convictions for as long as can be remembered he never joined any of the churches we attended in North Dakota. However he was always an avid reader (sometimes even the agnostic literature) and also one who enjoyed a lively religious or political discussion with his friends around the cracker barrel and the pot-bellied stove in the local store; and when possible he more than relished a chance to joke and argue with the local preachers who came and went from these small towns.⁸

Perhaps it is the landscape which brings about the religious in us, or perhaps it is different for each of us. In my unique family history there are distinct parallel lines where my mother's ancestry and my father's ancestry are mirror images of each other -- the fusion of the farm life with religious experience and expression. So the biases I bring to this dissertation -- and indeed the subject matter itself -- can be seen to stretch back across the generations.

It is for this reason that any discussion of whatever bias I bring to this dissertation begins here. According to Fetterman,

⁷ Dr. Earl W. Hayter, *The Troubled Farmer 1850-1900 Rural Adjustment to Industrialism*, DeKalb, IL, Northern Illinois University Press, 1968.

⁸ Taken from Earl Wiley Hayter's unpublished manuscript of memoirs: "Chapter I The Years of My Youth (1901-1919)", *From Claim Shanty to the Halls of Ivy, Sketches of An American History Professor (1901-1976)*, DeKalb, Illinois, Northern Illinois University Archives, 1977. Here he is referring to childhood, particularly the time spent in rural North Dakota, near Bartlett.

... the choice of what problem, geographic area, or people to study is in itself biased. Biases serve both positive and negative functions. Controlled, biases can focus and limit the research effort. Uncontrolled, they can undermine the quality of ... research. To mitigate the negative effects of bias, the ethnographer must first make specific biases explicit. A series of additional quality controls such as triangulation, contextualization, and a nonjudgmental orientation place a check on the negative influence of bias.⁹

In this section I would like to make explicit the specific biases I have and am aware of. The choice of the people I am studying, nuns, is born out of my life's experience. I have known many nuns, spent countless hours as a schoolchild with them, and in adult life lived in a convent for one year and a Christian community with nuns for another year and a half. When it was suggested by a colleague at the beginning of my PhD venture that a PhD is meant to be a contribution to the literature and that I should choose a topic that I already had some experience with, I immediately thought "religion," but as I was in the Natural Resources program that seemed difficult. Later, I was also given the advice to choose a subject and a topic that I wouldn't tire of over five years. With these two pieces of advice I realized that what I had most to offer in a dissertation and what I would be truly interested in doing did intersect and would be acceptable to the Natural Resources program -- a dissertation utilizing religion AND science (sustainability).

I chose nuns for several reasons. (1) They are women. In my twenties I had the good fortune of working in a Women's Studies Department at Emory University in Atlanta with an amazing feminist by the name of Elizabeth Fox Genovese. She opened my eyes to women's reality and experience in a way I had never heard of or yet explored and our discussions over coffee in her academic office as she smoked thin cigars while an enormous dog lounged at her feet, left a profound impression on me. Never before had I heard the things she was telling me about patriarchy, oppression, women's right to choose, etc. I heard part of a lecture she was giving, while putting out coffee and cakes and sandwiches, on the life of a white woman slave owner in the South in the late 1800s. Fox-Genovese had recovered this woman's diaries (whose name I now have forgotten)

⁹ *Ibid.*, Fetterman, pp. 11-12.

and wrote about it. I and many other women (for it was all women) in the room, black and white, were fascinated. I knew then that part of my life I wanted to spend giving voice to women's experiences.

When I lived in Villa Augustina Convent in Goffstown, New Hampshire with the Sisters of the Religious of Jesus and Mary -- who were an active (non-monastic) order -- I occasionally thought of this memory and spent many an hour considering how I could go about getting the stories of the nuns with whom I lived on tape and then into book form. I never carried out that project, for whatever reason. But the desire to document women's lived experience has not dimmed. I did not as yet have any idea of the techniques of anthropology or ethnography which could facilitate such a process. It naturally evolved that in the coursework phase for this PhD I did take an ethnography course. The semester's work was devoted to doing an ethnography of a site to be determined by the student; I decided on a group of monastic nuns near the house where I was living in Manchester, New Hampshire.

(2) I chose *monastic*¹⁰ nuns -- why? I have had little exposure to cloistered communities; it is a facet of Catholic (and other) religious experience which is rarely discussed or known. The concept of what these women would be like and what kind of place a monastery was fascinated me, and frightened me.

The earlier ethnographic study was a trial run in many ways for this dissertation. I had first hand experience of interviewing monastic nuns, as well as the externs¹¹ which avail themselves of the place. I saw the inside of my first monastic enclosure, and spent my first days and nights there enclosed in the silence and bells. I quickly realized that a project on monastic nuns was very well suited to my particular strengths -- I am familiar with Catholic ritual and language and culture, but I was a

¹⁰ Please see Chapter II and the discussion on the term "monastic."

¹¹ An "extern" is a person who comes to a monastery as a guest, who participates in prayer, but has not taken any vows to be connected to the monastery in a formal way. Please see the Glossary for terms like this.

novice at the essence of monastic life where I had a lot to learn. Because I knew enough about what it was like to be a Catholic, I could concentrate on the lived experience of the nuns as individuals as well as an organism (the monastic enclosed community) rather than on deciphering terms, rituals, and church history. I felt uniquely positioned.

(3) I also bring to this study a bias toward and interest in sustainability. I want to study nuns in the context of sustainability for several reasons including a strong interest in the issue and reality of sustainable living. As you can ascertain from my ancestry, survivability was an urgent way of life for my family on their respective farms. As they prospered so did their attitudes and practices of sustainability. That passion is also with me. For the last fifteen years I have studied, rallied at demonstrations, and behaved in a way that is in accordance with the core values of sustainable living. The political has been personal. I now live in a home on five acres in rural Devon in England with a dog and a growing brood of chickens where my husband and I continue to try to integrate as best we can such principles, and educate others to do the same.

(4) Finally, I am biased toward studying the lives of (some) nuns in the context of the issue of sustainability, a study that is to my knowledge waiting to be done. I like the challenge of synthesizing apparently opposite attractions. Discussions of religion and science are at a premium, and universities like the University of New Hampshire are taking the lead in interdisciplinary programs within formerly strictly divided academic disciplines. It is the right time, and the right place to pursue such a topic.

I have been able to secure a committee who are also interested in pursuing both the topic and the challenging process it takes to get to a valid, rigorous, successful doctorate that is also “transdisciplinary” -- in other words, outside the scope of any one academic department’s strictures, but within the rubric of doctoral academic qualification.

By definition, cross-disciplinary studies entail more than one discipline; trans-

disciplinary study is an attempt to inquire into realities from several perspectives and methodologies. Hopefully drawing on apparently separate traditions (life sciences, social sciences, religious studies) will allow new knowledge and understanding to emerge that would be invisible from any single academic standpoint.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

The Emergence of Christian Monasticism

Religious life, as lived experience, draws more from the well of emotions than from abstractly reasoned theologies and church structures.¹

I am including this section in order to inform the reader of the context of Christian monastic thought and practice and some of the themes which are involved. From the time of Christ and the establishment of the early church, through the birth of the eremitic² and cenobitic traditions, to the establishment of rules (particularly the Rule of St. Benedict) there are themes which gave rise to early monasticism and which continue to operate today in both the religious and secular arenas. Some of these themes are:

- individualism vs. community,
- consumerism vs. asceticism,
- intensity vs. boredom, and
- action vs. contemplation.

These themes are also central to discussions of sustainability which often inquire into the limits (and dangers of excess) of consumption, etc.³ As such it would be helpful for the reader to have some historical background about the evolution of these ideas as they relate to the monastic tradition. This section is only a small glimpse into the origin

¹ Kathleen Norris, *Dakota :A Spiritual Geography*, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993, p. 210.

² Please see Glossary for definitions.

³ Environmentalists are often accused of being "killjoys" and "hairshirted" and are pilloried with their beliefs and their behavioral contradictions, e.g., driving a car to a protest rally for less car use. Being consistent with our values is a perennial difficulty -- a debate which flourishes in ecological circles and monastic communities alike.

of monasticism in general.

At this juncture I would like to make a brief comment on language. A distinction will be made throughout this dissertation between "monasticism" as it is colloquially used today and the meaning of the term found in the literature of monasticism. We apply to other religions the term "monastic" (e.g. Buddhism) but the meaning of the term is not the same in Christianity as it is in Buddhism, Hinduism, etc., even though from the outside there are certain similar life style characteristics -- uniform habits or robes, shared prayer time, silence, etc. In the core of their belief structure and commitment Christian monastics are *focusing on Christ and the Gospels*, a point that I will take up later in this paper. By "monasticism", then, I am referring to a form of religious life that emerged out of a need to respond to the life and death of Jesus Christ by certain people in a certain way.

Monasticism is thought to constitute celibate men or women living in intentional communities who can be from any religious background. In the Christian context a monk or a nun is formally called a *cenobite* who lives in a *coenobium* -- in other words, one who belongs to a monastery where they serve under a rule and an abbot.⁴ Further, the cenobite and coenobium as a whole is dedicated to following the way of Christ. In terms of lifestyle, a cenobite is to be contrasted with another kind of Christian monk, a hermit or anchorite who lives alone. "Monasticism", then, is a uniquely Christian phenomenon and my research is restricted (mostly) to the Western Christian tradition -- though its Eastern Orthodox counterparts shared the same roots until the schism in 1073.

I owe a large debt to Timothy Fry, O.S.B., editor, and the associated editors of *The Rule of St. Benedict In Latin and English with Notes* 1980 for the main body of information for this chapter. Their research and understanding is unparalleled in any other source that I have come across.

The exact time and origin of Christian monasticism is disputed. The main sources

⁴ Timothy Fry, O.S.B., Editor, *RB 1980 The Rule of St. Benedict In Latin and English with Notes*, Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1981, p. 169.

of knowledge about Christian monasticism include: the *Life of Antony*⁵; the Pachomian materials; St. Jerome (who translated Pachomius' writings from Greek into Latin, thereby bringing it into the West); the *Lausiac History* by Palladius; the writings of Rufinus of Aquileia; the extensive works of St. Basil (especially the *Asceticon*); and the works of Evagrius of Pontus; John Cassian; and the historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.⁶ All of these writers were in some way documenting the rise of the movement now known as Christian monasticism.

Yet, there is no greater source for an understanding of the origins of monasticism than the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ found there. The early monks showed exceptional familiarity with the New Testament. The changed relationship of the church to society that developed in the fourth century with the cessation of the persecutions and the subsequent acceptance of Christianity by the Roman Empire also affected the early monks.⁷ The persecutions themselves provoked the rise of monasticism in part -- people did adopt the way of life as a result of fleeing from martyrdom. Yet, not until the cessation of the persecutions did "the monk come to replace the martyr as the hero of the early Church in its new triumphal condition."⁸

As Christianity became the state religion across much of Western Europe in the fourth century the transition away from persecuted minority to a dominant social position aligned with the state brought about

an invasion of the Church by the values of secular society.... Since the opportunity for martyrdom no longer existed for those who wished to respond fully to the teaching and example of Christ, the development of monasticism may well have been in compensation for this, to provide an outlet for those who were not satisfied

⁵ The *Life of Antony* is a biography most probably written by Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria and head of the church in Egypt for approximately fifty years, in the middle of the fourth century.

⁶ See Fry, particularly pp. 11-13 and the footnotes included, for detailed references to pursue on this subject.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Fry, pp. 13-14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Fry, p. 14.

with a mediocre Christianity. Monasticism appears, then, against the background of the changes in the Church of the fourth century as a reform movement, or rather as a new form for the older Christian idea of reformation in Christ.⁹

The idea of "reform" is at the heart of monasticism -- a perpetual action of listening to God with one's whole being and "forming again" one's life in the light of that. Within this "re-form-ation", there is a detachment from the world, a holding forth from it so that one can have the perspective to follow through when asked by God to act. The term *anachoresis* or "anchoress" means "retirement or withdrawal" and was used in pagan, Jewish and Christian writers to refer to "withdrawal from the world." But for Christians the example of Jesus withdrawing into the desert or the mountains by himself was the key source for bringing about the usage of the term "to anchorite, to hermit." Just who the first Christians were to take up a life of withdrawal is disputed, though it is widely accepted that the first hermit is Antony. He has come to be known as the earliest "desert Father."

Monks at the time were known to live both singly and in groups of two to three hundred. This difference gave rise to heated debate as to the true nature of monastic life. St. Benedict in Chapter 1 of his Rule, states very clearly:

There are clearly four kinds of monks. First, there are the cenobites, that is to say, those who belong to a monastery, where they serve under a rule and an abbot.

Second, there are the anchorites or hermits, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they ...have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert...

Third, there are the sarabaites, the most detestable kind of monks, who with no experience to guide them, no rule to try them... have a character as soft as lead. Still loyal to the world by their actions... they pen themselves up in their own sheepfolds, not the Lord's. Their law is what they like to do, whatever strikes their fancy. Anything they believe in and choose, they call holy; anything they dislike, they consider forbidden.

Fourth and finally, there are the monks called gyrovagues, who spend their entire lives drifting from region to region, staying as guests.... Always on the move.

⁹ Ibid., Fry, p. 14. In Fry's footnote accompanying this quote, Fry cites G.B. Ladner and the German historian Adolf Harnack as sources for the role of the idea of reform in early Christianity.

they never settle down, and are slaves to their own wills and gross appetites. In every way they are worse than sarabaites.

It is better to keep silent than to speak of all these and their disgraceful way of life.¹⁰

I think we can discern Benedict's position on the matter. The warnings of the dangers of the eremitical life -- by this it is meant the life of the hermit -- and the insistence on cenobitic life (i.e. within a monastery) as a foundation for eremitical life is found in early writers, but the precise separation point between the eremitic and cenobitic movements remains a matter of discussion.¹¹ In the fourth century, Pachomius founded a movement in Egypt which shifted the focus of attention from the self (or individuals around a spiritual father) to community (or a fellowship of brothers, a *koinonia*) as the focus.¹² Pachomian monasticism was meant to be an imitation of the apostles where Scripture played a central role. This was an entirely different orientation than going into the desert to do battle with the body and mind as hermits were doing. Instead, Pachomius seems to give us the earliest example of the monastic enclosure at Tabennesi around AD 320, and by the time of his death in 346 two monasteries for women were included in the "holy *koinonia*".¹³

St. Basil (330-379) held several views in common with Pachomius. First, the monastic life was to be an imitation of the earliest Christian community, and secondly, the cenobitic life was thought to be superior to the eremitical life in pursuing the teachings of St. Paul "to live as members of the body of Christ." Basil, based on his reading of the Scriptures, created a program for living which was basically a reform for the whole Church but which became a rule for only a particular society within the Church, the cenobitic monastic communities. Like Pachomius, he left a rule that was a

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Fry, pp. 20-21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Fry, p. 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, Fry, pp. 24-25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Fry, pp. 26-28.

compilation of regulations. But unlike Pachomius, Basil also provided a well-thought-out rationale for all aspects of monastic life.

As the fourth century was drawing to a close, monks of Egypt and Palestine began to focus on literature rather than Scripture, particularly the works of Origen and his theory of the spiritual life. Origen's theory included two key facets. First, Origen made a distinction between action (the ascetical combat against vice) and contemplation (the intellectual assimilation of truth). According to Origen, contemplation had the higher value. Second, Origen theorised a threefold division of the spiritual life -- into sciences known as the purgative (morals and rules for a good life), illuminative (the causes of things and their transient nature) and unitive (the invisible and eternal world) ways.¹⁴

Origen thought "the spiritual life begins when a person comes to realize that he is made in the image of God and that the true world is the world inside him."¹⁵ One monk, Evagrius of Pontus (345-399), studied Origen and built upon his ideas. Crucially, Evagrius alters Origen's cosmology so that the distinction of action and contemplation become two distinct and successive phases of the spiritual life. Evagrius' thought was highly contentious, not least because of his anthropomorphised view of picturing God in human form.

A debate between the thought of Origen on the one hand, and Evagrius' on the other led to rivalries among principle ecclesiastical figures of the time. This led to hostility and rioting culminating in the calling of a synod at Alexandria in 400. What occurred as a result was the departure of Origen-favoring monks from Egypt to Palestine and Constantinople as the followers of Evagrius held sway in the East.¹⁶ Of the monks who left for the West, one of them was John Cassian who took with him the intellectual tradition

¹⁴ Ibid., Fry, pp. 34-37.

¹⁵ Ibid., Fry, p. 35.

¹⁶ Ibid., Fry, p. 41.

of Egyptian monasticism into what is now Western Europe.

It is not simply that the monasticism in the West came from the East by way of John Cassian; monastic origins in the West were more complex than that. Though communication about monastic developments with Egypt was commonplace, it is likely that the appearance of monasticism in the West developed indigenously and independently of Eastern influence.¹⁷ The development of monasticism in the West was continuous with earlier stages of ascetical practice in the Western Church; widows, virgins, and others living an ascetical life were written about in the second century by Western writers. The documentation is scarce but what evidence is available points to "monastic forms of life springing up in all the principle regions of the Western empire: Italy, North Africa, Gaul, Spain, the British Isles."¹⁸ Yet, according to Fry,

More significant than the differences, however, is the fundamental unity among all the forms of expression of the monastic phenomenon. Conditions throughout the civilized world in the fourth century evoked a similar response from Christians of the most varied regions, cultures and social classes.¹⁹

With regard to women, in Italy Roman ladies were known to have adopted the monastic ways of life in a disciplined way out of a preexisting ascetical practice in the home which gradually took on more strictly monastic forms later in the fourth century.²⁰

Marcella, when widowed at an early age, began to live an ascetic life in her home, probably in the 350s. Jerome says that she was influenced by Athanasius and his successor (and blood brother) Peter, who came to Rome in 373. Marcella's home became the meeting place for a group of noble women with similar interests, who studied the Bible together. When Jerome arrived in 381, he became the spiritual father of these virgins and widows.

The case of Asella is even clearer. According to Jerome, she was consecrated as a virgin at the age of ten. This could not have been later than about 344. Shortly afterward she began to adopt other ascetical practices. In the 380s she was still living in solitude, apparently in her own home. Palladius, who was in Rome in 405, reports that she was by then living with a community. Her career seems to

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Fry, pp. 42-43.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Fry, p. 43.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Fry, p. 43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Fry, pp. 43-44.

mark the transition from early Christian forms of asceticism to a fully developed cenobitic life.²¹

As this passage illustrates, in Italy Roman noble ladies were instrumental in spreading the monastic ideal as they appealed to St. Jerome and others for direction. By the time Augustine came to Rome in 387 he found functioning monasteries of women and of men, and the monastic ideal spread throughout Italy.

In the West there does seem to be greater evidence of women involved in both the evolution and practice of both eremitical and cenobitic monasticism. St. Jerome, influential due to his scholarship, went to Palestine at the end of the fourth century. As well, Paula, one of the Roman noble ladies practicing the monastic ideal in her home, went with her daughter Eustochium. In Bethlehem, Paula established two monasteries - one for women, which she governed herself, and one for men, ruled by Jerome. The earliest example of Latin monasticism in Palestine seems to have been in 372, when Melania the Elder, another noblewoman, set off with other like-minded women to visit some monks in Egypt and then founded a monastery for women in Jerusalem.²²

These monasteries were beset by problems in the early fifth century. Yet, Jerome gave the Western Church significant writings on monastic ideals. At the same time, the Latin monks in Palestine translated Eastern Egyptian monastic texts so that the knowledge of Pachomian monasticism became known in the West.

St. Martin of Tours was the first great propagator of monasticism in Gaul and is often compared to Antony in the East as a typical monk-hero.²³ St. Martin began as a hermit in the late 350s, but as disciples came to him he became the spiritual father of a group of monks who formed a loosely knit group of semi-anchorites (a *laura*) rather

²¹ *Ibid.*, Fry, p. 44, with origins for the passage quoted as from Jerome. See Fry for more detailed information.

²² *Ibid.*, Fry, p. 48.

²³ *Ibid.*, Fry, p. 51.

than a real *coenobium*.²⁴ As his popularity grew, he was obliged to become the bishop of Tours (even though he wanted to remain in solitude) and became the first monk-bishop in the Western Church. Like the very popular Cardinal Hume in modern day England, St. Martin brought the monastic ideal into diocesan life when he became a bishop. The bishopric position of authority and presence helped to spread the monastic form of life.

Also in Gaul a second monastic tradition arose at the time of St. Martin of Tours, that of the Lerins monastery. It was founded by St. Honoratus -- probably between 400 and 410 after Honoratus returned from Greece -- when, like St. Martin, disciples came to his solitary encampment and asked him to direct a *laura*. The writing that came out of Lerins forms a part of the Western monastic context that later proves indispensable for understanding St. Benedict.²⁵ Lerins was a school of asceticism rather than a center for culture or theology:

It appears that it was primarily cenobitic, but that experienced monks lived in separate cells as hermits, though under the authority of the abbot. They attended, at least on occasion, the common prayer and instruction by the abbot. Discipline was quite severe. The cenobitic monks lived in strict poverty and apportioned their time to work, reading and prayer. Young monks were subject to an elder, and new recruits through a kind of novitiate of unknown length. Eastern cenobitism seems to have served as the model, but the solitary life was also held in high esteem.²⁶

Though based in the ascetical tradition, it is evident that cenobitism was taking root more deeply in the emerging semi-anchorites of the mid-fifth century. By the sixth century there were definitely signs that cenobitism was beginning to be more established. Some of the most important writings to have influenced this trend and the spirituality of Western monasticism in general were by John Cassian. He began with an interest in the ascetical life (like so many before him) and went travelling. He returned to the West after many years, settling in Provence where he became an important figure

²⁴ Ibid., Fry, pp. 52-53.

²⁵ Ibid., Fry, p. 54.

²⁶ Ibid., Fry, p. 56.

in the ascetical circles there and where he established two monasteries at Marseilles, one for men and one for women.

His monastic writings date from the period 420 to 430. The first of these is the *Institutes*, of which the first four books treat the monastic customs of Egypt: dress, prayer and psalmody, poverty, food, obedience, discipline, and an exhortation on renunciation....Of all Western monastic writers before St. Benedict, [John Cassian] was by far the most influential. His teaching was first preserved by the Lerins circle, who shared his views on monastic observance as well as on the theology of grace....Above all, the Benedictine Rule referred its readers to the *Collationes Patrum et Instituta* and thus ensured the continued reading of Cassian (RB 73.5). The number of extant manuscripts testifies to the popularity of Cassian in the Middle Ages, and his effect upon Western spirituality is incalculable.²⁷

In North Africa the development of monasticism was dominated by St. Augustine, though the ascetic tradition there had had a long history before Augustine's arrival. He first established a monastery in 391 on a plot of garden land given to him. The principle characteristic was the common ownership of all goods. From this humble beginning in the garden monastery, Augustine espoused the values of renounced individual ownership, poverty, and the common life; his whole concept of monastery centered around the value we today call "community."

In the first place, live together in harmony and be of one mind and heart in God; for this is the purpose of your coming together. Do not call anything your own, but hold all that you have in common; and let distribution of food and clothing be made by your superior, not to all alike, because all have not the same health, but to each according to his need. For thus you read in the Acts of the Apostles, that they had all things in common, and distribution was made to each, according as anyone had need.²⁸

In fact, the concept of "harmony among brothers" was so important to Augustine that it is from him that the word "monk" has been altered from its original etymological meaning -- *monachus* meaning "one" (from the Greek *monos*).

Since the Psalm says, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is that brothers should dwell together in unity,' why then should we not call monks by this name? For

²⁷ *ibid.*, Fry, pp. 58-59.

²⁸ St. Augustine, as quoted in Fry, p. 62. St. Augustine's conceptualization has strong echoes to the early socialist tenet "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

monos is 'one.' Not one in just any way, for an individual in a crowd is 'one,' but though he can be called one when he is with others, he cannot be *monos*, that is 'alone' for *monos* means 'one alone.' Hence those who live together so as to form one person, so that they really possess, as the Scripture says, 'one mind and one heart,' who have many bodies but not many minds, many bodies but not many hearts, can properly be called *monos*, that is, 'one alone.' (Aug. in psalm. 132, 6).²⁹

Though the Rule of Benedict is primarily based on the tradition of Egypt as mediated by John Cassian, the Rule of Augustine remains its second greatest influence due to the quality of Augustine's thought concerning the value of community and its emphasis on the relationships of brothers to one another.³⁰ With that let us turn to the Rule of St. Benedict proper.

The Rule of St. Benedict

*'For those who wish to live a simple life'... ought to be a virtual definition of monasticism.*³¹

Why is St. Benedict so important? Primarily for the reason that his Rule influenced all of subsequent Western monasticism -- including the priory I have chosen to research, The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey. Written in sixth-century Italy, the Rule of St. Benedict comes from a time when the unravelling of civilization seemed the most pressing concern, much more so than the preservation of the natural environment. The collapse of the Roman empire along with the incursion of the northern tribes made St. Benedict's type of localized community valuable as a social unit. Cenobitic monasticism in the West would prove to be one of the anchors of the new feudal society.³²

²⁹ Ibid., Fry, pp. 62-63.

³⁰ Ibid., Fry, pp. 63-64.

³¹ Terrence G. Kardong, O.S.B., "Ecological Resources in the Benedictine Rule," in Albert J. LaChance and John E. Carroll, editors, *Embracing Earth: Catholic Approaches to Ecology*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1994, p. 171. There is a well-known charity slogan reminiscent of Benedict's phrase: "Live simply so that others may simply live."

³² Ibid., Kardong, p. 163.

Monasticism in some places (e.g. Egypt and Syria) had evolved as a movement from city to desert, a way of living hermetically and ascetically. Emphasis was placed on going to a place that was considered devoid of beauty -- such as the desert -- so as to force oneself to look inwards to the health of one's soul. Asceticism, and the zeal it engendered, would grow from the 5th century onwards and continue to be in tension with consumption and/or consumerism up to and including our present day. This asceticism would often take the form of repression and very harsh denigration of the body, which would later be related to humanity's repression and denigration of nature.

With St. Benedict and his rule, however, no such negative philosophy of nature can be inferred. Rather, in the rule, nature is simply taken for granted as the world in which the monks lived. St. Benedict was no nature mystic (unlike St. Francis) given to ecstatic expressions of kinship with the natural world, but he did not seek to escape from it either. St. Benedict advocated stewardship of natural resources but it is largely implied. The word "stewardship" is used once and then in a biblical quote that has more to do with human community than with nature conservancy.

Once in Office, the abbot must keep constantly in mind the nature of the burden he has received, and remember to whom he will have to *give an account of his stewardship*.³³

Seven hundred years before the poetic and mystical appreciation of the earth that St. Francis expressed, St. Benedict experienced the context he lived in as a man of the times. St. Benedict's radical nature was every bit as radical as that of St. Francis, but different times bring out different expressions of the radical. Companionship with nature is an attitude that is incompatible with the hierarchical mindset of St. Benedict, but that doesn't mean that his worldview has no potential for ecological responsibility.

Near the heart of St. Benedict's spirituality lies an acute sense of creatureliness.

³³ From the Gospel of Luke 16:2 as quoted in Fry, Chapter 64 "The Election of an Abbot", p. 87. It was pointed out to me by the nuns at Turvey Abbey that in this case, "in Office" is equivalent to "in the office of the Abbot." The "Divine Office", however, means "the sung office in choir."

He seems to be almost overwhelmed by the majesty of God; he is an utterly religious person. From his point of view the world belongs to God and that is the reason why we must love it and care for it. Throughout human history, such an attitude has always been a primary motivation for ecological awareness.³⁴

The context for St. Benedict is that he lived during a time of one of the gravest heresies of early Christianity – an exaggerated dualism that exalted the spirit at the expense of material creation. This heresy had brought on severe asceticism in the first monks which led sometimes to a disdain and even hatred of the body and the world. There is little or none of this in the Rule of St. Benedict. He is concerned with promoting spiritual growth, but never at the expense of the body. Throughout the Rule there is a balanced and realistic attitude toward life that appreciates the importance of the physical. In the Rule, for example, the suggestion for obtaining clothing and food given by St. Benedict is that the monk and his superior are meant to take into consideration the climate and the season.

However, where local circumstances dictate an amount much less than what is stipulated above, or even none at all, those who live there should bless God and not grumble.³⁵

Monks must not complain about the color or coarseness of all these articles, but use what is available in the vicinity at a reasonable cost. However, the abbot ought to be concerned about the measurements of these garments that they not be too short but fitted to the wearers.³⁶

An important point to be made is St. Benedict was practical, yet kindly; he was aware of nature and that it was loved by God, but he says his community must be strictly tied to human well-being. While he displays no alienation from nature, he shows no interest in it as a phenomenon in its own right. For some ecologists this might classify St. Benedict automatically as part of the problem and not part of the solution. Yet

³⁴ Ibid, Kardong, p. 164.

³⁵ Ibid., Fry, from Chapter 40 “The Proper Amount of Drink” (40.8), p. 63.

³⁶ Ibid., Fry, from Chapter 55 “The Clothing and Footwear of the Brothers” (55.7-8), p. 76.

ecological thought needs to take into consideration human well-being as much as a singular interest in nature. What kind of human life and what kind of behavior is that human life manifesting toward nature if the well-being of human life is focal? Is this focus on human life something that the planet can sustain, or is it something that will ultimately destroy the ecosphere? The contention is that Benedictine monks, if they live according to his teachings, are friends of the planet and not his enemies.

As regards the human, then, St. Benedict promotes certain central virtues of how to live the Rule. Of these, three are specifically significant in terms of sustainable living -- namely humility, stability and frugality. Other issues related to values will be explored in later parts of this thesis, but for now I will concentrate on giving an overview of the three major, if you will, virtues relative to the human (and human relationship in the context of sustainable living).

Humility

Humility incorporates obedience and silence. In modern times humility is distrusted due to its apparent passivity and threat to self-esteem. Humility is an awareness that the holiness of God is so awe-inspiring that God is God and that I am me, the human subject, not God. There is a distinction between God as creator and God as all. The human choice is one of living in obedience to one's Creator or to reject the constraints of creaturehood and to attempt to play God.¹⁷ According to the Rule, we come from God and we go back to God; therefore we owe everything to God.¹⁸

Chapter 7 in the Rule of St. Benedict is "Humility." St. Benedict begins the chapter with a call to remember the New Testament, and the Gospel of Luke: *Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.* (Luke 14:11, 18:14) From this establishment of Scripture as his base, St. Benedict formulates twelve steps of humility leading to "exaltation in heaven." These steps are

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Kardong, p. 165.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Kardong, p. 166.

likened to Jacob's ladder (from Scriptures) with the angels ascending and descending. According to St. Benedict, we ascend the ladder to heaven by acting with humility. The ladder is our life on earth, and its sides are our body and soul.

According to St. Benedict:

The first step of humility, then, is that a man keeps the *fear of God* always before his eyes (Psalms 35[36]:2) and never forgets it.³⁹

The concept of "fear of God" essentially refers to an awareness that God is always there and we should try to avoid offending God by our thoughts and actions (i.e. through sin). From an initial step of avoiding sin (in which fear has its place) to an eventual step of manifesting love, finding balance in the way of humility is the yoking together of two concepts: (1) meekness before authority, and (2) compassion for the weak. The last step in humility is also similar to the first commandment from the Old Testament: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your soul.

The twelfth step of humility is that a monk always manifests humility in his bearing no less than in his heart, so that it is evident at the Work of God, in the oratory, the monastery or the garden, on a journey or in the field, or anywhere else.⁴⁰

After the monk has ascended all the steps of humility, the "exaltation in heaven" is "arriving at that *perfect love of God which casts out fear* (1 John 4:18)." When the monk is in the place of that perfect love, St. Benedict believes:

Through this love, all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue.⁴¹

This idea of acting out of love which casts out fear is a theme I will pick up again in Chapters V and VI, as it relates to sustainable living.

³⁹ Ibid., Fry, Chapter 7 "Humility" (7:10), p. 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Fry, Chapter 7 "Humility" (7.62-63), p. 37.

⁴¹ Ibid., Fry, Chapter 7 "Humility" (7.68-69), p. 38.

Stability

Stability is one of the three vows made to enter a Benedictine community. Etymologically stability means “the ability to stand or stay put in one place.” Among the earliest monastic hermits in the Middle East, stability meant the ability to keep to one’s hermitage: “Take care of your cell and your cell will take care of you” (desert wisdom). The monk was to avoid both aimless wandering which one was prone to due to a lack of family and possessions and to keep to his cell in order to focus his spiritual life and to face those aspects of himself that needed further conversion. Among the Cenobites in the West, stability had the added meaning of perseverance in the monastic state until death.⁴² Benedict puts a good deal of emphasis on the sheer need to stay home, sometimes called *stabilitas loci* or stability of place. Thus he directs the monastery to be a self-sufficient socioeconomic unit, containing “water, mill and garden.”

The monastery should, if possible, be so constructed that within it all necessities, such as water, mill and garden are contained, and the various crafts are practiced. Then there will be no need for the monks to roam outside, because this is not at all good for their souls.⁴³

The reader may assume that the reason for stability is, however, purely spiritual: “Then there will be no reason for the monks to roam outside, because this is not at all good for their souls” -- i.e. because one becomes a slave to one’s own will and gross appetites (from RB Chapter 1.11). Yet, St. Benedict’s monks did travel and received advice from visiting monks; the static ideal of stability could only be achieved more or less imperfectly, depending on circumstances. At Turvey Abbey, the nuns reserve time during the year when they accept no visitors -- perhaps returning to a purer form of the ideal of stability. The point is that St. Benedict was seeking balance between an environment that was closed to contamination by alien contacts and customs (“the world”) and yet open to the wisdom received from reliable visitors.

⁴² Ibid., Kardong, p. 167.

⁴³ Ibid., Fry, Chapter 66 “The Porter of the Monastery” (66.7-8), p. 91.

Today, people in the developed world travel thousands of miles routinely, change their domiciles about every three years (as well as their cars), and world news is beamed constantly into the remotest village -- even monasteries trying to live the Benedictine Rule today do not and cannot live in isolation from their neighbors.

The Benedictine monastery was the perfect institution for the age in which it arose. At that time the communication system so carefully created by the Romans was disintegrating. As the Roman Empire collapsed, people were left fragmented in small, isolated, rural communities. In such a situation the quintessentially local, self-sufficient Benedictine monastery was an ideal nucleus of religion, culture, and even commerce.

The point about stability as a virtue is that some degree of physical stability is of vital importance in shaping human attitudes toward the earth. "Those who live in a place have the biggest stake in it." This is a corollary to the ecological truism that degradation of our environment inevitably leads to degradation of ourselves.⁴⁴ For the ordinary person the earth is too big to be understood well on a global level. E. F. Schumacher suggested we "act locally and think globally." To really get to know and love a place, a person must live there, and live there a long time. Further, those who live in a place are usually in the best position to know what is appropriate for that place in terms of human initiatives. More mischief has been perpetrated by bureaucrats at long range than by the people on the land. The best care of the land will come from people who regard it as home. As Wendell Berry has been quoted: "Until you say 'this is where I will live til I die' change is not possible."

Whatever other adaptations they have had to make to their time and place, Benedictine monasteries have remained faithful to the localism taught by St. Benedict. Though it cannot be said that monasteries throughout history have always been paragons

⁴⁴ See especially the eco-feminist work on this subject. In particular Caroline Merchant's *The Death of Nature*, and Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (Editors and Authors), *Reweaving the World : The Emergence of Ecofeminism*.

of responsible stewardship, they do have enduring value as a witness that a certain stability is necessary to proper care of the earth.⁴⁵

Frugality

Known as “poverty”, frugality is something every monk vows to live but not necessarily at the level of the very poorest members of society (except with Franciscans). The essence of frugality in the Rule is the following passage from Chapter 34 in the Rule.

Whoever needs less should thank God and not be distressed, but whoever needs more should feel humble because of his weakness, not self-important because of the kindness shown him.⁴⁶

Distribution in St. Benedict’s monasteries should be made solely on the basis of need. Different people have considerably different physical needs. Satisfying those needs is the only real solution, and could only work in a small community of fully committed persons. In St. Benedict’s system, the abbot must have the discretion and compassion necessary to know what each member needs. The operational arm to the abbot is the “cellarer” whose responsibility it is to take care of the physical needs of the community. The cellarer is to be “like the father of the community” (Chapter 31.2). As such he must have many of the same characteristics as the abbot, but St. Benedict also twice insists he be *non prodigus* -- not wasteful.

As cellarer of the monastery, there should be chosen from the community someone who is wise, mature in conduct, temperate, not an excessive eater, not proud, excitable, offensive, dilatory or wasteful....⁴⁷

He should not be prone to greed, not be wasteful and extravagant with the goods of the monastery, but should do everything with moderation and according to the abbot’s orders.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., Kardong, p. 169.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Fry, Chapter 34 “Distribution of Goods According to Need” (34.3-4), p. 57.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Fry, Chapter 31 “Qualifications of the Monastery Cellarer (31.1), p. 54.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Fry, Chapter 31 (31.12), p. 55.

The person who fulfils the role of cellarer is meant to be one who has a certain ethos that would “regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar” (Chapter 31.10). In other words, someone who isn’t troubled by avarice, and, further, is infused with a notion of the sacredness of the material world which translates into a deep respect for each and every item of clothing, tool for the garden, etc.⁴⁹

The importance of treating the ordinary things of the monastery with the same reverence as the extraordinary things receives further elaboration in Chapter 32 of the Rule, concerning the tools of the community. Here St. Benedict demands that the abbot himself keep track of the tools and make sure that they are given out and returned in good condition. Anyone who has lived in a community realizes the potential for abuse when everyone owns everything – and no one considers anything his or her own. The “Tragedy of the Commons” phenomenon (where everyone is responsible and no one is accountable) is well documented. For St. Benedict, tools seem to be symbols of the material work, which needs and deserves our best care and attention.⁵⁰

Why does St. Benedict advocate this system of frugality? First, to combat avarice, the vice that one can never get enough of this world’s goods. The avaricious person confuses wants with needs. St. Benedict’s belief is that wants are insatiable for any person (including a monk) unless held in check. He condemns all private property as a vice.

Above all, this evil practice [private ownership] must be uprooted and removed from the monastery.... *All things should be the common possession of all, as it is written, so that no one presumes to call anything his own.*⁵¹

⁴⁹ Paul Clipson tells me that one of the latter day ecological communities, The Findhorn Foundation, actually acknowledges this respect for every item and tool by holding birthday celebrations for key machinery like vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers, etc.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Kardong, p. 170.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Fry, Chapter 33 “Monks and Private Ownership” (33.1, 33.6), p.56. The italics is St. Benedict’s, from The Acts of the Apostles, 4:32.

We see how consumerism is the target of much ecological evangelizing. St. Benedict's Rule finds echoes in so many modern commentators who are from distinctly secular traditions (e.g. the Marxist tenet against private ownership that "all property is theft," and the fundraising slogan, "live simply that others may simply live").

Second, if all receive what they need, then there should be "peace among the members" (Chapter 34.5). This peace is based on the solid reality of objective satisfaction of legitimate needs rather than focusing on the more diffuse goal of psychological contentment.⁵² Where legitimate needs are satisfied, there is a good basis for communal harmony; where they do not get met there may be a veneer of calm but violence smolders underneath. "If you want peace, establish justice" (Pope Paul VI). Further, the care of people is significant in the meeting of needs. For example, as regards clothing, the abbot is instructed to "be concerned about the measurements of these garments that they not be too short but fitted to the wearers" (Chapter 55.8) Like other aspects of the Rule, this understanding that the little practical necessities of life be well taken care of (if the community is to flourish spiritually) withstands the test of time.

Fifteen hundred years after it was written, the understanding that needs are to be fulfilled and wants curbed is still dealt with throughout the world. In the First World, wants are constantly threatening to overtake society and all individuals therein. Choice has become a burden and obesity is rampant. Is there contentment in this? In the more obvious scenario, photographic images on film are piped into our living rooms daily with the realities of people who don't have their basic needs met and are quite literally dying. According to Oxfam, 800 million people in the world (primarily in the developing world in the South and Third World) go to bed every night hungry; this is

⁵² Ibid., Kardong, p. 170.

roughly one-third of the world's population.⁵³

If St. Benedict's Rule were to be followed in the global village community, a lot of redistribution would be occurring. But who would be the Abbot? The complexity of moving from the scale of eighteen individuals living in a community under a kind of hierarchy where they allow one among them to act as "superior", to the scale of billions of people, does boggle the mind. But perhaps the United Nations is a type of Abbot Primate or Mother Superior. Many making up the one body.

In the monastic world from the beginning there was certainly a strong ideology of abstemiousness among the monks. This ascetic attitude toward material goods sometimes took extreme forms with the desert monks, but it was recognized by thoughtful monastic writers that abstinence could only be sustained if it were not carried too far. Like the modern day weight-watchers, a steady diet that one can keep to is what is vital, whether it is too much or too little at the moment.⁵⁴

St. Benedict's ascetic ideas are generally marked by moderation and good sense more than by idealism. For example, in chapter 40: "monks really should not drink wine at all but since they cannot be convinced of this, let them at least do so moderately" (Chapter 40.6). St. Benedict felt an aspect of frugality lay in the notion that if local circumstances make it hard or impossible to obtain wine, or the "right type of styled clothing" for instance, a monk "should not complain about the color or coarseness of these articles but use what is in the vicinity at reasonable cost" (Chapter 55.7).

Contained in this view are: (a) thinking and acting locally which eliminates global problems of transport of goods with unrenewable resource fuelled vehicles which keep people away from their families because they are on the road, etc; (b) living on what is easily available in the locality thereby strengthening ties throughout the local

⁵³ Based on a telephone inquiry to Oxfam Headquarters, Oxford, England, 29 March 2000.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Kardong, p. 171.

community; (c) tempering greed and avarice; (d) cultivation of the skill of acceptance which leads to serenity.

It may seem like elementary prudence to live on what is easily available in the locality, but how many of us struggle with that? There is another side to it as well. In our modern time, with centuries of trade from across the globe, local production of basic goods has broken down for most towns. I am fortunate in that where I live in England local investiture is very high, largely based on a community which shares an ethos of a simple lifestyle, close to the bone. One can buy shoes (vegan or leather), clothing (knitted, sewn, dyed), vegetables (GMO-free), meat (organic, free-range), building materials (natural paints, insulation, carpeting), cosmetics, ceramics (bowls, plates, vases, etc), wooden implements hand turned on a lathe (lamp bases, bowls, candlesticks), jams, mayonnaise, chutneys...and the list goes on.

Yet, there are also many things unavailable to us because they aren't made in Devon, England, and never have been or because times have changed and they are no longer present here. For example, anything made of steel (our scythe comes from the USA), apples (which used to be grown here in vast areas -- Devon was once orchard country, particularly used for their specialist ciders), and many large wooden items (the moor was largely a vast temperate forest of English Oak and Ash 4,000 years ago which was cut down and then grazed by sheep which prevented regrowth) are not available. Now, wood is in short supply and the remaining woodlands are precious and not meant to be cut (except selective removal of sycamores planted by the Romans, laurel planted by the Victorians, and other species brought in from abroad which have dominated the native English species to their detriment).

The notion of frugality extends to many areas of daily existence. People of differing backgrounds and cultures have differing views on what constitutes poverty or wealth. For example, one of the most telling signs of poverty in ancient times was the necessity of doing manual work. The upper classes did not sully their hands with this

kind of labor, which was thought proper only for slaves. Nevertheless, St. Benedict tells his monks to do their own harvesting when necessary and not to grumble about it (Chapter 48.7-9). Sometimes they hired others to do their farming, but at least they are not to think they are above such things.⁵⁵ Frugality for St. Benedict emphasizes “a steady diet” with no hint of anti-materialism or a view that somehow matter is evil and something to be despised; nor does he reveal a tendency for hedonism.

In sum, besides the three virtues there is a core tenet beautifully stated by the Benedictine writer, Terrence G. Kardong O.S.B.:

In our study of Benedict's attitude toward the physical world, we have not been able to point to any explicit philosophy that might qualify today as adequately ecological. By and large, his great concern is with the spiritual health of a human community. Still, he knows full well that the spiritual can only rest on the material. His remarks about the latter are most casual asides, but they are more impressive for all that, since indirect glimpses sometimes tell us a good deal about someone's deep convictions.⁵⁶

One gets the impression that the care of people requires close attention to the things that people need and use. Yet it should be emphasized that St. Benedict's basic purpose is to promote and sustain the spiritual life of the community. Since, according to St. Benedict, this means living in the body of Christ as a way of living and behaving, I will focus more specifically on this point in Chapters IV, V and VI.

English and American Roman Catholic Monasticism

From the time of St. Benedict in the fifth century there have been monastic communities in England. Until the mid-twelfth century the burden of spiritual leadership was upon Benedictine monks due to society's interest in them.⁵⁷ When the focus shifted to other orders it freed up the Benedictines from their idealized position to identify more closely with secular life, a position that is still true today in the

⁵⁵ Ibid., Kardong, p. 171.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Kardong, p. 172.

⁵⁷ See Barbara Harvey's "Introduction" in *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540, The Monastic Experience*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993.

monasteries I have researched. However, from 1066 onwards, when the Abbey of Westminster became "the coronation church of the kings of England", there was a great tension for the monks between living out their ordinary lives in the way that they saw it according to St. Benedict and the way that the kings and their ministers, clerks, etc. felt they should live their lives.⁵⁸

Within this abbreviated history lies the first and second basic differences between English Benedictine congregations and American ones: the length of the historical record, and the tension between church and state investiture.

In the United States the first Benedictine Order was established permanently by Dom Boniface Wimmer of Bavaria in 1846 in Beatty, Pennsylvania.⁵⁹ Since that time the focus has not been on whether the government and a particular church would be connected, but rather how separate they could remain. The separation between church and state has always been a hallmark of American governance.

England, on the other hand, has had a long history of interconnection between church and state. The head of the Church of England is the Queen; the Queen opens Parliament. All Ministers of England swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen (a problem for numerous Republican Northern Irish members of Westminster parliament). Ever complex, England's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church is even more so than with any other religious group. Since the adversarial relationship of Henry VIII with the Church, and his consequent separation of himself -- as well as England -- from Rome followed closely by the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540, the Roman Catholic Church has largely been in the shadow of the Church of England. Within the Roman

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Harvey, p. 3.

⁵⁹ G. Cyprian Alston, Transcribed by Susan Birkenseer, *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume II*, Robert Appleton Company, 1907, Online Edition by Kevin Knight in 1999, p. 19. Prior to the mid-1800s there were probably settlements among the Eskimo by way of Iceland but they must have disappeared at an early date. In 1493 a monk from Montserrat travelling with Columbus arrived in America but he didn't create a permanent congregation nor did other monks from England arriving in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

Catholic minority there are also “two churches” -- that of the upper class English elite who send their sons to Ampleforth and Douai, and that of the often maligned Irish and immigrant poor. As of 2000 it is still illegal in the United Kingdom for a Prime Minister to be a Catholic or for any member of the Royal Family to marry a Catholic. Prime Minister Tony Blair's wife Cherie is Roman Catholic and he attends mass with her, but it would be a delicate constitutional issue if he were to convert. When the Queen visited Cardinal Basil Hume at the RC Cathedral in Westminster before he died in 1999, it was considered a significant event laced with political meaning.

The Roman Catholic Church (RC) in America has evolved from a very different historical context. The first European settlers were of numerous religious backgrounds, but all had in common a striving to survive, to do so with piety, and to create a new life and way of being in this new land called America regardless of religious affiliation. Many were escaping religious persecution in England, the kind of persecution that if you were a Protestant and a Catholic had come to power you could be brutally tortured and killed for religious affiliation alone, and vice versa. Yet, unlike in England (and beyond) where with each overtaking of power either the Catholics or the Protestants were throned or dethroned, in America no religion was in power in the first place. Neither religious affiliation nor hereditary right were foci of American governmental power. Rather an individual's character and ability to lead, fight the oppressor, and champion the underdog were (and continue to be).

Having been an active member of the RC Church in both the United States and England, and a frequent visitor to Church of England, Quaker, and pagan celebrations, I can say from personal experience that in the United States worshippers express themselves with a larger sense of freedom and casual approval on the whole. There is an openness in most of America to creative architecture, music and liturgical celebration, and people are not aware of having been persecuted in the past or the likelihood that they might be in the future for their beliefs and practices. By contrast, in England the

historical legacy of defeat, persecution, and power is omnipresent, particularly in the non-elite Roman Catholic communities.

Yet, in the United States there is not evidence of prior grandeur as there is in England. Most of the great cathedrals -- Durham, Winchester, Westminster -- were built by former Roman Catholics but are now named under the auspices of the Church of England. To be a RC in England is somewhat akin to being a pagan in fourth century Rome; all around England there are sites where underneath or within the current structures are a different history. Linguistically most Church of England Anglicans consider themselves to be "catholic" and use the term to refer to themselves, something unknown in America. To be a Catholic in England is to be a "Roman" and Catholic. One qualifies the reference of Benedictine as "RC Benedictine" or "C of E Catholic Benedictine" because it is not implicitly known.

There is ostensibly in America an equal place for all beliefs, so that struggling to be on top is not meant to be an issue. Jews are not better than Muslims, or Catholics more powerful than Protestants. In England, however, because one religion has been allowed to be on top, all others live with the knowledge -- conscious or not -- that their religion is less, or even somehow defeated (as in the case of the RC). Though this research is not about the unique qualities of RC Benedictine congregations in America versus those in England, I do present the point that there are deep cultural differences between America and England, differences which surely have wide ramifications for our understanding of Benedictine congregations in England and America.

As a final point, a further difference between English and American realities is that in England the desire for ecumenism is strong. Perhaps this desire for ecumenism is stronger than in America due to a need to get along, draw together, if within the political power structure we are to advance as a society. But maybe it is also a response in line with continental Europe which has largely moved ideologically away from organized religion and its dogmatism and regulations to a more spiritualist base. As

well, the schismatic events of the world wars brought together people in Europe in a way that cannot be ignored anymore. As the European Union gains momentum and if the common currency (the Euro) takes universal hold across Europe, we will see more ecumenism not less. This is a reality that the United States does not understand, with its size and uniform American culture (albeit a melting pot of ethnicities).

With these ideas in mind, I turn now to the origins of one Benedictine congregation in England: Turvey Abbey.

Turvey Abbey in its Origins

Turvey Abbey comes from the Benedictine line. From the time of Benedict in the 6th century, this line passes along two branches in the tree -- to the Olivetan branch created in the 14th century under Bernard Tolomei, and to the *Vita et Pax* foundation created in the 20th century by Dom Constantine Bosschaerts. However, it is important to distinguish between the community and the place. The community was begun by the founder Dom Constantine in Belgium and then a daughter house was created in Cockfosters, England, with members of the Belgian community in it. In 1981 the community at Cockfosters decided to move to Turvey Abbey, hence becoming the Turvey Benedictines.

To flesh out this overview a bit more, Turvey Abbey is a double monastery comprising the Priory of Our Lady of Peace (nuns) and the Monastery of Christ Our Saviour (monks). There are very few double monasteries in existence; but the number is growing. The community settled in Turvey in 1980-1981, having moved from Cockfosters in North London. Some of the nuns currently living at Turvey are from the Priory of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Cockfosters, and some entered the community directly at Turvey Abbey.

The community at Cockfosters originated in 1936, founded by Dom Constantine M. Bosschaerts, OSB (1889-1950), of Antwerp, Belgium. Cockfosters was a new foundation created in a modern architectural style by Dom Constantine and authorized by

Cardinal Arthur Hinsley of England. Cockfosters was the first congregation in England in the *Vita et Pax* Foundation of the Congregation of Monte Oliveto.⁶⁰

Dom Constantine, the founder, developed a vision that is now known as the *Vita et Pax* Foundation. This vision centered on ecumenism, renewal of the spirit of Christianity, and the reunion of Eastern Orthodox with Roman Catholic. His vision was generated amongst similar thinkers of the day who witnessed World War I, became exposed to people of other faiths and cultures, and wanted to respond in the way they felt God was calling them. The community at Turvey Abbey continues this vision today. The idea of ecumenism and work for reunion divided Cardinals and Bishops, and took years to establish after many setbacks from within the Vatican. *Vita et Pax* began with Dom Constantine and Dom Lambert Beaudrin founding two men's monastic foundations in February 1926, one at Amay-sur-Meuse⁶¹ (now Chevetogne), and one at Schotenhof, near Antwerp. Benedictine nuns in England (from Eccleshall, Staffordshire) whom Dom Constantine had been preparing in the work of reunion were brought over to Schotenhof to begin the first women's Priory (Regina Pacis) for the Nuns of Reunion (and later some of these nuns went back to England to begin the Cockfosters community of nuns).

It is also important to note that from 1926-1931 significant restrictions were placed on the work for reunion by Rome and the Oriental Congregation of Monsignor d'Herbigny (a French Jesuit) who wanted individual conversions to the RC Church rather than dialogue. To this end the nuns and oblates of Schotenhof were disallowed by Rome from pursuing work for Reunion. Dom Constantine went to Rome and tried to gain ecclesiastical approval but was rejected. Eventually the monastery of monks at Schotenhof was also not allowed to continue and Dom Lambert, the head of the Amay congregation, was removed from his work and sent to France for twenty years.

Due to his belief in reunion and the connection of monks and nuns, Dom

⁶⁰ Note: Cockfosters is still an ongoing community, but only of monks and priests; all the nuns that were there have moved on to Turvey Abbey.

⁶¹ Amay was founded by Dom Lambert Beaudrin, not Dom Constantine.

Constantine decided to continue his work, but not in the position he currently had as a Benedictine of Affligem. He transferred the monastic community to the Benedictines of Monte Oliveto (Italy) in 1926 which allowed greater freedom for work for reunion. This decision to join the Olivetan congregation came in part because the nuns of Eccleshall had been affiliated with Monte Oliveto previously in France, before going to England and then to Schotenhof, Belgium.

The Congregation of Monte Oliveto originated in the 14th century under its founder, Bernard Tolomei. Tolomei was a lawyer who became a hermit, and with other hermits, adopted the Rule of Benedict in 1319. The Mount of Olives, where they lived, provided the name: Our Lady of Mount Oliveto. In 1344, Mount Oliveto was given permission by Pope Clement VI (a Benedictine) to found daughter houses.

Turvey Abbey monks belong to the Congregation of Monte Oliveto and the nuns of Turvey Abbey are affiliated to the same. The English Congregation of Benedictines (EBC) comprises "black" Benedictines like Douai, Downside, Ampleforth (monks) and Stanbrook (nuns).⁶² According to Dom Joseph Grammont, OSB:

Canon Law [in the RC Church] distinguishes religious institutions as ancient orders with solemn vows, and the newer religious Congregations with simple vows. In the Order of the Benedictines monasteries are grouped according to nationality, observance, and origin. These groups are also called Congregations. All these monastic Congregations together constitute the Benedictine Order.⁶³

⁶² "Black" Benedictines are known by their black habits. At Turvey their habits are white.

⁶³ From Dom Joseph Grammont, OSB, of the Abbey of Mesnil St Loup as quoted in *Abbot Constantine M. Bosschaerts, OSB*, edited from the archives at the request of The Archabbey Monte Oliveto Maggiore by Irmgard Suzanne de Vries Oblate OSB 'Vita et Pax' Congr. S.M. Montis Oliveti, Antwerp, 1988, Translated from the Dutch by the nuns of the 'Vita et Pax' Foundation, The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey.

Nuns and Monks: A Word About Differences and Similarities

*Basically nuns live the life better than monks.*⁶⁴

I heard this statement years ago and have kept it at the back of my mind. Since it came from the mouth of a monk rather than a nun, it seems to garner more respect. I have found that indeed the nuns are more focused on living the life as is, rather than writing about it per se, or reflecting back on it. Most of the books are written by monks about their life. When I asked nuns why they don't write about their own lives the response has been, "Because I don't have the time!" It is not that nuns are generally less intelligent or literate, but that they do not tend to take the time to write. Whereas in the monk's communities there is usually one or other monk whose work it is to write.

Turvey Abbey grants one a unique opportunity to reflect on differences and similarities between monks and nuns by virtue of the proximity of both communities. Though I have not spent the kind of time in the monks' monastery that I have in the nuns' priory, there are a few generalities which can be maintained: monks who are priests lead the Eucharistic celebration; the nuns choose to dress more strictly in habit whereas the monks allow street clothes under certain circumstances; the nuns create and follow a structure for their day that is centered on the cloister whereas the monks pursue work and activities that often takes them into the secular purview; food is more formally prepared and eaten with the nuns than the monks; and the nuns always seem busier with less time to devote to activities like jogging, birdwatching, or writing. Also, the nuns focus on guests in a way that is structured and formal, whereas the monks accept them but don't make a fuss of them. Monks are much more likely to take in the homeless and the mentally ill, perhaps due to the higher ratio of men who are homeless coming to their doors, but perhaps because they are more open to that form of spontaneous hospitality.

As regards similarities, monks and nuns are indisputably seeking God. Each in

⁶⁴ From Brother Romuald of the New Camaldolese Monastery, New Boston, New Hampshire, in an interview taken in 1994.

their own way, under one common Rule (that of Benedict in this research). Whether male or female, each monk or nun has differing gifts which make up the whole in a monastic community. The main similarity is there are as many different backgrounds represented in communities of monks as there are in communities of nuns as far as I can discern.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY: WHAT AM I DOING?

All research needs a design, but the process doesn't need to follow a linear flowchart.¹

There are four essential components in the research design for this dissertation:

- 1) starting the research process and negotiating access
- 2) principles of selection
- 3) recording and analyzing data
 - i) data from interviews
 - ii) data from questionnaire
 - iii) data from ecological survey
- 4) reporting and evaluating field-based research.

Each of these components has evolved from the initial research design phase, to the actual research process, to the completion of the writing. Research design has meant careful planning but also a realization that messiness is an essential component of what I am doing – an understanding that no matter how careful the planning as the research evolves I will come across unexpected delays but also “Samaritans.”

Starting the Research Process and Negotiating Access

Clarifying the nature of my research involved asking several questions: What is the research problem? and What do I want the research to achieve? First, the research problem relates to the essential core question: How is the way of life of nuns a sustainable one? That, in turn, is to ask how can I get at the way of life of nuns? The

¹ This quote, as well as several ideas which follow in this section, is taken from lectures given by members of CEDAR (Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research) during a conference on “Doing Fieldwork” held at the University of Warwick, England, December 12 and 13, 1996.

method I use to pursue that question is *case study*. I have decided on a single-case design rather than a multiple-case design so that I focus on one group of nuns with whom I can do that case study research. Second, I want the research to be a good case study, one that is accurate, reliable, and worthy of a PhD.

These two main questions are followed by second-level questions, namely: What are the data? Where are the data to be found? How are the data going to be collected? Why are these methods being used? In this study, the data I encounter is mostly word data, but also some numerical. I find the data in *The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey*, both in conversations and in what those conversations lead me towards (i.e., books to be read, videos to be seen, people to connect with, etc.). Further data come from other monasteries, libraries, an ecological assessment, and the responses to the questionnaires I have sent out. In Chapter IV I lay out the findings of the research.

Data must be, however, accessible and collectible. Gaining access to data, or if you will, to the nuns themselves and their lives has involved a considerable amount of time, discretion, and patience. If I consider myself for the moment a nun who is “being researched”, formal interviews might be perceived to be invasive and inhibit getting at real data particularly for people whose lives are by definition private and not typically open to outside scrutiny (more on this later). I have needed to absorb data or information in ways that aren’t exclusively along the lines of traditional formal interviews. I have heard one researcher state that negotiating access is a continual process of renegotiation.

Furthermore, the issue of ethics permeates any research design.² My ethical

² These questions will assist me throughout my research project as regards the ethics of my social research: What should individuals be told about the conduct of social research? Is secret research justifiable? Is secret research desirable? What data can be collected openly? How can data be disseminated? What protection can be given to those individuals who participate in social research? (From R.G. Burgess, Ed., *Ethics of Educational Research*, Lewes, Falmer Press, 1989.) In truth, there are no exact standards for how these questions are played out in social research.

boundaries and the ethical boundaries of the nuns have been constantly, implicitly, renegotiated. This did not occur formally, except in the first instance when Mother Prioress and I signed an informed consent letter for my doing this research and what that research might contain. I sought and was given approval by the University of New Hampshire Institutional Review Board to perform this research on human research subjects. (See Appendix) There are a set of guidelines for research protocol that must be adhered to and which I have followed throughout this research.

As the researcher it has been incumbent upon me to strike a balance along the continuum of being open and up front about what I want and what I am aiming for, and some form of discretion or withholding in order to get at appropriate forms of knowledge and understanding. The dance is between what I am willing to reveal and what they are willing to reveal. Every researcher, no matter how non-invasive he or she intends to be, does affect the environment; the researcher is part of the observed. According to R.G. Burgess:

Gaining access to a research site is not a one-off event; it is instead a social process that occurs throughout a research project. Indeed, the access that a researcher obtains influences not only the physical accessibility but also the development of the design, collection, analysis, and dissemination phases of the investigation. Access is also based upon the relationship between the researcher and the researched.... In particular, the researcher should consider: (1) research sponsors [or PhD committees] and the extent to which they influence the research project....(2) gatekeepers who are located at different points in the structure of an organization and the implications this has for data collection; and (3) roles that researchers have in the field and the extent to which these roles advance or impede their study.¹

In this research, perhaps more than most, it is significant to know in what manner I gain access to the relevant data sources. Nuns are a unique group of individuals who are both within our society and in some way outside of it. This uniqueness about them ought to be considered by anyone who wants to research them. Sarah M. Taylor, a PhD student at the University of California Santa Barbara who is writing her

¹ Burgess, R.G., *Research Methods*, Walton-On-Thames, Nelson, 1993, p. 52.

dissertation on a study of the community of sisters at Genesis Farm,⁴ has this to say when I asked her about gaining access and what the sisters agreed to:

I simply wrote them a letter, letting them know that I study 'Religion and the Environment' at UCSB and that I would like to learn more about their community. I also sent them a copy of my reading list I did for my comprehensive exam on Religion and the Environment. They said I could come and do their Earth Literacy program over the summer and that I could work in their children's summer program. So I did. My first summer there was sort of relaxed, just trying to understand things better. By the end of the summer, I knew that I wanted to do my dissertation on the Farm, so I asked them if it was okay and also wrote them a letter asking them if it was all right and they said fine.⁵

This approach may seem soft insofar as formal scientific ways of gaining access to research subjects is traditionally thought of, but is it "soft"? The process Ms. Taylor used was culturally-sensitive, and scientifically and intuitively based in a logical formulation of the best way to access the information she needed. In addition, she did not superimpose a proscribed process for gaining access to her subjects. Taylor continues:

In terms of approaching them [the sisters at Genesis Farm], it wasn't so hard because they knew my academic interests from the beginning. Besides I think they also know that my intentions are pure. They know that I would never do anything knowingly that I thought would ever harm them in any way....As for the formal interview, I've found them terribly unuseful and would not recommend them. Any relationship you have developed with these women will immediately be stiffened and falsified by the formal interview process. I think Karen Brown (Mama Lola) and many other women have discovered this in the course of doing feminist ethnographic work....My advice, for what it's worth? Just approach them with honesty and humility and feel good about the work you are doing....Before questioning them about what they believe and their motivations, question your own intentions and your own commitment to making a positive contribution. Then, in my own experience, when you ask them about it you can feel honestly good and not apologetic for what you're asking.⁶

It may be significant that Sarah is a woman, that she is researching women's

⁴ Genesis Farm is a community of religious women started by Miriam Therese MacGillis, OP, which is based around her thinking on eco-literacy as well as the thinking of Thomas Berry.

⁵ From an e-mail correspondence from Sarah M. Taylor, December 8, 1996.

⁶ Ibid, Taylor correspondence.

lives, and the women she has chosen are religious sisters. I, too, found in my field work that formal interviews and/or interviews that are based on acting the role of researcher do not work and are a waste of time. The nuns I have come in contact with at the monasteries -- my subjects if you will -- rely on what I call "contemplative intuition"⁷ to judge whether or not they will talk to me. I have found this phenomenon in convents (non-monastic) I spent time in before Turvey Abbey, but in the enclosed environment of Turvey Abbey it proves to be more the case. By this I mean they open up conversation (or ignore or close down the opportunity) while starting a brush fire to burn rubbish, mucking out the goat shed, passing a newspaper article during a silent lunch, or writing me a letter. They think about things for some time and then act on those thoughts when an opportunity arises. When they are put into a room in a chair opposite a researcher it immediately creates an artificial situation for most monastic nuns except those who are in an externally focused job position (e.g. Portress -- one who answers the door and takes messages) to relate to guests on behalf of the community. The life is primarily a silent one, spent actively engaged doing something other than talking. A culture of people spending time sitting and talking is in the main foreign and uncomfortable for monastic nuns, especially after they've lived the monastic life for some time.

Access is negotiated by honesty, presence and intuition on the part of the researcher. As an example of how research can break down, on one visit I made one of the nuns was quite agitated when I met up with her. She told me that a camera crew had been there. The community had given permission to a film company (at the film company's request) to come and do some research on them, including filming. The film crew had arrived, created a lot of commotion over the course of a day by going wherever they wanted whenever they wanted, and then left. When the film eventually was released

⁷ "Contemplative intuition" is an active process whereby the whole human self -- mind, body, heart, soul -- ponders in silence and attunes oneself to receive or give information to questions or thoughts.

it gave one particular representation: The film crew had followed the nun who works with the goats, and at one point it was revealed that the male kids who were born eventually ended up in the freezer. It was not revealed that this is a common farming practice; perhaps the film crew was not aware of this. The interviewer who had garnered that male kids were killed, interpreted it on television as an example that the nuns hated men and, like the male goats, wanted to do away with them. When the nun was telling me this story, she mentioned immediately that the main interviewer was a woman film crew member who came to their community in a tight, short black skirt with high heels. I remember this as a reminder of what to avoid as a researcher -- insensitivity and disrespect for the subject (e.g. short skirts in a monastery) and a lack of integrity revealed in looking for information to fit a preconceived view.⁸

Principles of Selection

What problems do field researchers face in attempting to focus their work and what principles of selection are open to them? The rationale for deciding sample size -- in this case the number of monasteries to research as cases -- relates specifically to plausibility, credibility, relevance, and validity. According to Arber:

The way in which one designs a sample will depend on one's research goals. Some researchers select samples in order to provide the maximum theoretical understanding, while others are primarily concerned to obtain a representative sample so that they can make inferences about the whole population. In the latter case, one studies a sample in order to learn something about the larger grouping of which it is a part; this larger grouping is called the population or universe of inquiry...Decisions about the sample design for a research study must always take into account the trade off between using a larger sample or studying a smaller one more intensively.⁹

To get at how nuns live in a holistic sense the choice I made was to study a single

⁸ For a more complete discussion of interviewing techniques and strategies, see pages 55 and following of Chapter 3 in David Fetterman's *Ethnography Step by Step, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 17*, Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1989.

⁹ I heard these quotes and took notes on them during the CEDAR course I took at Warwick University in December of 1996. Unfortunately, I do not have complete references for some of the authors including Arber, 1993, pp. 68-69.

community more intensely. But, how do I go about that? In the current climate of research trends in the U.S. the rationale for deciding the sample size, and the methodology for research, increasingly involves mixing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses as an approach to social research. It is these strengths and weaknesses that Bryman highlights as part of the rationale for integrating research methods. Hammersley agrees that to resort to a simple dichotomy of methods obscures the complexity of the problems and may limit the research. He suggests that a combination of methods of data collection and analysis should be used according to the needs of the research. If this combining of qualitative and quantitative methods is part of a planned strategy it can add depth and breadth to an analysis.¹⁰

Debra Costley suggests the following summary model of the positive aspects of using a combination of the two methods:

- (1) The logic of triangulation -- As research can never be free of methodological bias, it seems logical to try to verify data from more than one source, or by using different methods, investigators or theories.
- (2) Qualitative research facilitates quantitative research -- by acting as a source of hypotheses that the quantitative work goes on to test, providing background information on context and subjects, fleshing out variable categories of quantitative work, and/or aiding the piloting stage of quantitative instruments. Further, quantitative data can be seen as less meaningful if it's not located in qualitative context, gathered through interaction.
- (3) Quantitative research facilitates qualitative research -- Quantitative research may provide quantifiable background data in which to contextualize small scale intensive studies, may be used to test hypotheses thrown up by qualitative work, and/or may be used to provide the basis of sampling of cases for qualitative work.

¹⁰ Costley, Debra, from her working PhD, attributed to CEDAR and its Research Methods Course, October 1996.

(4) Qualitative and quantitative research are combined to give a general picture -- It may be that not all issues are amenable to a single method of investigation, requiring two sets of data to provide the full picture. This may result in two separate but linked studies. Alternatively, the two methods may be integrated in one study, with linkage in the field work phase, or the analysis or writing up stage. They may be conducted simultaneously or consecutively.

(5) Structure and process -- Quantitative research is useful in isolating the structural features of social life, while qualitative studies can investigate the process aspects. These strengths can be combined in a single study.

(6) The problem of generality -- The addition of some quantitative evidence may help to make the findings from a qualitative study more generalizable (in a statistical sense).

(7) The relationship between macro and micro levels -- Quantitative research can be used to explore the large scale structural features of social life, while qualitative research tends to concentrate on small scale behavioral aspects. When research seeks to explore both levels, integrating both types of research may be necessary. This is supported by Geertz's view of the importance of the local view and the global perspective to the understanding of human behavior.¹¹

The difficulties, according to Costley, with any type of methodological combination are: at some point data is likely to be collected which is not used or interesting lines of inquiry may be pursued which are outside the research plan; that it is difficult for any researcher to be an expert in all types of data collection and analysis, which may lead to a bias to one particular approach; and that this bias is likely to be compounded by the researcher's allegiance to a particular paradigm or view of the world. "There is a tendency for a mixed method approach to generate unmanageable amounts of data, which, given the restriction on most projects of time scales and

¹¹ Ibid., Costley, working PhD.

funding, makes it a difficult strategy to justify."¹²

Research has moved on to the point that it is not necessary any longer to divide one's methodology strictly into either qualitative or quantitative categories. From the point of view of experience my research draws from both sides of the divide into what I hope is a cogent and complete case study. As such ethnomethodology = "a method of sociological analysis that examines how individuals in everyday situations construct and maintain the social order of those situations"¹³ lies at the core of my research. Case study research then is the central form of ethnomethodology I use.

Recording and Analyzing Data

The case study is my chosen method in conducting the research of this dissertation. According to Robert K. Yin,

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (p. 13)....Case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (p. 1)....The case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (p. 3).¹⁴

In contrast with teaching case studies, research case studies demand rigorous and fair presentation of empirical data. Yet, there are other methods to present empirical data – experiments, surveys, histories, archival analyses. So why did I choose case study? Each of these methods is different in the way data are collected and analyzed and each follows its own form of logic. I have chosen the case study as the primary research method using participant observation and interviews, and a survey and a questionnaire as secondary and supportive methods for the overall case study – some quantitative data

¹² Ibid., Costley, working PhD.

¹³ Lesley Brown, Editor, *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles, Volume 1 A-M*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 857.

¹⁴ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research , Design and Methods, Second Edition, Applied Social Research Methods Series Volume 5*, London, Sage Publications, 1994, pp. 1, 3, and 13.

to support a mostly qualitative study.

But to go back and explain the process of selection, there are three conditions to be considered in assessing which methodology to pursue: (a) the type of research questions posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events.¹⁵ As regards (a), in this research the main research question is: How is the way of life of nuns in a monastic community a sustainable one? Such a question deals with linkages needed to be traced over time rather than incidents. As regards (b), I don't want to manipulate the behaviors of the nuns but I do want to directly observe them and to interview them. And, as regards (c), the nuns are alive to report on their lives so I don't need to primarily rely on documents and artifacts for data. Though history or experiment (or other) strategies may overlap with a case study strategy in (a), (b) or (c), case study research is nevertheless the best strategy for my particular research given the unique focus derived from answering (a), (b) and (c).

I have chosen to use more than one strategy within the case study, however, to give a full picture by exploring the large scale features of social life (through the questionnaire which tests replicability of values) while concentrating on the small scale behavioral and attitudinal aspects (interviews and participant observation). The environmental assessment survey and the questionnaire sent to 26 other women's monastic communities are used within the case study to answer questions including: What is the composition of the natural environment where the nuns live? In what ways have the nuns lived sustainably? What are some environmental indicators present at Turvey Abbey? How many of these environmental indicators indicate a high (or low) level of sustainability? What replicability of values and beliefs is there between women's monastic communities?

It is significant to note that I am looking for a replicability *of values* in my

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Yin, p. 4 and following.

questionnaire of other monastics within the case study which, as a whole, is looking for a generalizable *theory*. I, and other case study researchers, are not looking to make generalizations about monasteries (populations or universes) themselves but rather about theories. According to Yin,

The case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample,' and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).¹⁶

Pursuing a "generalizing analysis" in this case study research has involved researching The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey as a community, looking into the lived experience, the beliefs, practices and social structures, and determining what makes up the whole. It is important to state, as Yin does, that case study research should not be equated with qualitative research; case studies can be based on any mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence. Participant-observation or ethnographic method follow an ideological commitment to be followed whatever the circumstances, but case studies begin with a logic of design that may or may not include participant observation, etc. as a data collection technique.¹⁷

What kinds of sources for gaining evidence (e.g. data collection techniques) can be appropriate to a case study? Some possibilities are:

- documentary analysis looking for themes
- diaries
- participant/observation -- a continuum:

complete ----- participant ----- observer ----- complete
 participant as observer as participant observer

- interviewing -- structured, semi-structured, and/or unstructured
- postal notes -- people write responses to questions spoken to them
- establishing life histories of individuals

¹⁶ Ibid., Yin p. 10 and following for more on this topic.

¹⁷ Ibid., Yin, p. 12.

- experiments which deliberately separate a phenomenon from its context to focus on a few variables
- histories dealing with noncontemporary events
- surveys which limit the number of variables to be analyzed to fall within the number of respondents that can be surveyed

A crucial question emerges: How am I going to get at the research problem, significant aims, and key questions in this particular case study inquiry? In general, the case study inquiry is meant to

cope with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.¹⁸

The action plan I used for collecting the evidence was:

- ** I began with documentary analysis -- having asked the nuns to give me a list of books, videos, etc. which would help me to get to know their community better, I read through this massive archive looking for common themes which would be used as data;
- ** I pursued participant observation while visiting and living in Turvey Abbey in short, intensive spurts from August 1996 to December 1998. I have been mostly an observer as participant due to limited access (i.e., I am not "in formation" to be a nun, I do not live in the Abbey but most often have stayed in the guest accommodation when I go). I converse with the nuns informally, within the context of their time and desire, or else participate silently in the daily monastic routine as I have access. Usually I attend all prayer sessions, walk the grounds, eat all meals, study their library materials, and attend all events for the day as a basis for my participation and observation. Participation increases when a nun is serving me lunch, or settling me into my accommodation, or during a formal weekend when I am in attendance with ten or

¹⁸ Robert K. Yin, p. 13.

so guests and the attention is on “active hospitality”.¹⁹

* * I realized after being in the case study context that one useful data collection technique is what I now call “deep interviewing”²⁰ which involves the researcher embedding herself in the contextual environment of the study -- in this case, the monastic enclosure which includes the acreage around the buildings -- by having tea, taking a walk, mucking out a goat shed with the nuns and both allowing and leading a conversation to disclose significant information. This is in contrast with altering the context -- e.g. sitting on chairs arranged across from each other with a tape recorder on a table in between -- to suit the researcher. Yet, I did do real interviews, though I altered the formality to suit the context (the nuns).

* * I kept copious notes of my daily experiences and observations in a quasi-journal format. This is phenomenological writing involving interpretation as well as my description.

* * Creating and getting responses to a questionnaire sent to 26 other contemplative/monastic Roman Catholic women’s communities in England, leading to an understanding of their values, beliefs and practices of sustainable living as well as a demographic picture of these communities. I justify the pursuit of this data collection on the grounds that there is transferability of ideas. This is more apparent in Chapter VI, Interpretation and Synthesis.

* * Creating and completing an ecological assessment of the property at Turvey Abbey belonging to the women’s community. This ecological assessment included within it a

¹⁹ I am beginning to conceptualize a divergence in the act of hospitality; on the one hand it is receptive and passive, and on the other is giving and active. The former would be particularly feasible with persons who are paralyzed and need constant care, and the second with service workers. This is a working definition and concept.

²⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Marcus Banks, Oxford University, for pointing out the need to base interviewing techniques on the proclivities of the subject at hand. Whereas a managing director may feel most comfortable with an interview with tape recorder, business dress, and a timed formality, a nun will be inhibited, uncomfortable, and deferential in such a circumstance.

baseline survey done with Will Reed, a known professional in the field; a video that I made of the interior and exterior space (not to be distributed); and the contributions of Dr. Albert Fritsch and his group at Appalachia Science in the Public Interest (ASPI) who have created Environmental Resource Assessments (ERAs) done in religious communities.

** Discussions with nuns (including the Turvey Abbey nuns and other nuns I have as friends) and colleagues about wide-ranging issues pertaining to sustainable living, active versus contemplative life, the power of prayer to create abundance, and alignment with God as a central aspect of life. These discussions feed into Chapter VI, in particular to areas of synthesis.

All in all a great strength of the case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence. According to Yin,

The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues. However, the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of *converging lines of inquiry*, a process of triangulation.²¹

In case study research

all sources of evidence are reviewed and analyzed together, so that the case study's findings are based on the convergence of information from different sources, not quantitative or qualitative data alone....Any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode.²²

In a single-case study multiple sources of evidence converge to create a fact. Hence my use of a survey and questionnaire to support the primary data collection, interviews and participant observation. If this occurs, triangulation is successful.

Though I am not dealing only with qualitative data the point that Marlene Morrison of CEDAR makes is relevant for case study research: "qualitative researchers collect vast amounts of data. Key tasks include finding effective ways to code, sort, and

²¹ Ibid., Yin, p. 92.

²² Ibid., Yin, pp. 91-92.

organize the data collected.” She quotes Wolcott:

The critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can but to get rid of most of the data you accumulate. This requires constant winnowing. The trick is to discover essences and then reveal those essences in sufficient context, yet not to try to include everything that could possibly be described. Audiotapes, and now computer capabilities entreat us to do just the opposite...we have to be careful not to get buried in avalanches of our own making.²³

How can I find my “essences”? Yin, who doesn’t use the term “essences”, suggests that a case study investigator needs:

- (1) a general strategy for analyzing data -- whether such a strategy is based on theoretical propositions or a basic descriptive framework.
- (2) given a general strategy, specific analytical strategies can be used to lay the groundwork -- pattern-matching, explanation-building, time-series analysis, and program logic models.²⁴

It is important to emphasize that *none of these strategies can be applied mechanistically*. Case study researchers are meant “to ‘play with the data’ as a prelude to developing a systematic sense of what is worth analyzing and how it should be analyzed.”²⁵

Lofland provides this classification of social phenomenon which is useful in learning to “play with the data”:

1. acts -- action in a situation that is temporally brief
2. activities -- action in a setting of longer duration
3. meanings -- the production of participants that define and direct action
4. participation -- persons’ holistic involvement in a situation under study
5. relationships -- interrelationships among several persons simultaneously

²³ I do not have a direct source for Wolcott, as it was quoted to me by Marlene Morrison in her lecture.

²⁴ Ibid., Yin, p. 125.

²⁵ Ibid., Yin, p.125.

6. settings -- the entire setting under study conceived of as a unit of analysis.²⁶

There are however forms of qualitative research which are "conversations with a purpose" where codes (essences) emerge from what you're doing, rather than essences (codes) defining what you are collecting. The coding process is actually a cyclical process of building up a social reality. This can be seen as "triangulation" by most qualitative researchers.

Beginning with a description of the whole, what is its relationship to its constituent parts? Since social researchers are concerned with the complexities of social life, there is a dynamic moving about through a complex web of different kinds of data at work. However, to know that description leads to classification of descriptions, and then to connections between the classifications and descriptions and round and round again is to touch the concept that I am looking for -- focusing on how people create and construct their lives. From observation and description data ("first order data") we look at the links between that data ("second order concepts"). Then, we can advance a theory which is grounded in that data ("grounded theory").²⁷

At this point I incorporate what and how I did my interviews, questionnaire and ecological survey.

Data from Interviews²⁸

In August of 1997 I carried out a series of individual interviews with the nuns living at The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey. On Wednesday the 27th of August I interviewed Sr. Scholastica, Sr. Celeste, Sr. Vivian, and Sr. Rose; on Thursday the 28th of August I interviewed Sr. Perpetua, Sr. Marie, Mother Prioress, Sr. Carmen, and Sr. Agatha; and on Friday August the 29th I interviewed Sr. Angela and Sr. Mary Catherine. Sr. Consolata wasn't able to make any of the times over those three days

²⁶ Exact source unknown. Lofland, 1971, pp. 14-15.

²⁷ From a discussion I had with Christopher Pole of CEDAR, December 12, 1996.

²⁸ Please note that the names of the monks and nuns have been changed to pseudonyms.

although she was interested in giving an interview. We decided it would have to come at a later date, which in the end turned out to be the 25th of February, 1998.

The interviews came about in this way: I decided that they were needed as part of the data gathering; I performed preliminary interviews with Sr. Marie and Sr. Madeline on the 24 of March 1997 (which clarified the important questions to focus on); then I asked Mother Prioress about doing interviews of each nun in the community. Mother Prioress suggested I give a talk to the community during tea one day to inform them of what I'm doing and what I want, and then we'd take it from there. Mother Prioress did not choose for the community who would or wouldn't be interviewed. Rather, on Tuesday the 26th of August, 1997, I found myself at 4:30pm nervously facing all eighteen nuns. I was nervous because I had read enough about PhD research at that time to be aware of the importance of not giving too much away with one's subject. I had heard (and read) it was better to be vague with the details of what you are looking for than to reveal too much and "lead the witness" so they give you what you want rather than "real data" (i.e. what they are). I was afraid I would come down on the wrong end of the continuum and jeopardize the validity and authenticity of my research, or, somehow be untrustworthy to the nuns for not being transparent enough.

I had prepared an "Outline for Talk to Nuns" which included three components: (1) me -- PhD background, (2) the study I am conducting and what its components are, including: why I picked Turvey, the time commitment involved, the possible benefits for the community (and any potential risks), voluntary participation, and limits of confidentiality; (3) Interviews: open vs. structured, life history as a focus, and possible questions I would be asking. They listened as attentively as any audience I have had before or since, and at the end they smiled and remained largely quiet. A few questions were asked, but since we were sitting in a circle it happened spontaneously. Then it was 5pm and they headed off in different directions as tea -- and my talk -- officially ended.

The next day I discovered that Mother Prioress had taken the initiative to type up

a time table of when the individual interviews could be held, and pinned it to the community's bulletin board where a nun could sign her name next to an available time slot. I noticed the first slot was scheduled for 9:30am and Sr. Scholastica had signed up. It was just after breakfast; I grabbed my things and the next thing I knew I was interviewing Sr. Scholastica in my room. I had suggested meeting there, awkwardly, not knowing where else to go and not having thought of this issue ahead of time. Each time slot was an hour long -- 9:30-10:30am, 10:45-11:45am, 2:00-3pm, 3:30-4:30pm and 5-6pm -- woven around the key prayer times in the day. Some nuns used their work time to come and give an interview, but the prayer times were not interfered with. I met different nuns in different places -- Sr. Scholastica in my room, Sr. Celeste in the guest dining area in the monastery, Sr. Vivian in her office, Sr. Perpetua in the apple shed. I found it worked best to allow each nun to establish the place where the interview would take place, for ease and comfort.

The issue of the tape recorder and whether or not to tape came up in varying degrees with each interview. Only Sr. Vivian -- the Retreat Secretary who works regularly with externs -- was comfortable with the tape recorder. Every other nun had doubts, but most consented to its use except Sr. Consolata and Sr. Marie with whom I wrote as copiously as possible during our interview session. Both writing and recording the interviews, however, have their strengths and weaknesses. In the moment, a tape recorder allows for the researcher to get into the flow of the conversation without having to stop to write. After the fact, when transcribing or putting the notes into a finished product is occurring, notes are by far easier to complete; there is a limited amount of data, whereas with a tape you have the entire conversation to transcribe for as long as the interview took place. Yet, transcription allows for what the memory forgets over time as well as good, quotable material.

At this point I would like to describe what happened with the tape recordings and how I derived the final form of transcriptions they are now in. I made two significant

errors in my tape recording: First, I did not do enough interviewing with a tape recorder ahead of these interviews to realize that an interviewee's voice will fade in and out depending on the sensitivity of the subject matter. One's voice, for instance, gets softer and harder to understand when talking about something painful. Second, I did not check to see if my tape recorder could work at certain distances in a room, or filter out background noise if need be. Therefore, on significant parts of several interviews, the taped voices are indecipherable or indistinct. It took many more hours than the already lengthy hours of a normal transcription to meticulously try to trace the meaning of the sounds. That was sometimes to no avail. Those transcripts are marked "indistinct" when it simply could not be understood after multiple attempts.

At one point I hired a company which specializes in audio transcriptions to use their machines to alter the speed of the voice to try to decipher the meaning, but this led to other complications. For example, the women who did the transcriptions had little or no religious vocabulary so that where it said "ecumenical" they transcribed it as "economical." Such significant errors could not be let go, so it meant that there were three transcription drafts in all making up the final one -- the first was my attempt with a hand held tape recorder rewinding, playing, stopping and writing down; the second was the company's attempt; and the third was my going over line by line the company's transcription, while listening to the tape, and correcting it. The importance of a good tape recorder cannot be underestimated if you intend to capture your data in that way.

Yet, even if I could not always hear the exact words I was able to detect emotion and changes in tone which gave another kind of meaning. This meaning was not available from the notes unless I'd specifically made such a reference. Over time a researcher will not remember such subtlety. This helps to emphasize the need to do transcriptions of notes or tapes *right away* when the meaning is still fresh in the mind. Doing mine in the Spring of 1999 caused greater difficulties for me than if I had done so at an earlier stage.

With reference to the interview itself, before I went into the first one with Sr. Scholastica I had written down an outline of what I wanted to cover. The list included:

- Age/name/concerns of this interview process
- What is your personal history -- why monasticism? why Turvey Abbey?

background pre-Turvey Abbey

- What is/are the best parts of monastic life at Turvey Abbey?
- What are the hardest parts of monastic life at Turvey Abbey?
- What does sustainability or ecology mean to you?
- What does "conversion of life" mean to you?
- If you had a word of advice for how to live a good life to non-monastics,

what would it be?

- How much do you talk with/see your family?
- Do you have friends now that you had when you entered? If the relationship has changed how has it changed?
- What do you read -- newspapers? books? magazines? other?
- How/what do you know about the wider world?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of a mixed-culture

community?

- What do you miss, if anything, about the outside world?
- If you receive something from someone do you share it with the community?

- What do you own?
- What is the economics of Turvey Abbey -- how do you make ends meet here?
- What is/are your job(s)?
- Why do people come here do you think?
- Do you vote?

As regards the larger issue of sustainability I was aware that for some of the

nuns they can readily use the terminology and for others it draws blank faces. I always got around to discussing elements of sustainability, either directly using “sustainability” language or indirectly by seeking out attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that inherently relate to sustainable living.

As the interviewing process developed with the nuns over time I asked the questions less in the format as they are exactly worded above; in the beginning I started with asking the questions one after the other as if the interview were structured. This was not a strategy. It was a development. The interviews were meant to be and were in the end semi-structured – the above questions interlaced with conversation and other questions that arose. I did cover for each interview the above questions for replicability purposes, but each nun as well had a unique story to tell which led the interview into different arenas perhaps only pursued in that one interview. This gave a diverse picture of the individuals themselves who are nuns. They are not, as one might assume, a similar breed with like backgrounds, piety, and personality, but a colorful array of different persons.

Each unabridged transcript of my interviews with the nuns is approximately 25 to 35 pages in length. As a whole, the twelve transcripts give a sense of the uniqueness of each nun, detail the answers to the demographic questions (e.g. where were you born), and give a sense of the collective voice of the community. As regards the collective voice, some of the nuns are more articulate than others, some are “sparkly”, some are going through deep inner work, etc; these individuals together make up the general culture of the monastery.

In order to understand the Turvey Abbey community and hence how it is living, it is my view that the reader must understand the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of both the individuals themselves and the community as a whole. From this we are then able to ascertain how (or if) they live in a “good enough” sustainable way. The interviews, along with participant observation, are key primary data for my research. Again, the

questionnaire and the ecological survey are supportive methods to these two primary data collection resources.

Data from Questionnaire

As regards the questionnaire, in December of 1998 I sent a questionnaire that I created to 26 communities in England and Wales. These communities were chosen for the following reasons:

- all are to be found in *A Directory of Monastic Hospitality*²⁵
- all are Roman Catholic communities
- all are women-only communities (nuns)
- all are within England or Wales, none in Scotland or Northern Ireland

These communities included Benedictine (9), Poor Clares (5), Bernardine Cistercian (1), Benedictine Sisters of Christ Crucified (1), Visitandines (2), Sisters of Adoration (1), Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Grace and Compassion (1), Carmelite (4), Canonesses of St. Augustine (1), and Benedictine Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Montmartre (1). Though there are several more Roman Catholic communities of contemplative women throughout Britain (including Scotland and Northern Ireland), part of my selection process involved choosing only those communities which are in England and Wales for reasons of accessibility, funding limitations, and the available time I have for research into the cultural and historical roots of such communities. Whereas Wales is unique in its culture, its Catholic tradition has a fairly homogeneous cultural base with England in many respects. This cannot be said of Scotland and Northern Ireland where historical, political, and other considerations prove to make them very different cultural realities than that of England.

²⁵ *A Directory of Monastic Hospitality* was compiled and published by The Commission on the Economics of the Contemplative Life in association with Anthony Clarke Publishers, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire, England, 1994. This directory was given to me out of sheer good fortune by Dr. John Carroll before I left for England in 1995. I have made the assumption that those communities who are in the book are self-selected for hospitality and openness, both vital ingredients for research of this kind.

Of the 26 questionnaires that were sent out there were nineteen responses. Ten of these nineteen responses were questionnaires returned completed, eight responses were returned incomplete (with notes as to why they were not being completed), one was returned with a note that the community had now closed. Seven questionnaires were left outstanding. This is the final result after a reminder letter was sent January 11, 1999.

Of the returned and completed questionnaires, two out of the ten were only partially completed (i.e. sections were filled out and sections were left blank). Of the returned and incomplete questionnaires, seven of the eight sent accompanying notes as to why they would not be completing the questionnaire. These are:

- "We do not wish to take part in this questionnaire. No more requests please."
- "...information would take to [sic] long to look up = too detailed"
- "...we are unable to answer your questionnaire"
- "...we are unable to oblige in doing this"
- "...we feel we cannot help you. We are not an autonomous community...suggest you send your questionnaire to our Mother House, Tyburn Convent...where the answers would be much more useful to you."
- "...as our role in the Church as Carmelites is prayer and sacrifice for the Church and for the world we do not feel it will serve much purpose to fill in questionnaires about our personal lives."
- "We have not the remotest intention of completing the questionnaire, many of the sections of which we find impertinent and intrusive to a high degree."

I allowed for anonymity of response to the questionnaires. As such, the identity of which communities responded is mostly speculative except in the cases where an accompanying note was given. This would include Turvey Abbey, in which Mother Prioress wrote a note with her partially completed questionnaire.

The questionnaire itself was composed over a period of several months utilizing

information and questions gleaned from site visits, interviews, discussions with Dr. Tom Schram, and outside sources. These outside sources include a three-part questionnaire titled "Personal Values and Attitudes to Energy Efficiency" which was circulated at Linacre College, Oxford University, when I was a Visiting Student there from 1996-1997. The questionnaire was written by Nick Banks of the Environmental Change Unit at the University of Oxford; I used wholly his section on Personal Values in my own questionnaire. Several of the questions in the Demographics section of my questionnaire come from questions asked in *Living in Britain, Preliminary Results from the 1996 General Household Survey* and the *General Household Survey 1988*. The General Household Survey (GHS) "is a continuous survey based on a sample of the general population resident in private households in Great Britain."³⁰ It is also an inter-departmental survey carried out by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys in London, published in 1990. The data within the *Living in Britain* bulletin were collected over the period April 1996 to March 1997, and are based on a number of trends and changes measured by the GHS.

My intention in using questions from the Oxford questionnaire and the GHS was to compare or relate the answers given by nuns to those given by other populations, namely graduate students (in the case of the Personal Values section) and average households (in the case of Demographics). In the end I did not need to make this comparison; it was not needed for the thesis.

The questions in the section of my questionnaire called "Sustainability" are composed from questions and themes that emerged from my site visits at Turvey Abbey, and from my classroom and conference work in sustainability.³¹

³⁰ *Living in Britain, Preliminary Results from the 1996 General Household Survey, A Survey carried out by Social Survey Division, Office of National Statistics, London, The Stationery Office, 1997. The GHS has been carried out by Social Survey Division since 1971.*

³¹ The full text of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix. As well, a summary of the answers for the ten respondents can be found there.

Data from Ecological Survey

There are two parts to the ecological surveying I have done on the property held by Turvey Abbey. The first is a baseline survey utilized throughout Britain in landscape surveys which includes both an objective checklist and a subjective checklist. The second is based on Dr. Albert Fritsch's Environmental Resource Assessments (ERAs), and specifically the Linwood Spiritual Center's ERA, and incorporates those elements not found on the baseline survey but which I consider necessary to include in an ecological survey, either simple or extensive.

Baseline Survey³²

On the 13th of June 1998 – a blustery, rainy day – I went to Turvey Abbey to do a baseline landscape survey with Will Reed, a Landscape Architect based in Cheltenham, England. Will is a professional in the field of environmental assessment, a previous resident of a spiritual community, and also a friend. We decided on a baseline study rather than a full blown ecological audit both in proportion with my limited expertise in the arena and in proportion with its importance to the overall PhD project (the survey would be supportive, but not central, data as agreed by my committee).

Both before and after the survey I researched and collected an array of environmental detail for the Turvey Abbey property: an aerial photograph, numerous maps, a land survey last plotted for the site in 1931, details of the main species found on the site from Phase I surveys carried out in the late 1980s, information about soil types on the property, and a butterfly and bird checklist from the Bedfordshire Bird Recorder who happens to be Brother Francis of the Monastery of Christ Our Saviour, Turvey Abbey – the monks' side of Turvey Abbey's double monastery.³³ In addition, over the years I have frequently heard relevant information in conversation with the nuns and

³² Please see the Appendix for the data found on the nine viewing sites composing the baseline survey. Photos of six of the sites are also included in the Appendix.

³³ Please see the Appendix for maps and information about bird species, soil types, and the like which I have collected for Turvey Abbey.

have jotted that down.

Will and I walked the boundary to the property and selected nine viewing areas from which to assess and complete the objective and subjective checklists. These checklists are used by Will regularly in his work as a landscape assessor and designer. (Please see the Appendix for a copy of the blank form we used.) We had several blank forms with us, and at each viewing spot filled out a new form for that specific spot. I also had brought my camera and when it wasn't raining I took a photo from the spot where I was standing of the view as we saw it into the property (except for the peripheral view which my camera could not pick up). Each form took approximately twenty minutes to complete, with Will explaining terms to me and generally checking for accuracy.

At the top of the page the researcher lists the following information as regards the baseline survey: the surveyor's name(s), the weather, the direction of view, description summary, significant seasonal differences [in the view, from winter to summer, etc], the date, the time, and a viewpoint reference code. The form then was composed of two other sections, the objective checklist and the subjective checklist.

In the objective checklist are these three categories: landform, land use, and landscape elements. Within each of these categories are descriptions of, say, possible land forms which you are to select from to best describe the area you are looking at. For example, under landform: flat, rolling, undulating, steep, vertical, crags, upland, and so on. Next to each word (e.g., flat) is a set of three blank boxes. If the view you are seeing is conspicuously flat you would fill in all three boxes; if it was evidently flat, fill in two boxes; and if it was inconspicuously flat, fill in one box. And so on. You are to record what is present by marking the relevant words.

In the subjective checklist one is to record impressions. Again, there is a series of categories, namely eleven -- scale, enclosure, variety, harmony, movement, and so on -- but this time you are meant to mark only one appropriate box to indicate a

description of your impression. For example, next to *enclosure* are the words *tight*, *enclosed*, *open*, *exposed*. If the view you are looking at gives you the impression that it is mostly open, that is the choice you select. However, the choices are similar to each other (e.g. *open* and *exposed*) so you are meant to choose the one that best fits your impression of the view.

Environmental Resource Assessment³⁴

On April 27, 1997, I began a correspondence with Dr. Al Fritsch of Appalachia-Science in the Public Interest (ASPI) in Livingston, KY with reference to ecological audits, and particularly those done in religious communities. Dr. Fritsch was recommended to me by Dr. John Carroll with regard to his speciality in connecting ecology and science with religious communities. In his letter dated May 3, 1997 Dr. Fritsch states:

...our ecological audits [we now call] Environmental Resource Assessments -- ERAs. We have only used general checklists, not formal energy audit-type information sheets, because we have found that our assessments require on-site evaluation. Assessments are not for everyone and yet they require outside experienced persons for any religious or other community....We are always unsure whether the ERA candidate will do a satisfactory job -- whatever that means. We have found through experience that one can't predict what will be the outcome or the priority issues of an assessment through letter, personal interviews, phone calls, or preliminary maps and information. We may get a general idea, but need to perform the on-site visit to complete assessment. Generally the unexpected occurs. For that reason the following three characteristics are minimal for the successful assessor: environmental awareness, practical experience, and investigative skills.

Dr. Fritsch goes on to say that practical experience must involve some scientific, engineering or equivalent experience, but "preferably assessors will be those who grow some of their own food, build their own residences, and use solar energy in some fashion."³⁵ He asserts as well that it "takes a certain personality who is questioning,

³⁴ Please see the Appendix for the data I report as regards the environmental resource data for Turvey Abbey, as I see it.

³⁵ From a letter to the author from Dr. Al Fritsch, dated May 3, 1997.

inventive, and investigative in psychological make-up." In a letter dated May 12, 1997, after receiving a letter from me Dr. Fritsch wrote back to say "you are certainly highly qualified for doing assessment work and I hope you proceed to conduct one." I suggested having some training to do an ERA on Turvey Abbey, and Dr. Fritsch suggested:

You press the point of training. Perhaps this could be done at a distance even though a personal visit would be very helpful for all parties. My suggestion. Do a videotape of the entire monastery grounds and then make a tentative environmental assessment. Send the tape and assessment to us for comment. At least we could direct you on what further to look for or okay what you have to say. Include areas of excessive noise, indoor lighting and ideal solar locations...or at least estimate.

Dr. Fritsch states that their ERAs "are narratives that set down principles, observations, suggested actions, discussion, and ten-year plans. We don't use checklists before or during an assessment. In the final report we do at times include a checklist for the assessed place -- a listing of activities and practices for people to update their own assessments." He was at the time writing a book to encapsulate the ideas, information, and stories of assessments ASPI has been working on over the years. Dr. Fritsch suggested they are including inventories for twelve subject areas -- land use, gardens and food, forests, water, wildlife, physical space and facilities, energy, conservation and alternatives, waste management, indoor environment, transportation and community relations.

In September of 1997 I decided to travel back to the United States to visit several communities that were on a list Dr. Fritsch had given me of places where he had done ERAs. I put together a schedule which included places in relative proximity to each other such as The Catholic Worker Farm in Marlboro, NY and the Linwood Spiritual Center in Rhinebeck, NY. I set out on September 20th, 1997, from Northampton in a friend's (gratefully received) car to visit Sr. Kathleen Donnelly of the Linwood Spiritual Center, where I would be staying until Monday September 22nd, 1997. Sr. Kathleen was very helpful and hospitable, representing one of only 32 Sisters of St. Ursula left in the US. Linwood is their Mother House -- a property of 70 acres deeded to them by a rich

bachelor when he died. Sr. Kathleen was very positive about the ERA that had been done on their property (completed Jan 28, 1997) and enthusiastic about me becoming an assessor. She was eager to show the changes that were being made as a result of the assessment and what they would be doing over the next five and then ten years. Sr. Kathleen allowed me to take a photocopy of their assessment, which I now have for reference and use in my own assessment of Turvey Abbey.

Next I travelled to the Catholic Worker Farm (September 22-23, 1997) and met with a couple, Tom and Monica, who raised their children there. The situation there was very different from that at Linwood -- infrastructure is poor, homeless and dislocated people mainly in residence, several people with mental illnesses. The assessment (which I saw but did not take away with me) is very different from Linwood as well: three pages, mostly supportive rather than a real assessment.

Then, on September 24, 1997, I met with Dr. Fritsch on a site visit ("walk-through session") for an ERA he was doing for a convent in Baltimore, Maryland. I spent the day with him and his assistant, and two sisters who were representing the convent. In his view,

A confusion may be over our walk-through sessions and the complete ERA performed in most cases. We do not regard walk-throughs as full assessments, simply consulting sessions. The assessment needs time to reflect and seek consultant advice. Again, ideally it's a team effort.¹⁶

Dr. Fritsch said I should do a preliminary assessment on thirty remarkable features and then we could compare notes. I wrote and sent off my notes on the Baltimore assessment on October 5, 1997. Due to various circumstances we were out of touch until January 2000 when Dr. Fritsch faxed to me the Table of Contents from the Baltimore Sisters of Notre Dame assessment at my request. The chronological order of the assessment differed from the one from Linwood Spiritual Centre (e.g. Community Relations was to be focused on in year one for the former, and year five for the latter). However, the same

¹⁶ From a faxed letter from Dr. Al Fritsch of Appalachia Science in the Public Interest (ASPI) to the author, dated May 12, 1997.

ten sections were named in both assessments: physical facilities, energy alternatives and conservation, land resources (or grounds), waste management, community relations, water resources, wildlife, food and nutrition, indoor environment, and transportation.

In the video I took of Turvey Abbey between August 25-29, 1997, I was unaware of these categories and recorded commentary on the two and a half hour tape according to what I saw and knew at the time. In January of 2000 I viewed the tape again and wrote down comments, with the 10 categories of Dr. Fritsch in mind, which you will find in Chapter IV.

Reporting and Evaluating Field-based Research

Finally, we arrive at reporting and evaluating field-based research. Writing up is a process of producing ideas that involves: being aware of the outcomes to be accomplished by my research; an awareness of who I'm doing the work for and an eye to how I will be evaluated; the consistency of the report with the observations I've made at the beginning; building in to the research plan prospects for change (e.g., a key informant dies); and going back to my research site after I've finished my report to finalize my contact with them and potentially show them the research I've done.

There's messiness in the constant going back and forth between observation and writing about that observation, in having a dose of the flu, or in getting a bad case of writer's block. I go to Turvey Abbey in a purposeful way to fulfil the requirements of the research, but at another level I am going to spend time as with a friend as well and all that that implies.³⁷

I am following this list of criteria in evaluating my field studies:

1. the degree of development of substantive theory
2. the novelty of claims made
3. the consistency of the claims with empirical observation
4. the credibility of the account to readers and to those being studied

³⁷ This reminds me of the scientist, Barbara McClintock, and her work with corn plants; she knew each plant as a friend (which ultimately enhanced her research).

5. the extent to which the cultural description produced provides a basis for competent performance in the culture studied
6. the extent to which the findings are transferable to other settings³⁸
7. the reflexivity of the account: the degree to which the effects of research strategies on the findings are assessed and/or the amount of information about the research process that is provided to readers.³⁹

According to Yin, the reporting of the case study needs to follow these steps: identifying the audience for the report, developing the compositional structure, and following certain procedures (like having the report read by the nuns who are the subjects).⁴⁰ In this case the audience is a dissertation committee which will want “mastery of the methodology and the theoretical issues of the case study topic, an indication of the care with which the research was conducted, and evidence that the student has successfully negotiated all phases of the research process.”⁴¹ I should attempt to communicate directly to my committee, but also be able to communicate research-based information to nonspecialists, particularly as this PhD is within the Department of Natural Resources and involves an interdisciplinary subject not necessarily known to contributing disciplines alone.

Among the possible forms a written case study can take, I have chosen to compose the case as a classic single-case study involving both narrative to describe and analyze the case as well as a series of questions and answers.

The final aspect of reporting the case study refers to validating the procedures used. This is related to the overall quality of the case study. Because this is a case study which will be evaluated by a dissertation committee they will read (and re-read!) and

³⁸ Replication in qualitative studies is based on issues rather than exact contents, as would be found in quantitative methods.

³⁹ Hammersley, M, 1990, p. 56, as quoted at the CEDAR conference in December 1996.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Yin, p. 127.

⁴¹ Robert K Yin, p. 130.

review it numerous times, but ideally in a case study the subjects themselves should be allowed to review the draft report. To this end, in March of 2000 I sent Turvey Abbey a draft version of Chapters I, II, and IV for their review. I asked them to check the facts and to see if I had represented the spirit of Turvey Abbey accurately. They responded:

I enclose your manuscript which we have read. Mother Prioress suggests that you use pseudonyms if you want to mention actual names, or keep to things like the role ('the Guest Sister' etc) or something more general like 'one of the junior sisters' or 'one of the senior sisters', etc.

I have indicated any factual errors e.g. in names or other details.

I really enjoyed reading it. It took me back to those days of your visit here and I think you have been fair and given a good impression. I was struck (unpleasantly!) by how incoherent one is when speaking, and the speaking is transcribed from tape.

The subjects -- the nuns of Turvey Abbey in this case -- may not agree with the conclusions I've drawn, but they should not disagree with the actual facts of the case. If they do, there is an outstanding question of validity. I must then resolve those differences by searching for further evidence. In the final version of this dissertation document I have included all of the corrections the nuns suggested.

In conclusion, to create a good case study there are five general characteristics:

- (1) the case study must be of unusual and general public interest and/or the underlying issues are important either in theoretical terms or in policy or practical terms
- (2) the case study is complete
- (3) the case study considers alternative perspectives
- (4) the case study displays sufficient evidence, and
- (5) the case study is composed in an engaging manner.⁴²

⁴² Ibid., Yin, pp. 147-152.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTEXT AND PEOPLE OF THE PRIORY OF OUR LADY OF PEACE

In this chapter I describe and detail the data I collected in my research in such a way as to elucidate the context and people of Turvey Abbey. There are three sections to this chapter: The Daily Reality, Giving Voice to That Reality, and Conclusions.

In the section entitled "The Daily Reality" I relate the schedule of monastic life. The Daily Reality includes four subsections: prayer and rhythm of the day, work, study and hospitality. In the second section, "Giving Voice to That Reality", I flesh out that daily reality with the words of the nuns as well as my own participant observation notes to lead the reader to a felt experience of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the Turvey Abbey nuns. This second section includes two subsections: The Community, and Buildings and Landscape.

In The Community subsection I pay particular attention to four values the Turvey Benedictines focus on: "living according to the Rule of St. Benedict", *vita et pax* (life and peace) including liturgy and ecumenism, "seeking God by living out Gospel values", and "developing spiritual awareness of the unity of all creation and the simple beauty of everyday life."

In the Buildings and Landscape subsection I describe the property, based on a video with commentary that I made at Turvey Abbey in August 1997.

In the third section, Conclusions, I pull together why it is important to understand the context and people of The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey. This is the message, if you will, of this chapter.

In this Chapter I am dealing with that which is familiar, *explicit* and available in the published literature the Benedictines of Turvey Abbey print. In Chapter V, I again look at these data but for the culture's issues, patterns, and concerns that will be

implicitly understood; ways of living not necessarily expressed. In Chapter VI, I interpret the explicit and implicit meanings against the overall aims and purpose of this study and the implications for wider reality.

The Daily Reality

In July of 1996 I wrote a letter to 25 different women's religious communities throughout England and Wales asking about retreat programs and the possibility of staying within their monastery (See Appendix). Within three days -- a researcher's dream -- I had received replies from all of the communities. Though originally a personal request, I felt I was on the right track for a dissertation subject. Out of these replies there was one which attracted my attention, The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey, for their unique form of a retreat: *The Monastic Experience: "Seeking God"* -- a 10-day monastic experience (See Appendix). According to the information sent to me:

We began a few years ago to offer these specifically 'monastic experience' retreats as a result of requests from guests and people interested in learning about the monastic life.... These retreats give participants a chance to experience something of the Benedictine way of monastic life and to join in the lives of the Turvey Benedictine communities. The weekends consist of a balanced rhythm of successive periods of prayer, work, study, recreation and silence. Participants are asked to bring with them clothes and footwear suitable for outdoor work (or indoor work if the person is not strong enough to work out of doors), and to be ready to help to build up community in the group over the weekend by helping in every way and by participating in the periods of recreation, silence, work, etc.¹

That year (1996) the monastic retreat was to be held August 6 - 16, and I promptly arranged to go. My intentions for attending were two-fold: personal exploration and to find out if this community was appropriate for an in-depth research project. I was accepted as a participant on the retreat and on August 6th set out for the five hour drive from my home in the South West of England to Turvey Abbey. I arrived late afternoon and was met with a huge gap-toothed smile by Brother Peter, an elderly

¹ From *Vita et Pax "Monastic Experience" Retreats - 1996*, Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey, Turvey, Bedford MK43 8DE, UK.

monk living in the men's monastery of Turvey Abbey's double monastery who led me to the nuns' guest house. There among a flurry of guests arriving I was greeted by a nun who with friendliness and efficiency showed me the kitchen where I could make myself a cup of tea or take a cookie; the phone; the toilet and shower room; and my own private room with a bed, a desk, a lamp, and a wardrobe. On the walls were tapestries, mosaics, and art made to reflect an image of God, Christ or another aspect of religious meaning. The house was simple, clean, and respectful of individual privacy. On my desk was a copy of the schedule of monastic life. (See Appendix)

I describe this first impression for its value as a lasting impression. Over the years to follow, from August 1996 to Dec 1998 -- the period in which I travelled to Turvey Abbey on research -- that first impression remains and illumines for me Turvey Abbey: simplicity of life, uncluttered images, friendliness, abiding hospitality, generosity, cleanliness, and a rhythm of life centered in prayer. I will go on to interpret this in Chapter VI, but for now I would like to continue to describe the reality of the Turvey Abbey community of nuns as I found it.

Prayer and Rhythm of the Day²

The daily life of the community is centered around times of prayer.

Our aim is to search for God by living deeply the Gospel values within the monastery, open always to the needs of the contemporary world. Our prayer forms the basis of our day and life, and affects every aspect of our work and our relationship with society.³

Though there is an important emphasis on work and other aspects of the life, the key element of a nun's day is getting to the Divine Office and when a nun is late it is the only time I saw genuine disapproval from the Superior. St. Benedict was known to have said "times of prayer are the work of God." Depending on the day there are four or five

² Please refer to the schedule of Ordinary Days, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Solemnities, and Vigils of Feast days and Solemnities in Appendix B.

³ From a pamphlet sent to me entitled *Seeking God: the Monastic Experience* printed by the Turvey Benedictines, 1996 (See Appendix).

times of Office throughout the day and a Mass in addition. From sundown Saturday to sundown Sunday is held as holy -- "holiday" -- a time "out of the ordinary" and a day of rest which signals the ending of one week and the beginning of another. From Vespers (the time of the "evening star" according to Sr. Vivian) at 4pm on Saturday there are numerous small changes which mark the specialness of the time: the nuns change over their weekly jobs, they wear a new cowl for the week, a new Hebdom (from "hebronaria" or "hebdomadarium": she or he who leads the liturgy) leads, special foods can be had on Sunday (e.g. the nuns have toast at breakfast), and there is rest with no work periods. As well, Mass is held at 10:15am on Sundays rather than the usual 11:50am and attracts many members from the public. Mass is followed by coffee and cookies in the monks' Guesthouse, all invited.

On ordinary days (Mondays to Thursdays, most of Fridays, part of Saturdays) one nun can be heard moving up and down the corridors of the Priory ringing a bell, much like an old school bell, about ten minutes prior to the Office of Readings which begins at 6:10am. There is no entry procession at Reading; people enter silently and wait until the signal to begin the Office is given. Once they are all at their seats, the Office of Readings takes place for about forty minutes and at Turvey Abbey, where they have chosen to retain the ancient custom of singing or chanting the Psalms and many of the prayers, one can hear a few coughs and clearing of throats before the Psalms are intoned. After the Office of Readings, the nuns may do as they like for about twenty minutes, and most go back to their rooms to wash, or read, or some may just continue to sit in chapel. They each have their own place in chapel, but the time between the Office of Readings and the Office of Praise (or Lauds) allows one to move to another part of the chapel to sit and pray silently until Lauds begins (when they move back to their regular seat). All, however, remain within the Great Silence which has begun after Compline the previous night and continues through the night, through the Office of Readings, Lauds, breakfast and until after *Lectio Divina* the next day.

At Lauds, which begins at 7:10am, all the nuns and monks wait silently in the *statio* corridor outside the chapel until the signal is given for the procession into choir. As the Superior rings a small bell (at rest on a polished tree trunk), the community walks in two rows, in single files, into the chapel -- including a nun with a walker. (Just prior to the procession, one elderly nun in a wheelchair is wheeled in by her attendant and braked in place, then her attendant joins the processional line.) Then, as the nuns and monks reach the altar they bow three times. According to Sr. Vivian:

We bow to the altar because that is the symbol of the presence of Christ in the Paschal Mystery which is central to our life (death and resurrection) and where the Eucharist is celebrated, a re-enactment of this mystery. We bow to each other to remind ourselves that Christ is present in each of us. We are Christ to each other in community. When not entering in procession like this we also bow to the superior if she/he is already present, to remind us that St. Benedict sees the superior as representing Christ above all others.

It is ordered, simple, and beautiful, beginning another day where numerous symbols are enacted. Sr. Vivian comments "the Office of Praise (Lauds) is treated more solemnly because it was originally the 'dawn' office in which we give thanks and praise to God for the new day, and on behalf of all creatures."

At 7:50am there is a simple breakfast of bran cereal, bread (not toasted), and margarine. There is a choice of jam and cheese or peanut butter and yogurt. There is also coffee or tea to be had. The milk is always goat's milk from the goats they keep.⁴ During breakfast the Refectory sounds with the clanking of dishes and eating. If you are a guest and happen to be in Refectory rather than Brand House (the guests' eating place), you will find each nun in silence. Still, if you find yourself looking for something or confused as to what to do with your dishes, one or other nun will appear next to you and help you find your way without you having to say anything.

After breakfast the nuns go back to their rooms -- every nun has her own private room to herself -- for the first period of *Lectio Divina* in the day. In the

⁴ Though at some point they may also have cow's milk as I have been told the monks want to "smuggle in a cow."

morning this lasts for one hour. According to Sr. Vivian, *Lectio* is:

a form of prayer using the Word; listening to the word of God....There are as many approaches as there are people. As generally understood, there are four stages or parts of the process of how to do *Lectio* -- a pattern of a way: (1) *Lectio* translates as 'listening to the Word' therefore is reading aloud, (2) *meditatio* is meditation in the sense of repeating, learning by heart, which includes thinking⁵ (3) *oratio* is praying; one's personal response like dancing, calligraphy, etc., and (4) *contemplatio* which is God's business; a deep attentive silence; we can't achieve this it's a gift. We can prepare ourselves though. It's all meant to flow. It happens differently, but begins with listening and hearing the Word.⁶

As further clarification, Sr. Vivian suggests that *Lectio*, *Meditatio*, and *Oratio* are what we can do or achieve -- a clearing the ground if you will -- whereas *Contemplatio* is equivalent to enlightenment received. I have deliberately capitalized "Word" for the reason that in the context of the nuns it has sacred and unique meaning. "Word" refers to Holy Scripture, and is a basic foundation for the meaning of their lives. Scripture is the manifestation of God's presence in the world.

After the morning period of *Lectio* the Great Silence is ended, but the refraining from chattering and idle talk will continue at all times. The nuns change into their work habits -- short white veils, a denim three-quarter length dress with belt, and socks with work shoes (depending on the job they do). The morning work period is from 9:15am to before Mass which is held at 11:50am. (I will discuss their work life in the next section.)

Before Mass the nuns ("quick change artists" they've been called) change from their work habits to their regular white habits. Mass is called Eucharist (whose meaning is "thanksgiving") at Turvey Abbey and is held every day. During my time at Turvey Abbey some of the monks have gone through seminary to become priests. One younger monk moved from training to be a priest to being ordained and then saying Mass

⁵ The image of a cow ruminating is likened to *meditatio*.

⁶ From a talk by Sr. Vivian on Wednesday morning, August the 7th, 1996, during the Monastic Experience Retreat.

as a fully fledged priest. Brother Matthias, now Father Matthias⁷, prefers the ancient tradition of singing the Mass which tends to make the Mass longer than the average 20-30 minute daily Mass time known to the wider general public. Guests who are not familiar with this monastic flavor often fidget, but the nuns and monks continue this tradition as they do.

The public is invited to attend any of the Offices in the chapel as well as Mass. Over my time at Turvey Abbey few people come to the earlier Offices, including guests staying in the retreat house. Mass, however, tends to be popular with both retreatants and members of the public. Throughout the day each Office (and Mass itself) has a different feel to it based on the presence or absence of externs (i.e. the public).

After Mass, which all nuns and monks are to attend, is a time for those whose work it is to serve the lunch (Dinner) to do the final preparations. Dinner is the main meal of the day and is served at 1:15pm. Each nun comes in to the Refectory and stands at her place -- the tables are arranged with a top table for Mother Prioress and Dom Julian, fanning outwards from them in order of years of profession. If you are there as a guest you will sit at the outermost places, after the postulants. At a signal from Mother Prioress, Grace before lunch will be partly spoken and partly sung. As an example of a Grace before lunch:

Superior	The peace of the Lord be with you.
All	The love of Christ bc with you.
Superior	The eyes of all creatures:
All:	Look to you, Lord, and you give them their food in due time. You open wide your hand, grant the desires of all who live. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
Superior	Lord have mercy.
All	Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.
Superior	Lord, remember us in your kingdom, teach us yourself to pray.
All	Our Father, who art in heaven...
Superior	For yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever
All	Amen.
Superior	Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts which we are going to

⁷ I was told on 27 March 2000 that Father Matthias "sadly has left."

All receive from your bounty. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

After grace all sit at their places and two nuns come from the open place in the horseshoe up to the top table and offer Mother Prioress and the nun on her left first serving. Mother Prioress takes what she'd like, bows to the nun serving who bows back, and the nun serving goes to the person on Mother Prioress' right. This proceeds down the line until everyone is served. Meanwhile one nun will be reading from a book into a small microphone. The books being read range from Nelson Mandela's *Walk to Freedom* to Esther de Waal's *Seeking God* and others. According to one nun, being the reader is a tough job; you have to speak well enough to be heard and understood above the clanking of dishes and eating noises.

Second servings are offered in the same way as the first. Eating continues and so does the reading, but there's no time to delay. I've usually found that I have to hurry my style of eating to be even close to finished when Mother Prioress taps on her glass to signal the end of lunch and the recitation of the Grace after lunch. As I clamor to my feet and push my chair in to stand behind it, Grace begins:

Superior	Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.
All	For his love has no end.
Cantor	O praise the Lord, all you nations, acclaim him all you peoples.
All	Strong is his love for us, he is faithful for ever.
Cantor	Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
All	As it was in the beginning...
	We thank you, Father, for you care for us, and have fed us always from the time we were young. We thank you, Christ, for you broke bread with us. We have been satisfied with the good things of the earth. Help us, filled with your Spirit to come to your heavenly meal.
Superior	Blessed be God in his abundant goodness.
All	Blessed for ever, Amen.

At this point Mother Prioress and others move swiftly out of the Refectory, some nuns beginning to clean up, and others like me sitting back down to try and finish what hasn't yet been finished on our plates.

It is now the afternoon work period, and off goes the white habit and on goes the blue work habit again. At this point most of the retreatants or guests retire to their rooms exhausted from the pace of the life. Though they are welcome to contribute work, many don't. At the monastic experience retreat the afternoon work period was supplemented by an optional Bible study period at 3pm, followed by a talk at 3:30pm. Over the 10 days of the monastic experience week we heard talks such as: Sr. Marie on Bible study and *Lectio*; Sr. Celeste on reverence, science, and belief; Sr. Vivian on a range of topics including *lectio*, vespers, and history; Dom Julian on obedience and liturgy; and Mother Prioress on obedience and whatever we wanted to chat about. After these talks (and question and answer period), there was time to do as we liked before Vespers.

For the community, 4:30pm is time for tea and recreation in the community room. This is the one time in the day when a buzz of more or less casual talking can be heard. Each nun has a pottery mug made by Brother Peter or Brother Francis which can be found on a tray with some biscuits (cookies), along with different types of Fair Trade coffee, regular tea, herb tea and goat's milk. A couple of the nuns who read the newspapers are telling others what they've read. News about family, friends outside of the community, and world events and issues are discussed. Mother Prioress chats with junior members, and the old and the young converse with each other. All are sitting in a circle. Most have a notion of the time and even when a bell isn't ringing at 5pm, watches are glanced at and nuns move off to do something else at that time. Tea is officially over.

At 6pm Vespers is held in the chapel and white habits must be donned. (White habits are always worn in chapel, never the work habit.) After Vespers comes the second period of *Lectio* for the day. Supper is held at 6:45pm in the Refectory where it is silent unless it is a Sunday or Solemnity. Then, music plays in the background, usually classical but it has also been religious. On one visit I made to Turvey Abbey I wrote the following in my notes.

The women [on the retreat] went to the nuns' Refectory for supper. It was a meal in silence, one which I won't forget. As normal, the meal began with a reading from Scripture and Mother Prioress leading us in a sung grace. The classical music began as we were being served, then rose to a loud crescendo while people serenely ate. I didn't have a napkin and my hands were continuously messy from the open-faced sandwich I was eating -- until I peered out of the corner of my eye to witness very correct eating with knife and fork. My embarrassment also crescendoed. Food was going down fast and I'd barely started. More food kept graciously being offered. No room at the plate. Crisps? Sure -- but how to eat them? Out of the bag? With my hands? Does the crunching noise offend? Suddenly, no sound. Uh-oh. Most are done. Then a bell rings. I leap up and Vivian [a guest] follows. I look, and no one's moved. Bright red, I sink down to my seat again only to glance at Annika [another guest] who's smiling broadly at me. That's it. My nervousness had peaked; it's all I can do to keep from laughing hysterically. Then Sr. Mary Catherine proceeds to read the Martyrology followed by Necrology about this martyr and that martyr's gruesome deaths on this day in history. This is surreal. Then it's truly time to rise up, sing the grace, and nuns go out and others clean up. And there I am with undrunk herbal tea, a nectarine, and half a bag of crisps....

After supper, and clean-up, there is a small break of about twenty minutes. The community has an optional time of recreation. Sometimes I take a walk, others go to their rooms to finish a letter, or a chapter of a book, etc. Then, finally, the last prayer of the day: Compline at 8pm. The final prayer of Compline is sung by the leading Superior, Mother Prioress one week and Dom Julian the next, out in the hall before chapel in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary:

Visit, we beseech you Lord, this house and family and drive far from it all the snares of the enemy. Let your holy angels dwell herein to keep us in peace, and let your blessing be always upon us. Through Christ Our Lord.
All: Amen.⁶

As the last act of Compline, an ancient tradition is reenacted as the presiding Superior takes a branch of evergreen, dips it in holy water; the other Superior touches it and crosses him or herself; then the leading Superior goes down the row of nuns, monks and guests blessing the communities and congregation with sprinkled water. The Great Silence descends. Heads bowed, white habits fluttering, the monks and nuns step

⁶ As stated in "Compline" the pamphlet available by the chapel doors before Compline, printed by the Benedictine Communities of Turvey.

off into the night.⁹

Work

Work as distinct from prayer can be considered to be the following:

Daily tasks, such as manual work (including the care of animals), art, writing, study and secretarial work, needlework, retreat and guest-house work, allow a variety of talents to be used in the service of God and one another. By developing a deep spiritual awareness of the simple beauty of every day life, we seek to radiate God's life and peace to all who come to our monasteries.¹⁰

As can be seen by the Schedule of Monastic Life (See Appendix), daily tasks are done across two periods -- in the morning for two and a half hours, and in the afternoon for two and a half hours. Even if a nun gets involved in a job she may be doing (like cutting down brambles for a bonfire), she must stop in time to change out of her work habit and get to chapel in her white dress habit. In this way work is boundaried and no one person need overwork; in fact there are protections in the Rule of St. Benedict against working overtime. "But it does happen!" according to the nuns.

There are key areas of work that are done by the nuns' community at Turvey Abbey: the making of vestments with intricate embroidery and tapestry work; the making of tapestries; art in various forms (including a style developed by the community's founder, Abbot Constantine); gardening (fruit, orchard, and flower gardens); yard maintenance; buildings maintenance; kitchen work (including cooking meals and the daily baking of bread); goats' care; cleaning; Novicemistress; Guestmistress; Retreatmistress; Bursar; Mother Prioress; Portress; etc. Each nun has a primary responsibility -- eg, Sr. Mary Catherine is in charge of the vegetable gardens -- and will make the majority of everyday decisions for that work. Bearing in mind Sr. Mary Catherine and the vegetables, when harvest comes she will ask for further

⁹ This does not mean that all the nuns must go to sleep. Some will go for a walk, some read, others go to sleep, etc. There isn't a rule about this aspect of the life.

¹⁰ From the pamphlet *Seeking God: The Monastic Experience* printed by the Benedictine Communities of Turvey for the Monastic Experience Week, August 1996. See the Appendix for a copy of this pamphlet.

assistance to help on certain days to pick a certain vegetable and get it from garden to freezer.

Once a year there is a time to reflect as to whether a nun wants to continue in the job she is doing, whether she might do something else, and even whether that job should be continued. There are a certain number of nuns in the community and like any household there are always more things to be done than there is labor to do them. So choices have to be made as to where to focus attention. Of recent times the garden has become the focus of discussion as to whether or how it should continue. It is a contentious issue, where each nun must honestly weigh her value for the vegetable garden and her willingness to work in it against purchasing what would then be needed if they weren't growing as much food. At my last visit in 1998, several of the nuns were admitting that they would rather be doing other work with their time than gardening even though they placed a strong value on food grown on the premises. This tension had been evident since my arrival in 1996 and is expressed in this interchange:

Sr. Scholastica: ...oh we'll put weed killer on it...[pointing to an area along a fence, one feet away from where food is growing]

Annika (a guest): Oh I don't know...the ecologists would say...

Sr. Scholastica: Well if we had thirty people to pull all the weeds out! But we don't...I'll just use the weed killer."¹¹

There is a challenge to keep the focus on the prayer life of the community when it appears daily tasks are not getting done, or may have to be abandoned (like the vegetable garden) due to lack of labor. One of the ways the community can get added assistance is through guests' labor. The monastic experience is held in the summer, a time when people commonly have vacation time as well as a time when a lot of outdoor work is already in full flow. Some guests come specifically to help in the garden, knowing the need and liking the work and the community in which to do it.

Sr. Rose, a novice, told me how she had no idea how to do needlework, but the need was there and she found herself signed up to do needlework as her work. She was very

¹¹ From my notes, August 1996.

apprehensive, but with time learned she had a knack for it and liked it. She is now doing that work regularly. Sr. Bridget is in charge of the sewing room work and orders. Sr. Agatha does all the design work and the painting of posters. Sr. Carmen paints tile with religious texts that are very popular and are on sale in the monastery shop. Sr. Agatha and Sr. Carmen, in particular, are the "older ones" who at some point won't be able to do the work. There is an intergenerational passing on of work like an apprentice system in the monastery.

According to Mother Prioress, "we pray/work in order to remember God loves us. Women are better at work...maybe because men have been involved with study."

Study

Study is the third component of the way of life advocated by St. Benedict along with prayer, work and hospitality. As universities began in monasteries it is an obvious connection to make that monks (and nuns) study. The rigors of academic discipline can work well within the monastic enclosure, but unlike in a modern family situation, usually an individual goes to college as long as it supports the community (i.e. family) to do so. If there are negative effects upon community life (i.e. too many are studying and not enough income is being generated or manual work being done) then an individual may need to postpone study until another time. According to Sr. Vivian, "there is no program for university study on the whole. Sr. Rose finished her Master of Arts as a postulant, but it is not general practice." Not all nuns can study at university at once as there are impacts on the community, both social and financial, which must be considered. In this way, individual and community are held in checks and balances.

Observing the nuns, there is ample reading material available for self-study across a broad array of topics. Study of a skill -- such as embroidery -- can be undertaken with a nun proficient in such. There was an evident pursuit of formal academic study during the time I was with the nuns, but it was not a predominant activity. The youngest nun, Sr. Emmanuel, in fact did leave the community in March

1998 to pursue Occupational Therapy at Brunel University and to discern over that period whether she wanted to continue her commitment to monastic life at Turvey Abbey. She was touchingly supported by the community in this choice, and last I knew was continuing to live with the community (only without being clothed as a nun). There was also the study of a non-formal yet academic sort occurring in one's free time in classics, theology (particularly with the nuns in formation), science, horticulture and home economics.

It was evident that the monks were pursuing traditional forms of study as a major facet of their way of life. For example, Dom Julian teaches and holds regular weekend seminars at the monks' monastery for students of Freudian psychology. And of course Brother Matthias was in training as a priest, Brother Francis as a naturalist, and so on. This obvious emphasis on formal academic study in the monks' monastery was less obvious a focus in the nuns' monastery. Traditionally, according to Sr. Angela, nuns haven't studied or written about themselves because (a) nuns were connected to an anchoress; (b) nuns were poor which made them physically weak, too weak to write. Monks, however, got money because they said masses which made them physically stronger; and (c) nuns didn't have schooling in Latin, the language connected to the written word.

According to Mother Prioress "one learns the monastic life by doing it." She states:

since many men go on to the priesthood, they study; they have that carrot in front of them. Women have lessons, etc. depending on what they want and need. The most important part of learning comes in the living -- the liturgy is the main form of education which goes hand in hand with learning basic principles for living the life and applying them.¹²

¹² From a question and answer period with Mother Prioress during the Monastic Experience, August 1996.

Hospitality

Hospitality is a final component of the life -- along with prayer, work and study. For many centuries the monastery has been a place of sanctuary, a place where a bed and some food would be available to anyone who asked for it. It remains the same at Turvey Abbey. On numerous occasions over the years when I have been there I saw this in action, albeit always quietly without drawing attention. The doorbell may ring during Mass and a nun bows to the altar and then goes to answer it (the only event I saw which took them out of Mass or Office other than caring for a dying member of the community). Many people are in need of temporary sanctuary -- for example, the well-off but mentally unwell middle-aged woman who was bundled into her car by her husband. She was dropped off at Turvey Abbey because her husband felt the nuns could help her even though she was not Catholic and had no prior knowledge of a monastery. The number of homeless men that come time after time to the door at the monks' house has persuaded the monks to create a space with one room, with two beds for these "wayfarers."

There is also a form of hospitality which is about reaching out to meet someone. Many guests feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar with silence and continue to talk. The nuns don't silence them. They present what they do, so guests know, and then they leave them to follow or not. Some guests try to corner the nuns to question them or to just tell them something they need to have heard. The nuns make time for them and meet them privately to listen.

And, finally, there is a component of hospitality which involves privacy. Each guest is given her or his own room. In each room there is always clean sheets made up for the guest upon arrival, and a note about the community and its schedule. (See Schedule of Monastic Life in the Appendix.) There is permission given to attend or not attend any or all of the prayer or work times; discretion is at the choice of the guest and will not be questioned. There is hospitality in leaving each person to rest or participate as needed. It is also a way that each nun behaves toward the other, with respect for

individual need and choice. I will go into this aspect of monastic life in much more depth in the following chapters.

Giving Voice to That Reality

Teeth: full of character, smile different from different faces. Shoes: two pairs of Birkenstocks (monks), several types of sandals, shades of browns and creams peek from beneath habits bowing at altar. Habits: variations of cream, white, and fabric individually in unison clothe the person. Mother Prioress makes the nuns' habits from whatever fabric is on hand. Hence, each habit is somewhat different from the next, no two truly alike.

It's August 9, 1996.¹³ I had tea with the nuns at 4:30pm. Sr. Mary Catherine asked to join me. She's from Sunderland and was a postulant for twenty months (usually it's six months but she had to sell her house) and a novice only since December 1995 (less than a year). She said it took her ten years of being "nibbled at" before it got loud enough to bring her here. There's no where else she'd rather be. "But" she says "who knows. I could leave next week." She had been attending retreats near her home by and by, then heard about the Monastic Experience four or five years ago and planned to come, but chickened out. She didn't want this life. But she did come for a weekend...then another Monastic Experience...then every holiday she had while teaching. Finally she decided that this is where she wanted/is meant to be. She takes care of the vegetable garden and helps milk the goats.¹⁴ I find her soft, gentle, pleasant, quiet. The bell rings and others scurry off, but Sr. Mary Catherine continues to be still, with me, for a few moments more.

It is August 10, 1996, the day I was going to get married. Something is a bit looser inside -- I feel saddened, but not tight and angry. My mind is clearer. I had my first good night's sleep last night in quite a while. Possibly it was because I got to sleep

¹³ From my participant observation notes written while at Turvey Abbey.

¹⁴ Sr. Scholastica has overall charge of the garden, and Sr. Consolata of the goats.

more normal hours; Lauds was the first thing to get up for, at 7:10am. I dreamt of the love a friend has shown me. Her eyes were clear to me. I think I wept with gratitude. I wrote to her during the morning Lectio period (it seemed appropriate) to tell her, and to say that it sustains me during the time I feel unloved and alone.

While scraping potatoes in the sunshine, I realized I had looked at the clock at 10:25am, and that at that time I was supposed to be saying my marriage vows. I wonder where and how Paul is.

The sun is shining. Lunch is in fifteen minutes. I'm hungry. I wonder if I should/will ask Sr. Vivian to chat. I want to tell someone about today. I don't think I'll ask a nun -- how would it affect my future research if I did? I think it best to not enter pouring out my personal life into the situation at this juncture. I am often reminded of how I am exploring a new culture, similar to a researcher going into a primitive tribe. There is the tool of quiet waiting which must be perfected. Trust. Compatibility. Relaxation. Rapport. Questions and research must come from this context. Yes?

I organized buying a card from the Abbey Shop and having people sign it to wish Jill well -- she's one of our group who left this morning. Sr. Vivian said Jill couldn't take the pace [of the Monastic Experience]. The nuns felt badly that she's leaving early, they said so. Because my vivid dream and the sleep fulfilled me a bit, I was freed up to think of sending her the card -- i.e. feeling a bit healed, I could give, be sensitive to others and act on that.

Sunday August 11, 1996. My moods rise and fall, shifting ground ploddingly. This morning, Mass brought in families with children -- running trucks around, dropping books -- the noises poked into the now familiar cadence of the liturgy and prayers, unsettling control in me. I loved the procession with incense. They live the traditional and the modern (post-Vatican II) liturgical experience. All hymns and tones were of a different rhythm indicating the specialness of the holy day. There were two readers from the public. The Lectern was even farther back in the public sphere than it

usually is. Sr. Marie asked Kara, Steven and me [all guests] to offer the gifts, in a dancelike way I'd never experienced. Going to the altar I felt like a butterfly approaching the altar flower.

Afterwards, money was collected (by a member of the public) for an Oblate who is a medical doctor and works among the poorest of the poor, in the favelas of Brazil. Also, Sr. Marie had made copies of a letter from CAFOD urging people to write letters to the government so as to encourage them to keep sending aid internationally. All were invited to Brother Francis' ceremony of perpetual vows on August 19th.

Brother Peter invited us into the monks' Guesthouse for coffee -- a good Catholic fellowship tradition which never ceases to make me feel happy and a deep sense of belonging. I feel gladdened by it. I got into conversation -- the longest of our group yet - - with Steven, Lucy, Kara, Maxine and Matthew (a retreatant not with our Monastic Experience group) on topics ranging from eco-spirituality, creation spirituality, Buddhist-Christian intersection, to transcendental meditation and Thomas Merton. There is a rush to speak when silence ends. Talking was jagged at the edges.

Sr Consolata came up at tea yesterday with "i haven't met you yet. You're Cathy?" She's a witty raconteur -- had she been in another place, such a skill may have been sharpened. Here, it is perky and pleasant, but not hurtful. At Mass today, Sr.Consolata [Choirmistress] invited us to "have a look at the opening song because last time we sung it at Mass it was a bit *lugubrious....*" She had everyone singing it correctly, with a smile.

I feel nourished by this Sunday. Lauds, reading in my room, long shower, dress nicely, Mass, coffee and a chat, write, Midday Office, lunch, a walk....Today has been a festive, jolly, communicable day. Coffee after Mass, tea (in Brand House) after Vespers -- public invited. Sr. Vivian, Sr. Bridget, Sr. Mary Catherine, Sr. Rose and Sr. Emmanuel went with us -- or should I say, took us -- on a walk around paths through the surrounding countryside for one and a half hours. They can't wear shorts so were

quite hot in the sun. Sr. Rose mentioned she brought some "long shorts...below the knee, for when we get more relaxed." That has yet to happen. Clothing is such a "hot topic" with the nuns.

As we were walking and then taking shade sitting under a large horse chestnut tree at the edge of a field, Sr. Vivian told me she entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1955, lived in Kenya for nine years teaching, and switched over to the Benedictines "not long ago -- an unusual circumstance but yet done here and there." Her apostolic roots are apparent. She is a long-time friend of Sr. Mary Catherine's mother, and in fact they went to school together. Sr. Mary Catherine and Sr. Rose went to the secondary school run by the Sisters of Mercy where Sr. Vivian had taught for many years. Now Sr. Vivian, Sr. Rose and Sr. Mary Catherine live here together.

Sr. Rose and Sr. Mary Catherine decided independently to enter. They both told how they came on this same Monastic Experience bringing "lots of crisps, chocolate, and wine...thinking it would be pretty grim." They went home "with the wine intact." They had a good laugh when I told them I'd been going down to the village store to get M&Ms.

Sr. Rose was describing her seventeen year-old sister's recent holiday to Benidorm, Spain with three girlfriends == out at midnight until 6am, sleep until 3pm. Her sister was head cook, mostly making tuna and pasta. They met four Liverpool blokes, holiday romances.

The nuns commented about the abortion case of the twin which was most recently in the news. Sr. Vivian feels it's a must "not to be separate from the world, to know what is going on" and so she reads the newspapers.

August 12, 1996. Brother Peter is a potter, and I want to ask him about making me a set of pottery.¹⁵ I went to visit him in the monks' Monastery to approach him about doing this work and he told me about his life.

I desperately wanted to enter when I was thirty, but my mother was too sick and

¹⁵ I have a set of mugs, bowls, jugs and serving bowls in my home which Brother Peter has made.

they wouldn't take me then. So I waited until my mother died and then I entered, at first, Prinknash...that was twenty years later! Margaret Leach gave us this potter's wheel. It's all made of wood. This [pottery room] used to be the apple shed. See I took out first half the shelves then them all. At first there were no windows. [Now there are two.] The nuns had finished painting [something] and I went to the dustbin, got the remaining drips of white paint and painted these walls! Brother Francis had the idea to let the vagabonds, when they come, sleep in here. So a cot is against the wall which can come down. We're going to make a room for them. They used to sleep inside the house but some of the guests complained....I wanted a gas-fired kiln but Brother Julian didn't want flames flying around. He told me to get the electric one. It was given to us....

The community has guests, retreatants, the homeless, and family and friends who come to stay for a short or long while. According to Sr. Vivian the community had some kids from the inner city come and stay one time and they mucked out the goatshed together. They filmed it, and especially got shots of the gunk. It's Sr. Vivian's "favorite job -- real earthy!" And, according to Sr. Consolata who officially looks after the goats as one of her jobs, "this is one of the few jobs where you get an authorized coffee break!"

Tonight we had dinner with the monks. Compared to the nuns they seem more liberal, i.e., with the nuns dinner is silent and wine is "only on feast days" but with the monks we had beer, coffee, chocolate, with each monk having a separate meal to their taste, and, we all talked.

August 15, 1996. Today I attended a talk given by Mother Prioress. She is from Indiana with family from around Joliet, Illinois, where my cousins live. We shared personal American anecdotes. She entered in 1975 and professed as a nun in 1980. Originally she came to England on a Watson Fellowship to study textiles and weaving after studying philosophy at St. John's in Annapolis, Maryland. She was interested in Benedictine life and went to meet the community when it was at Cockfosters, North London which was near to where she was studying. She wanted a "traditional and internationally cultured" community and Cockfosters/Turvey had English, Dutch, Belgian, etc. nuns whereas Stanbrook Abbey (the most well known Benedictine monastery for women in England and her other real choice) had predominantly English.

She plays guitar at certain times during the Office. She doesn't like hierarchies -- "isn't a mother where others are children" -- but rather likes things egalitarian. She's a child of the sixties and has much to say about her generation. She's been back to the US about five times, and her parents come every summer for a month. She was originally Episcopalian, as her parents still are, but converted to Catholicism before becoming a nun.

Mother Prioress' style in her talk was much different than Dom Julian, the Superior for the monks. Dom Julian gave a prepared talk, but Mother Prioress wanted to have a conversation with questions and answers. Someone asked Mother Prioress, Why is the life difficult? She answered:

...it asks a lot of change, hard work, the need for conversion to monastic life -- which can be very difficult for an older person who's socially adapted oneself to conditionings. Solitude and silence are skills which are needed to live with other people. Being in the same place -- this becomes more of a problem later on, when the barrier of monotony could be more apparent....Also, there's no status for nuns. It's very hard to take sometimes; there's no tests for 'how am I doing?' How do you judge a distance if you don't have an odometer in front of you?

Mother Prioress is a weaver by trade. She can't keep it up because of her busy job as Prioress -- "weaving needs a rhythm and a keeping up of the skill." When you enter the "boundaries are suddenly unclear; it's no longer 'I am a teacher' because what you do rests on your *being* instead." She adds that for those who "need physical dislocation for distraction, living in a monastery is very difficult." She tells us that Brother Francis is a naturalist and bird watcher. He localizes himself to Turvey Abbey and its environs and is getting to know it very well. According to Mother Prioress, "the limitations [of monastic enclosure] can engender creativity in a way unlimited possibilities can't."

She says that two ways creativity has emerged in the nuns community is in making cards, and in cooking. But this creativity is also laced with competition. "When a nun's feast comes up there is a competition for the most beautiful card! The creativity of the limited is exceptional -- origami, embroidered, computer-generated, etc. A feast

to look at!" As well the nuns like to "create a good meal." Creativity from within the Priory also flows outside the walls and touches the outside world through their artwork, food (visitors), vestments, wall hangings, etc.

August 16, 1996. At the Office of Readings, around 6:30am, the doorbell rang while we were at prayer. Mother Prioress went to answer it and returned a minute or two later followed by a man who sat at the back without a prayer card. He coughed loudly and with mucous a few times or so. At the end, he went out, picking up his orange nylon rucksack and Mother Prioress gathered him up outside talking as I walked away....

The Community

There are eighteen nuns living at The Priory of Our Lady of Peace and six monks living at the Monastery of Christ Our Saviour, Turvey Abbey. According to a pamphlet available for sale at 20p (32 cents) in the Turvey Abbey shop, the Turvey Benedictines make a distinction between "the Communities" and "the Buildings." This is what is said about the communities:

The monks and nuns at Turvey belong to The Roman Catholic Benedictine Congregation of Our Lady of Monte Oliveto (Olivetian Benedictines) whose Archabbey is near Sienna in Italy. Within this Congregation, Dom Constantine Bosschaerts, a Belgian Benedictine monk, founded the *Vita et Pax* Foundation for renewal of monastic life, with Liturgy and Ecumenism as its special charisms. In 1936 monks, nuns and oblates of the foundation established an English branch at Cockfosters, North London. At the joint initiative of Prior Dom Edmund Jones and Prioress D. Lucia Antonissen, a group of monks and nuns moved to Turvey in 1980-81, while a community of monks at Cockfosters continued to develop their monastic life in the parish. The nuns' school was handed over to lay management. The move to Turvey grew out of a need felt by both monks and nuns to explore a form of monastic life outside the context of parish and school. There was also, on the side of the nuns, the need for more space for a growing community....Abbot Constantine's motto: *Vita et Pax* (Life and Peace) sums up well both the outward and inward aspects of our vocation here.

Turvey Abbey, and specifically the Priory of Our Lady of Peace -- the women's community at Turvey -- is a place and a people one falls in love with. Most of the guests, from whatever (if any) faith tradition come back again and again to this place for a kind of sanctuary in modern life that is about silence and solitude but also an often

inarticulate “more”ishness. That “more”ishness is what I would like to begin to articulate here.

The community expresses themselves to the public firstly in terms of the written word, in correspondence from the Guestmistress or Retreatmistress to prospective guests and retreatants. The community also gets across who they are and what they are about in the form of pamphlets they have constructed, including a seasonal newsletter they sell for 50p (75 cents) out of their shop. Within these pamphlets are explicitly stated values that the community espouses as well as behaviors they follow and attitudes they hold.

In this section I would like to describe what some of these values are, as stated in the nuns’ literature, and allow the words of the nuns themselves (as I found them in observation, conversation and interviews) to give voice to the reality that they live. In particular I would like to focus on a passage that is printed on an annual basis in the *Turvey Abbey Retreats and Courses* pamphlet.

Turvey Abbey Benedictines are two independent communities, nuns and monks, who live according to the Rule of St. Benedict: prayer, work, study, hospitality. The communities belong to the *Vita et Pax Foundation* whose main charism is the double one of LITURGY and ECUMENISM.

We seek God by trying to live out Gospel values within the monastery, in love and service, open always to the needs of the contemporary world. Our prayer forms the basis of our life and affects every aspect of our work, and our relationship with society. By developing a deep spiritual awareness of the unity of all creation and of the simple beauty of everyday life, we seek in our work and prayer -- especially in our Liturgy -- to radiate God’s *life and peace* to all who visit our monasteries. Not only Christians but people of every Faith, all who *truly seek God* (Rule of Benedict) are warmly welcome to join us in prayer.¹⁵

I make the assumption that this passage represents what the community wants the outside world to know about them, and that they as a community articulated this passage as a pithy, succinct declaration of their identity. This assumption is partly based on the fact that this passage is found, word for word, on all *Retreats and Courses*

¹⁵ The bold and italics are given by the authors. This passage is from *Turvey Abbey Retreats and Courses 1996*.

programs for three years running and perhaps for longer.

From this passage, I would like to pay particular attention to the following values to give voice to the reality of The Priory of Our Lady of Peace: "living according to the Rule of St. Benedict"; *vita et pax* (life and peace) including liturgy and ecumenism; "seeking God by living out Gospel values"; and "developing spiritual awareness of the unity of all creation and the simple beauty of everyday life."

"Living According to the Rule of St. Benedict"

As I detailed in the previous section, the community's reality is one of balancing prayer, work, study and hospitality -- the essence espoused in the Rule of St. Benedict. Throughout my time at the Priory, conversations (and interviews) were laced with references to the Rule of St. Benedict and its focus in the nuns' lives.

During my stay in August of 1996 for the Monastic Experience we were given a series of talks from different members of the community, both monks and nuns. Since the monks and nuns do share prayer and thoughts on prayer, and since the monks who are priests give homilies (sermons) to the nuns and public each Sunday, I wanted to include some thoughts given by Dom Julian during a talk he made on the subject of "obedience."

I picked obedience because when some people look at us, what doesn't make sense is our vow of obedience. It's become a real stumbling block in our society. The 'blind obedience' of the Nazis, the change in universities to common assessment with the students....From the spiritual side, obedience is based on the model set by Jesus 'coming to do the will of his father', not his will....A monk or nun is not modelled on sacrificing their lives blindly to God for the sake of our sins. If this were true, obedience would be alienating for human uniqueness....Obedience only makes sense with a god who wants us to be whole and fulfilled, but not with a god who wants us to suffer. Obedience can bring freedom and fulfillment which brings one to radiate joy. In Benedict's Rule, the first words are 'Listen.' Seeking God requires our silence...which needs obedience in coming away from all the preoccupations of what I desire. We are so soaked in our culture that we easily speak its language, but Jesus didn't. He stood free. He was totally wrapped up in his vision of the mystery of God. I think St. Benedict was speaking of this too. Instead of being wrapped up in me, I become gripped by the mystery of God.

Dom Julian is a professional psychotherapist, particularly focused on Freud. As such he goes on to speak of obedience in the psychological context, as well as

experientially. He states that through obedience “we can break out of the tyranny of *myself*, and the voices of people and places that have been keeping us unfree.” His view is clearly that “true monasticism does not involve a giving away of all responsibilities in blind submissive obedience.” Rather, monastic life has “a system of support and a direct way of confronting [the past, wounds, etc] moment by moment.” One can “break free” in living in monastic community.

But how is this done? Experientially, Dom Julian says, it is

mostly done without words. A Superior gets to know individuals very well. There is no rule book. It is a very personalized approach. A Superior who is being unpreoccupied with self, has no desire to give ‘pearls of wisdom’, just communicates without words, receiving from the other by being there and seeing Christ within....you discover what humility is all about.

Dom Julian said that St. Benedict put into his Rule “there are no ranks or hierarchies as such because we’re all one in Christ.” The Abbot must “consult the community, listening to all, but the Abbot must make the decision.” He adds, “nowadays with Canon Law as it is, the powers of the Superior are limited.” All is well in the community when all take into consideration the needs of the community and others.

Mother Prioress comments in her talk about obedience in the light of women’s realities.

A male Superior might say ‘be nice’ and a female Superior would say ‘tell the truth.’ The language needs to reflect the different experiences of women and men. I am looking forward to a book which is to be written by a French nun rewriting the Rule of Benedict for women. Most of what I know about women’s experience [as nuns] are written by contemporary writers like Benedicta Ward, Joan Chittister, etc. It’s hard to find anything before the past few decades. It’s as if women didn’t exist! I heard a broadcast where these men were talking about whether you had to be a priest to be a monastic...C’mon guys! Did you forget there are women who live monastic lives, who can’t be priests?!

Mother Prioress points out that “in many communities [of nuns] the novices are kept from the community to protect them from the community and its ‘lots of mothers.’ It can be very difficult for a novice to discern when to be obedient and when someone’s interfering.” For men, in her thinking, “because they’re aiming at ordination

(achievement) it's very challenging to overcome and let one's life be just living life for Christ." Mother Prioress does feel there is an up side to obedience, for both men and women: "doing something that you didn't think you could do."

Sr. Vivian has this to say about the Rule and whether it needs to change:

Well, it's changing all the time you see. I mean some of the things that have grown up... you come up against the whole feminist issue here... 'monk' and the feminine 'nun' really only means 'a person who is seeking God single mindedly, single heartedly.' The whole question of enclosure for instance was imposed on women's communities but not on men's! For instance, you could be a monk without enclosure, taking up work outside the community, but you can't be a nun without enclosure! Now there's something wrong there. I mean, it's the one Rule of St Benedict. So I think there has to be an understanding of 'what do we mean by monastic' that's got to be the same for both men and women, which never has been.¹⁷

Sr. Marie gave a talk on St. Benedict in his time. "In St. Benedict's time there was more time dedicated to holy reading than there is now. 'Repetition brings authorship.' If you read the Prologue of St. Benedict's Rule about listening you can hear how Scripture pours out of him." In the time of St. Benedict, around the late 5th century and early 6th, it "was chaotic. The highly educated Roman nobles and the barbaric Goths were brought together to live side by side by Benedict, in his community. Both groups, in society, wouldn't mix before." In the Rule, Sr. Marie chooses to mention the following points that St. Benedict makes: "develop education according to your ability, gossip is constantly to be avoided, times of prayer equal the work of God, and holy reading is to be both done with effort and as a relaxing time."

In my interview with Sr. Mary Catherine on August 29, 1997, I asked her this question: Can you say something that you might have specifically learned from living the Rule of St. Benedict that might be insightful for people who have never read it? After a long pause, Sr. Mary Catherine responded in the following way.

¹⁷ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 29, 1997, p. 14. Please note that the written versions of my interviews with the nuns throughout the rest of the text may sometimes come across as rough. I have attempted to retain the precise spoken text, to give the authentic voice of each nun in her way of speaking.

I suppose the main thing is just not to take things for granted, not to expect life, happiness, etc on a plate. That life is...life is hard -- to be worked at. And after all we are just mortal human beings and one thing that strikes me is that we have to face death every day and I think we often, at least I often think of myself bigger, better than just another creature on this planet and if we remember, if I remember that it's actually completely out of my hands really, you know (pause), all I can do is, I suppose try and work at making the best of this life, you know, the life that I have, not necessarily the after life but just the life that I have. Why it's being respectful of life in general here, I mean there is a lot around respect, there's a lot about respecting [in the Rule of St. Benedict, like] the tools at the monastery are just as important as the vessels of the altar and it is, it's like even each grain of soil is to be respected because of what goodness it holds and so just not taking things for granted really.¹⁸

I then asked: Is that something that you have learned here specifically?

I'd say more so, whether it was something that was there but...it certainly formulates itself whilst being here and it is formulating itself and as I said because of the Rule, hearing it etc, things strike me, and I think 'yes, of course.' I suppose up until I came here I did, to a certain extent, just take things for granted and if something bad happened, it was 'well that's life' you know.

According to Sr. Angela in my interview with her on August 29, 1997, the best bit of life at Turvey Abbey, that which has taken her by surprise and that she didn't expect, is:

The kindness I think. People work pretty hard at trying to live up to the ideal in the Rule of how they should treat others and sometimes they make it and sometimes they don't. I mean that is also true of me. But, in actual fact, seeing people constantly picking themselves up and making the effort again is a real plus that I hadn't actually given very much thought to before I came but, yes, there is actually something maybe very enabling and certainly very positive about living in an environment where people will genuinely treat you with respect and courtesy and not just on a superficial level because they genuinely have a concern. It is very positive to live like that. It's also very enabling because what it does is it actually enables you to do the same if you are always getting that kind of treatment then it tends to make you feel, make you look a bit more at yourself and put yourself out more to return it...I am inclined to say there are a lot of benefits, that was one of the things that, the very first thing that I read about the Rule [of St. Benedict] was Esther de Waal's *Seeking God*, which is of course isn't written for people in monasteries at all and I was very struck reading it by how much it represented a balance reapplied. The reason I entered a monastery was because I couldn't sustain that way of life by myself, I didn't either have, I'm not

¹⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Mary Catherine on August 29, 1997, p. 20.

sure if it was willpower or concentration or determination or whatever to do it by myself so I came to do it in a monastery. But it's perfectly doable on your own and I actually think as a way of life it would just fit very well into an ordinary life away from a monastic setting with a career and a family and things like that. I think it would fit in very well with that.¹⁹

This idea of the transferability of the Rule of St. Benedict to others outside of a monastic context is illustrated in the questionnaire I sent to the other monastic communities; seven out of ten "strongly agreed" with the statement: "Our community is equivalent to any other household; we still have to pay our bills, vote, deal with illness and death as the next household."²⁰ In fact, the vision of the Founder of the *Vita et Pax* Foundation -- to which Turvey Benedictines belong -- is of a "Benedictine village of monks, nuns, and oblates (lay people who make a vow and live their life attached to a community like the Turvey Benedictines)" which was a "very pioneering" idea, according to Sr. Marie.

The talents, work, and interests of ordinary people can be used and appreciated while living the Rule of St. Benedict, whoever and wherever they are. For example, Sr. Agatha, an artist who combines art with monastic life believes that monastic life according to the Rule of St. Benedict encourages her artistic expression and vice versa.

Well, I think it is because here in our set-up we are encouraged to develop our talents. That is very much part of [Dom] Constantine's principle that we should develop what God has given us. It's in the Rule of St. Benedict....So I was put in the studios [at Schotenhof] but that was not easy because of the very strict style, very rigid almost, and I painted landscapes and flowers, you know, and I painted children's portraits and things like that....It has taken me ten years before I could really do work that was approved by the sisters in Schotenhof....You had also to polish your self, you had to stylize, if I may say in that way, to cut away your weaknesses and your bad inclinations and, well that is what monastic life is

¹⁹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Angela, August 29, 1997, pp. 20-21 and 25.

²⁰ The other three communities answered the question this way: two said strongly disagree, and one said "not really." Of the two that said strongly disagree, Mother Prioress from Turvey Abbey commented, "All that is true, but I wouldn't say we are equivalent to any household. There is a difference between 'community' and 'family.'"

about, to improve yourself. You must sculpt yourself. Cut off what is not right.²¹

In August of 1996, Sr. Celeste gave a talk to those participants of the Monastic Experience (of which I was one) about the Rule. Sr. Celeste, a physicist by education and the community's Bursar by work, said "the Rule speaks of reverence for each other and the Christ present in each other as well as the tools and goods we hold in common." In Sr. Celeste's words, "when one is reverencing, one looks through the eyes of love." She also adds that "reverence for the body is important. We have a responsibility to look after it, without making it a god." For her, "the link between the mind and body is so intimate that we can hardly separate them out."

The importance of the body is something the nuns talk about and practice a great deal. They never cross their legs because it cuts off circulation,²² they don't eat between meals unless they need to, there is a conscious attempt not to strain one's body if part of it is sore, and they have various body work done, particularly the Alexander Technique.²³ Overall the philosophy can be summarized: "Be grateful for what work you can do, but don't deny the body's needs."

Sr. Vivian, also in a talk in August 1996, explains that the Rule shows aspects of the Benedictine way (i.e. what prayer is) but "never tells how to do it." St. Benedict leaves room for interpretation in his Rule. For example, many of the early monks couldn't read, and therefore lots of repetition was used in prayer, particularly in practicing *Lectio Divina*. How *lectio* is practiced has changed because most nuns and monks can read now, but the essence of it has remained. As well, an individual community has scope to reinterpret the Rule according to changes in society over time.

²¹ From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Agatha, August 28, 1997, p. 13.

²² "As well as being good monastic ceremony!" I was told in the comments I received from the nuns on this draft.

²³ The Alexander Technique is "using the body and postural alignment advocated by the Australian-born physiotherapist Frederick Alexander (1869-1955)" according to *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume 1, A-M, p. 49.

Turvey Abbey has chosen to devote Sunday mostly to a time of rest rather than giving more time to *Lectio* as St. Benedict wanted in his day. This decision is made by the community based on a thought-out assessment of what the spirit of the Rule would want, and what a balanced perspective and decision would be. Likewise, the nuns at Turvey Abbey are no longer waking for 3am Office as they would have been in St. Benedict's time, also for carefully thought out reasons.

I asked her if St. Benedict had a reason for the quick pace of the time table -- I feel like I'm looking at my watch all day -- and Sr. Vivian replied that "the whole pace of the world is quicker now so it is also in the monastery. As well, we [Turvey] need to make a living without as much outside help as was available in St. Benedict's day."

Sr. Perpetua thinks a good nugget of wisdom from St. Benedict for how to live in a community or a family is the following:

If you start to think of all the differences, even in a family, that you have to cope with, if you are going to fix on that (laughs) then you do not stick it. But, as I say, in love you overlook it. And also in the Rule, I suppose it was very wise of St. Benedict, he says 'do not let the sun set on your anger and make it up before sunset.' If you take it seriously, that is a great help.²⁴

Sr. Vivian also speaks of St. Benedict and "sticking it" with patience.

St. Benedict talks about patience a lot...enduring with patience...That's very unpopular but if you meet any married couples who have survived long years of marriage and still love each other, it's always been through endurance and pain. I've never met a couple yet who persevered through marriage for whatever, twenty years or so, and who haven't gone through hell and back again and it's the same...the same with monastic life. It's the sort of patience and endurance and (pause) yeah I suppose it forges a strength. You hope it does anyway. You can see it in the old Sisters....²⁵

Vita et Pax (Life and Peace) Including Liturgy and Ecumenism

Sr. Perpetua was born on the 20th of August, 1935, near Antwerp, Belgium. In our interview in the apple shed at Turvey Abbey she told me how she entered the

²⁴ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Perpetua, August 28, 1997, p. 28.

²⁵ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p.19.

Schotenhof Benedictine community in 1964, had wanted to go to Brazil but ended up in England, first at Cockfosters and now at Turvey Abbey. She spoke "too much Dutch" with Mother Lucia, Sr. Agatha and others who were also from Belgium, or from Holland. While at Cockfosters she taught four to seven year olds and "learned English from the children, the quickest way to learn." In my interview with Sr. Perpetua on August 27, 1996, I asked her if Dom Constantine's emphasis on *Vita et Pax* is a charism:

Yes, most especially to work for ecumenism and that came from a request from the then Pope, who asked specifically the Benedictines to work for ecumenism, for unity.... 'Vita' is 'life' and 'Pax' is 'peace,' and in my life here when I started to be a nun [in 1964] we were more geared to work for unity [with baptized Christians] at that time. Now it is more broad also because of the feeling of unity and ecumenism on the whole. But Sr. Madeline does a lot of work there.

As I write this, I read in the *Boston Globe* that Pope John Paul II is visiting Egypt, the first time a pope has done so "in the history of Christendom." This visit is "an important message to the Egyptian government that the Coptic peoples are part of a larger Christian community worldwide. His Holiness brings a message of tolerance that needs to be heard."²⁶ The Coptic Catholic Bishop, Youhanna Kota, said (in the same article), "This visit deepens the ties between East and West, and will, we hope, put an end to these divisions." Mary Fahmi, a Coptic Orthodox, states, "This event...is a way to show we're all Christian, Orthodox or Catholic. And a way to show we all believe in one God, whether Christian or Muslim." In fact, the Vatican at this point in history is pressing ahead with ecumenical matters and encouraging various orders, particularly the Benedictines, to do so as well. Turvey Abbey has been ahead of the game for some time.

Sr. Perpetua carries the subject of unity beyond just believers in one God, or those who have been baptized into one or other Christian faith. She expresses her view of ecumenism subtly but fully in the following passage:

We find it too much...the millennium celebrations. We have not been doing

²⁶ Charles M. Sennott, "Pope begins Mideast pilgrimage," *Boston Globe*, February 25, 2000, p. A2.

anything for it, except grumbling that it isn't fair (laughs) and that it should not happen at all! We find it too much....saying that as if nobody else exists. The church wants to say that it is two thousand years that Christ was born, but where does that leave all the others who are non-church? We are such a small minority, really, worldwide, why should we put such an emphasis on it?....You get the people outside the church which we want to include. We want to see them more as God's people, just as well as baptized ones. We see it as *more*. In the beginning, when I entered, we wanted to work for unity but that was always with other baptized people, not with non-baptized people....That has been an evolution over the years. Father Constantine had more in mind. He wanted to build a church where there was a big hall where everybody could come and pray and in different chapels where the different denominations would go, because that was the thinking at that time -- they could not pray together. But he would bring them in a big hall together and have a Mass, the Catholics would go there, the Anglicans could go there, and so on. But I think he would include all the other religions at that time already. He was ahead of his time.²⁷

The community at Turvey Abbey, according to Mother Prioress, is a community where "we are different from each other, we don't basically come from the same economic, ecclesial, or cultural backgrounds." As a result, Mother Prioress thinks this makes them "more elastic. The more differences there are the more different you can be." She makes an analogy to making mayonnaise: "the more oil and the more oil you put in it's like an emulsion, that's how it works."

The connection between the community's focus on ecumenism and its diverse composition -- in background, age, and individual interest -- is an interesting one albeit not a conscious, thought out, link. Turvey Abbey has a "strong tradition of being quite a mixed bunch" which Mother Prioress feels "makes life difficult but interesting." When she became Prioress the community had four or five sisters in their nineties, but now the oldest is Mother Lucia at 86. This "loss of the ancients" is not a typical problem for religious communities; rather it is atypical as most of them are without new younger members.

In the Courses and Retreats offered by the Turvey Benedictines there are several weekends held that are ecumenical: "Meditation and Mindfulness -- An interfaith

²⁷ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Perpetua, August 28, 1997, pp. 24-26.

weekend, learning from Christian and Buddhist traditions of meditation and mindfulness"; "Zen Buddhist/Christian Meditation -- The practice of Zen meditation for Christians within a Benedictine setting"; "The Weaving of Peace -- A reflective study weekend exploring some of the links between Benedictine and Celtic spirituality in prayer, art and design, within the monastic context"; "Christian-Jewish Prayer -- The Psalms, Christian and Jewish worship"; and days for Interfaith marriage, etc.

The link at Turvey Abbey with Buddhism and Buddhist nuns and monks throughout Britain is especially strong. Sr. Perpetua illustrates this link:

We feel very much at home with the Buddhists which are around here. Also because they are of a certain kind, the forest kind²⁸, which are more understandable for us than other groups....They seem to be more near to us in the way that they live than others....Now there are existing in England a group of monastics which includes the Buddhists and us and they come together for meetings, also in each other's monasteries.

Is there difficulty around prayer? I asked.

Not now there is meditation! There is no difficulty. And they pray probably not to a god, more to a being. Not specifically a personal god, but you can pray! I can live with that. They come and sit in our little chapel in the Blessed Sacrament to pray. In practical terms we are different. For instance, they do not eat after midday, I think, they fast. They go begging, which we do not. So there are some practical points that are different, but the emphasis on living together for instance, they also have monks and nuns, the eldest nun is junior to the lowest monk. I don't think I would be happy with that! (laughs) To have that every day, in everything you do, that must be hard after a while....

Would your life be different if you were seated next to someone who was not specifically seeking God but was seeking enlightenment?

Yes, I do not know. Yes, we come together in the chapel and have the prayers there together that is communal. But for the rest, no. Your own private life and your private place, you are on your own, you do not share that with others so much. So if they were at those moments seeking enlightenment and I am seeking God, I think we would come to the same.

Sr. Marie, an iconographer, who teaches how to paint Greek and Russian icons to retreatants and others is very concerned about Christian unity, particularly that

²⁸ This type of Buddhism originates in Thailand.

between the Eastern Orthodox and Western churches. In fact this concern with Christian unity led her to enter Cockfosters at age twenty one. (Her father is Jewish and her mother is Anglican and they were unhappy that she entered.) She had gotten involved in the Catholic Youth Movement and discovered the Eastern rite. She discovered icons can be used as spiritual therapy and finds they "help her to see the Western way with clarity through the Eastern viewpoint." At Turvey Abbey, icons are used as a basis of prayer and worship in both the private Blessed Sacrament chapel and at times throughout the liturgical year in the main chapel. Many of these icons are hand painted by Sr. Marie, to professional standard. I was a part of a liturgical dance that Sr. Marie choreographed during an Easter celebration in March 1997. She often brings music from the Eastern rite as well as the traditions they celebrate, in the way they celebrate them, into Turvey Abbey life and liturgy. For instance on Holy Saturday, March 1997, Sr. Marie created a ritual of music and worship around the Eastern Orthodox tradition of Easter (which would be celebrated the following week according to their calendar).

Dom Julian gave a talk on August 13, 1996, on Liturgy. In that talk he said the following:

Liturgy is communal prayer. Christianity began with community and the individual was inserted into it. Therefore prayer is foremost a community act which shapes communities. Eucharistic prayer is at the heart of liturgy and the model for all our prayers in that it: 1) gives thanks first for creation, 2) recalls what Jesus has done (thanks for Jesus), and 3) is an expression of our trust in God through intercessions (prayer for a gift from the Holy Spirit). All the rest of worship circles around these three.

In Sr. Celeste's words as well as several other of the nuns' words, the best part of the life is "praying together, that supportive relationship, the fact that we come together regardless of how we're all feeling, and pray several times a day."²⁸

Furthermore, in response to my question "Can you visualize who you are without that prayer?" Sr. Celeste states:

Not really, because every nun, we really are held together by our common faith

²⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 6.

in God, our common deep conviction of God's mercy and love and that's what we endeavor to show to each other. Sometimes successfully, sometimes not, sometimes we have to remind each other of that....but I think that without that and without the grace of God we would not remain here.³⁰

The Office itself is a community prayer, and was designed for community living. As such, Sr. Angela doesn't say it by herself on holidays because "it doesn't really help." However, in ordinary days (not holiday times) "the fact that people are expecting you to be there [at the Office] sometimes gives you the push to get there."

According to Sr. Consolata, "the family that prays together stays together. The durability (sic) of the community is based in the liturgy. The physical reality of singing together holds us together through all vicissitudes."³¹ As well, "...If we allow the space for the unique individual to develop then we need something incredibly powerful to hold us together, and it is actually the physical being together that the liturgy involves - the physical location, making the same physical gestures, and vocalizing together -- that creates community."³²

At the Eucharist, the bread used in communion is baked at Turvey Abbey, made of flour and water. The wine is grape juice concentrate, purchased from a store. As for the reception of communion, the monks and nuns will not turn away anyone who asks or seeks to receive communion with the belief that Christ is the body and blood. This is a more open approach than is typical in the mainstream English Catholic Church.

At Lauds and Vespers, there is a lighting of candles which is a symbol of those at worship being an extension of the Eucharistic community. According to Dom Julian, "all the structures, hierarchies, etc of the church -- the 'newspaper image' of the church - don't speak to it being first and foremost local communities. The Roman Catholic

³⁰ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 6.

³¹ From an interview with Sr. Consolata on February 25, 1998 (this interview was not tape recorded), p. 3.

³² From an interview with Sr. Consolata on February 25, 1998 (this interview was not tape recorded), pp. 3-4.

Church is the link-up system of these local communities where it all begins.” So how then does worship and obedience go together? Dom Julian states, “they are twins. They belong together. There’s a risk of ‘obsessional neurosis’ but also a possibility for deep mystical connection.”

He cites the example of a person coming to his office who wanted to enter as a postulant. They were filled with a zeal “to pray all day.” This, he says, “is suspect in monastic circles. Holiness is a gift. What you can do [by ‘praying all day’ with such fervency] is stop it from occurring.” In his words:

Worship is like standing before a very beautiful painting. You can forget about the crowds. Let it absorb you and something of an inexpressible something comes to you. It communicates with us -- an extraordinary process -- leaving an imprint one doesn’t forget. The same with music; a concert that suddenly touches you. That kind of communication --art -- is what liturgy is all about. It’s not there to produce or ask...If you let it happen, it communicates something which can’t be put into words which is the mystery of God.

Mother Prioress feels that singing in Office and the Liturgy is “very important on several levels -- posture, breathing, willingness to be heard. It’s deeply personal.” She mentions that all novices are given singing lessons. Singing is a “great discipline for community life -- one must not leap ahead or lag behind the whole.” She adds “when you’re breathing well lots of things fall into place and you engage the whole of you. The singing here is wild rather than ethereal so it’s whole, engaging, and integral.”

In the Divine Office, or the Liturgy of the Hours, the focus is on the 150 psalms from the Old Testament which were (and still are) a focus of early Christianity.

The 150 poems which make up the book of psalms sing to us the human and divine history of Israel. A psalm is a religious song. The very word ‘psalm’ suggests a musical instrument...with which the singer accompanied his song....The psalms are a series of shouts: shouts of love and hatred; shouts of suffering or rejoicing; shouts of faith or hope....Israel has preserved these poems because it has recognized in them the expression of its unique religious destiny. The psalms repeat in lyrical form the teaching of the prophets; they recall the great events of a history that was itself a divine revelation; they meditate on the covenant....Enlightened by the Spirit of Pentecost the apostles saw the mysteries of Christ foreshadowed in these inspired poems....It is not surprising therefore that Christ’s Church should have found in the psalms her favorite prayer. These inspired verses resound in the liturgy of the Word, in the celebration of the

Mass, in the Divine Office and in the most varied ceremonies of every rite.³³

Every two weeks at Turvey Abbey all 150 psalms are sung across the seven days of Divine Office. Because the psalms are poems or tones, not hymns, reflecting the spoken word, they are meant to be sung. Turvey Abbey keeps this tradition, though most religious orders no longer do so. "Recite and the word and you will become one." According to Sr. Vivian the Office, the Liturgy of the Hours, is central to their life.

The central part [to our day to day lives] is the work of God, the Divine Office, which is about praising God and praying for the whole church. It's not just...you know, I mean we don't, we're not just praying for the church when we say 'Oh God, bless the church.' It's the whole of the Divine Office is the prayer of the church and it is praying for all those who don't or can't pray for themselves.³⁴ So that's central. It's an absolutely central focus to everything we do. St. Benedict says 'nothing should be preferred before it.' So everything comes to a standstill when that, when it's time for Office.³⁵

Sr. Consolata, the Choirmistress, was a professional cellist before entering Turvey Abbey. Now keyboard playing and singing replaces or fills some of what she gets from the music, but her cello playing doesn't really contribute to the community or monastic life. According to Sr. Consolata, "it's very difficult to play the cello half well, but there are some things that are and aren't 'monastic' and one should realize that."

One way the community lives "life and peace" is through its guest ministry. People from all walks of life come again and again. In the monastic week guests are asked for a donation of ten pounds per day or five pounds if they are unwaged -- this includes all meals and a bed, which is a very reasonable rate (equivalent to US\$16 or US\$8 per

³³ *The Grail Psalms*, translated from the Hebrew, Singing Version Arranged to the psalmody of Joseph Gelineau, London, Collins Liturgical Publication, 1963, pp. 5-8.

³⁴ Though Sr. Vivian doesn't specifically say it here, I have heard on several occasions prayers offered for all of God's creation, not just for humans.

³⁵ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p.16.

day).³⁶

“Seeking God by Living out Gospel Values”

I asked Mother Prioress at one point during a question and answer period after a talk she had given if there were qualities that were looked for in women who wanted to become nuns. She answered: “It’s very hard to pinpoint but... a twinkle in their eye! Is that person seeking God, primarily. And is the desire capable of becoming an overriding passion?” Her view is that “all of us have come with mixed motives, but seeking God must be the central criterion. Then they’ve got to want to be in this place with this bunch of people.” Mother Prioress mentions at some point in that same talk that monasteries are designed as they are “to facilitate the knowledge of self and God.”

According to Dom Julian, “we can’t approach God, we can only seek God.” We can only experience the mystery of God but we can’t rationalize it away. Individuals who receive that experience can come together in community, like they do at Turvey Abbey. Dom Julian thinks that “we are marginal to all the values of modern day society and therefore, in a sense, are outcasts.” He admits that “sometimes it hurts a bit to be so outside” but that “if one is occupied in seeking God, then at times something of God’s beauty will be glimpsed. That’s what keeps us going.” For him, a “peak experience” is not sex, shopping, or career advancement but “an immediate experience of the presence of God.” “Relationships in monastic life are symbolic of and mirror our companionship with Christ” says Dom Julian. As well, these relationships are meant to be “a return to paradise, beyond evil.”

I asked Sr. Vivian what she thinks makes the monastic life work. She answered:

I don’t know actually. I think...I think...people’s own desire to seek God. I mean, we’ve all come for the same thing really. However differently we all see it. I

³⁶ I was told in the comments the nuns gave me on the draft document that “the general tariff is higher.” According to the list of Turvey Abbey Retreats and Courses for 1998, weekends are £57 (\$75) and day retreats are £8.50 (\$12). There is also the comment: “The tariff just covers basic costs. Donations towards the maintenance of the chapel and community buildings, and the extra running costs are always welcome. On average, per person, it costs an additional £8 to maintain standards.”

think we trust each other so that if something goes wrong, that we, you know, fall out with each other or someone seems to be out of gear, one has to trust that everybody in their own way is seeking God and to find which is the right way to seek God in the situation....The first thing we came here for was to seek God not to seek ourselves.³⁷

Sr. Vivian was a Sister of Mercy, an apostolic (active) sister for over twenty five years before entering Turvey Abbey and contemplative life. In her reflections about apostolic and contemplative religious life, she makes the point that St. Benedict did not write his Rule about a specific job (i.e. teaching) but about seeking God. Apostolic orders are centralized around a specific job like teaching and tend to attract only those interested in such a job. However, in monastic life, where the focus is on seeking God, people can come from a very diverse set of backgrounds. In her words:

The only reason for being here is for seeking God, not to do art or to look after the guests or to, you know. These are incidentals.³⁸

Sr. Agatha was born on 17 July 1920 in Amsterdam. She is one of the older nuns and always appeared to radiate serenity as well as good humor and intelligence (particularly in the realm of ecology and sustainability). In my interview with her I am struck by her use of the word “trust”, and “trust in God.” Rather than speaking of “seeking God” she talks more about “trusting God.” As if at least in part her life has meant she has come to know God, at least enough to know that He is there, and to be trusted.

Sr. Carmen, like Sr. Agatha, was born in Holland but a bit later, in 1932. She went to Belgium to the Schotenhof Benedictines at seventeen and became an Oblate, and then later “switched over to being a nun.” Her blood sister was also a nun at Schotenhof. She went to Brazil for five years, came back to Schotenhof for several more years, and then in the 1960s she “was sent” to the Cockfosters community in England. I asked her how it had been moving to a new country and she replied:

³⁷ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 16.

³⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p.26.

Do you know, the culture you feel here are sisters and monks are one in Christ and the culture, that culture by itself, you see in each other Christ and that makes it easy because the culture is a second thing for me. The culture I find pleasant because I find the English people very polite.³⁹

Sr. Carmen is familiar with changing languages in the liturgy as well as in daily life. The Mass in her day was in Latin, so she learned her native Dutch, as well as the closely related Flemish, then Portuguese, then English. And throughout the one thing that has been the center has been her connection to seeking God, or Christ, in every community that she finds herself in. Yet, like Sr. Agatha, her conversation is centered on knowing Christ, or God, in a way that is about, somehow, looking back on the relationship from a place of knowing, deep knowing.

Sr. Rose is on the other end of the Turvey Abbey age scale to Sr. Carmen, one of the “young ones.” She was born in 1966, actually in Denmark, but moved to Sunderland, England when she was six months. Her mother is Danish and a convert to Catholicism from Lutheranism, a change that Sr. Rose believes made her “quite fresh [as in clear, not tainted]; she didn’t have the hang-ups and the strict rule keeping that my father’s side [Irish Catholic] had.” Sr. Rose speaks Danish fluently, having travelled to Denmark for “all the summer holidays when I was growing up.” Her father, from the West of Ireland, also learned Danish from being around it. She did a theology degree, taught for a few years, and when she came to Turvey Abbey finished up a Master’s degree.

Sr. Rose, expresses her interest in religious life at Turvey Abbey in this way:

I’m fascinated at how a group of women in this century can live together and make something work. I’m fascinated, really fascinated at how the older sisters do it and I want to see if I can do it as well. (pause) When I entered I was of a mind that I found it very hard to pray by myself. I needed the support of others. I still would hold to that, but now I know how hard it is to pray in a group....The thing is though, yes it’s praying, but it’s ordinary, it’s our work. The rapturous moment is rare, you know, the feeling I had when I came as a guest, ‘I can’t breathe this is so beautiful!’⁴⁰

³⁹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Carmen, August 28, 1997, p. 4.

⁴⁰ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, pp. 8-10.

Unlike some of the middle aged nuns -- Sr. Vivian, Mother Prioress -- or the older nuns -- Sr. Agatha, Sr. Carmen -- Sr. Rose does not use language like "seeking God", "one in Christ", or the like. Sr. Rose, like Sr. Mary Catherine (also born in 1966) and Sr. Emmanuel (younger still) uses words like "beautiful", "rapturous moment", "wanting to live a committed Christian life", and in particular, "there's a sense in which we are all working towards a common goal, have a common vision." It is as if she is looking ahead but has not quite found what is the subject of her seeking. At one point, however, Sr. Rose does say:

We know that even though manifestation is wildly different in each person, each person here is seeking God. I feel this is what makes it damn hard, but I feel that this is my place for now whereas before I was very happy teaching in the parish with friends, but there wasn't anything that bound everything together.⁴¹

Sr. Rose and Sr. Mary Catherine are, in a real sense, not quite of the secular world and not quite of Turvey Abbey. Interviews and time spent with Sr. Mary Catherine and Sr. Rose reveal women very much like me, concerned with worldly issues like clothing, aspirations, achievement, and a broad based reference to "meaning." Yet, the differences between their life and mine -- all of us born within a year -- in terms of travel, perceived independence, marriage and children, is obvious. Still, I am also aware that in being drawn to Turvey Abbey, and listening to that call, they are day by day enculturating themselves into a way of life that is based more on a quality of the community at Turvey Abbey than it is on the outside world beyond Turvey Abbey.

I am aware of the differences between the younger nuns and the older nuns in particular in terms of language, focus, and lifestyle. Somewhere in between are, literally, the middle aged nuns.

Sr. Angela was born in 1962 in Glasgow, Scotland. She is, I would say, just entering the middle age bracket, partly because of the underlying tone and contentedness with the life that I can feel in her. In my interview with Sr. Angela she uses language

⁴¹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, p. 21.

closer to the younger nuns -- "I was attracted to the openness and ordinariness" -- but has a self-assurance found in the middle aged and older nuns. She has spent enough time in the life at Turvey -- she entered in 1992, at thirty years old -- to have become accustomed to it, to have become comfortable with it. As well, her parents and friends have by now adapted to her living her life at Turvey Abbey.

Whereas both the younger nuns, Sr. Rose and Sr. Mary Catherine, mentioned they didn't know if they would stay at Turvey Abbey, Sr. Angela and the other nuns never mentioned this as being a thought for them. Another observation is regarding the parents of both Sr. Rose and Sr. Mary Catherine. Both of their sets of parents have found it difficult to fully accept Sr. Rose's and Sr. Mary Catherine's decisions to enter, as well as to adapt to this change in their lives. Both Sr. Mary Catherine and Sr. Rose are visibly disturbed by this difficulty, and talk about it. I think it makes it difficult for them to be fully present at Turvey Abbey as a result; they are being pulled from the outside to go back to the outside. Sr. Angela and the other nuns have parents who have come around to the idea and it is no longer an issue, at least not one that causes them to be distracted from their living the life.

Another aspect of "living the life" is living out Gospel values. I did not actually hear the phrase, "living out Gospel values" mentioned while at Turvey and so it has an intangible quality for me. I assume from my background in Catholic teaching and practice that "Gospel values" refers to living as Christ would intend, as Christ would live. And how did Christ live? The New Testament is the clearest source. As such, throughout the daily life at Turvey Abbey there are numerous New Testament readings and reflections. As they breathe in a knowledge of the life of Christ it permeates their thinking, feeling and ultimately their action. Like the early desert mothers and fathers, they are still focused on the New Testament and the life of Christ to instruct them in their living.

**“Developing Spiritual Awareness of the Unity of All Creation and
the Simple Beauty of Everyday Life”**

I have an abiding image of Sr. Celeste walking along a path at Turvey Abbey in the midst of a desolate winter day carrying a single red zinnia. As she was wearing a white habit and veil with a black coat against a grey sky it was particularly vivid. I did speak to her and she said she often picked a single flower, to take back to her room, and to use in her prayer. In a talk she gave in August 1996, Sr. Celeste commented that “the gardening and goats [at Turvey Abbey] aid them in keeping in touch with the real, our creatureliness, the cyclical nature of things.” She continues by saying that “reverence is closely related to appreciation of beauty. We can’t put beauty into things; beauty comes from God.”

In the community, Sr. Celeste believes that they:

aim to give of our giftedness through liturgical dance, poetry, making cards for each other, etc. All are expressions of giving to God what God has given to us. Beauty has the power to bring us out of ourselves...to ecstasy. We are creatures alongside a flower. Each in our own way, we are word of God.

There is unity in the created order: we are held in being and sustained in God. I always feel wonder to think of God speaking the words which became the created order. It is wonder-full.⁴²

Sr. Celeste, as a scientist, loves the “beautiful mathematics which can describe the created order, our beautiful universe.” She follows the research and exchange of dialog currently occurring between scientists and religionists about the origin of the universe. And, at times, she and Sr. Scholastica (another physicist) have attended conferences on science and religion. However, Sr. Scholastica says she is “too practical for the conferences. I don’t really get into the philosophy or how the conferences are run.” Sr. Celeste now reads journals more than she attends conferences. She believes firmly that “our rationality informs our prayer” and feels “it’s possible to be both a scientist and a believer.” To that effect she cites Psalm 8. In the preface to this psalm,

⁴² From a talk given by Sr. Celeste on August 7, 1996, in Bec House to the participants of the Monastic Experience.

entitled "Man the viceroy of God", the author comments "man is little less than a God because he has a share in God's dominion. He is much greater than the stars because, child though he is before the Eternal, he has a voice for praise."

How great is your name, O Lord our God,
through all the earth!

Your majesty is praised above the heavens;
on the lips of children and of babes
you have found praise to foil your enemy,
to silence the foe and the rebel.

When I see the heavens, the work of your hands,
The moon and stars which you arranged,
what is man that you should keep him in mind,
mortal man that you care for him?⁴³

According to Sr. Celeste, "if you are a believer to begin with, extraordinary circumstances (for example the anthropic principle and the formation of carbon) further belief." She is, however, upset with the popular media's presentation of science because "the arguments are presented in such a way as to be so self-consistent that there's no room for God." Still, Sr. Celeste thinks one can take what is offered by science and tie it in with one's own spirituality, to find connections with one's religion. In her view, "the hearing of the voice of God is communication direct to the mind/soul not via the brain -- a tape recorder couldn't pick it up!" For her there is "lots of evidence, though unprovable, for the existence of God."

The original meaning of "symbol" was actually linking things together rather than just representation (like coin for money) as it is commonly understood now. St. Augustine said that a symbol "hides what it reveals" and that "the mystery of God is hidden yet it is revealed; humans are like walking symbols." In doing a symbolic act -- like putting flowers on a grave, or lighting candles before Mass -- we are linking one thing to another. The act may seem nonsensical (i.e. putting flowers on a grave) yet it

⁴³ Abridged from *The Grail Psalms*, Translated from the Hebrew, Singing Version arranged to the psalmody of Joseph Gelineau, London, Collins Liturgical Publications, 1963, Psalm 8, p. 26.

somehow brings immense comfort. This is the essence of symbolism, and also a way of seeking God. As we enact symbols we create the linking of one thing to another and deepen our awareness of everyday life.

In my notes from August 1996 I wrote this:

On a walk before dinner after Vespers, I saw four rabbits playing at the edge of the nun's lawn and the forest area. There is a chair facing them -- was it placed there to watch them?

I pet the goats' heads. On my walk -- so many public footpaths! -- I meet a horse. Calling to her 'Hi Pretty', she comes. I rub her head. All is well.

The flowers in the chapel are always exquisite. One or more of the nuns are of the standard of professional flower arrangers. Most, if not all, of the flowers are grown in the gardens of Turvey Abbey. The presence or absence of flowers, their colors, textures, arrangement give a subtle but effective cue as to the time of the year and the season of the religious calendar (e.g., a bare altar for Good Friday, and huge white bouquets for Easter).

Sr. Scholastica tells a story to which she laughs so heartily I am sure it can be heard by Mother Prioress across the hall:

There was this sister who was confined to her room, who had a goldfish she talked to. She called it 'x' because she wanted to get off her chest all the things she disliked about X! Also, another nun could sing a certain song and the fish would come to the top of the tank...She just 'knew' them, she said!

Sr. Vivian has her own story to tell, about Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Lectio can be used with music, art, and nature. Imagination in prayer is where our work senses are most used. St. Ignatius developed it, but has been in the monastic tradition for a long time. Gerard Manley Hopkins once contemplated a bluebell for one hour. He saw how beautiful it was and in it he knew the beauty of the Lord.

Sr. Vivian comments during our interview about the monastic tradition and respect for the earth.

It's there in the Christian tradition all the time. It's there in the monastic tradition, respect for the earth and respect for the balance and the respect for humanity. It's been there in the monastic tradition and you know the early Christian tradition what was in the Celtic church which got wiped out, or knocked

out or knocked to one side you know. It's the same kind of thing. The presence of God is in everything but that's what the whole monastic thing is about. I mean, that's why work...it doesn't matter whether you're in the art studio or the garden or cleaning the toilets or talking to the guest. It's...it's the presence of God within the present moment."⁴⁴

Buildings and Landscape

According to a pamphlet available for sale at 20p (32 cents) in the Turvey Abbey shop, the Turvey Benedictines make a distinction between "the Communities" and "the Buildings." This is what is said about the buildings:

Though the main house has always been known as Turvey Abbey, it never was a monastery until 1980. Its history is a puzzle. The land may once have been owned by a religious house, possibly the Benedictine Priory of St. Neots or the Augustinian Abbey of St. James in Northampton. There are no real clues until 1670 when the Brand family is first recorded in the parish register. They were known to be a Catholic family and tenants of the Earl of Peterborough, Lord Mordaunt. The last Brand living in the Abbey, Winifred, died in 1745 and the Abbey and outbuildings were sold in 1786 to Charles Higgins. The Higgins family was responsible for much of the present character of the buildings, the gardens and Abbey Park. Tenants of the Higgins family remained until 1955 when the Abbey was bought by the late Mr. Rupert Allen. His daughter, Mrs. Jocelyn Nash, lived here with her husband until 1977 when the estate was sold to the Association of International Accountants who made it their headquarters for three years. Finally the Benedictines acquired it in 1980.

Over two days in August of 1997 I took a video and made a commentary on the buildings and landscape of The Priory of Our Lady of Peace (not including the monks' monastery) as I found it. What follows is what I said about Turvey Abbey at that time.

It is 7:30am and the traffic is picking up considerably. It is very noisy. The wall along the front of Turvey Abbey is made of stone with large gaps where foliage is growing. Turvey Abbey is at the extreme end of the village of Turvey (towards Bedford) where the speed limit is just changing from 30mph to 60mph. Traffic coming from Bedford is doing approximately 60mph when it reaches Turvey and then begins to slow down slightly as it arrives in the center of the village. There is no sign far enough from Turvey to alert drivers to slow down prior to arriving in the village, or a speed bump or

⁴⁴ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p.27.

other traffic calming devices in place.⁴⁵

The main entrance into Turvey Abbey is hard to access because of the traffic problem. However once you have entered the gates there is a feeling of instant calm. The main building dates from the Jacobean period and is made of old yellowed local stone, with a very interesting roof line with chimneys. The front door is ornate, attractive, but very heavy. All the signs (e.g. "Turvey Abbey") are of the same artistic style, throughout the property. The rock drive matches the color of the building's walls and allows one to hear when a car enters the area. Potted plants provide a friendly and natural barrier between car area and walking area. Inside the main entrance is a chair and small table with visitor's book; it is a confusing space for guests as one feels that one is on top of the private space of the nuns.

There is a small library very close to the entrance with a wheelchair lift to the second floor and the community room. Carpet tiles are on most of the floors in the main building. The community room is light and sunny, but small and cramped for eighteen nuns to be meeting. Wooden chairs are in a circle around the room, and in the center is a coffee table with religious magazines and newspapers. Fireplaces throughout the building are either boarded up or not in use. Potted plants are on stairways and in windows. I was asked not to film on the third floor where there are private bedrooms and I did not go there. In the bathroom on the 2nd floor near where I was staying at the time are: a scale, a bath, toilet, chair, sink; all tiled, simple. In my bedroom (similar to all the guest rooms) are: wooden bed, a sink with mirror, desk with kneeling chair, another chair, a wardrobe, a lamp, and a crucifix on the wall.

Flower beds edge several buildings -- which must be very labor intensive if it is to be kept tidy. The path from the main building and chapel to Bec House (the guest accommodation) is well lit, but the path onwards from Bec House to the Cottage across Jacks Lane is not. Overall there is a feeling of the property being managed but not

⁴⁵ I am told by the nuns, as of March 27, 2000, that "this has changed. There are now speed cameras -- it has helped."

manicured. (Note: It is August which is peak time for growing things.) A trash bin by Bec House is one-fifth full: some food scraps, laundry detergent, etc. The landscaping of the area around Bec House is extensive -- sculpture, benches, water garden, trellising, plants, cut lawn, paths made out of arranged bricks, arch cut in hedge -- yet carries the feeling of deep repose and meditation.

Bec House is mostly stone but also wood with a lot of windows on the side facing away from traffic. Inside, it often feels cold in the common areas near these windows. There is a lovely wooden staircase leading up to the second level. This space is light but drafty. There is a loud clock which ticks through the night. A large kitchen with a stove, small fridge, a pay phone, and a sink and cabinets for tea and coffee and nibbles is evident. The kitchen is much larger than need be for the use of it by the guests (as all meals are catered for already in other parts of the monastery). A shower room for all the guests on the first floor (ground floor) has one inadequate shower, a toilet, and a sink. The upstairs area has two guest rooms separated by curtains and these two rooms share a bathroom. The group meeting room is drafty and usually cold and dark. The stone wall that is at the front of the property meets up with a solid stone wall along Jacks Lane around almost the entire perimeter of the property -- private, enclosing. The cottage across Jacks Lane which is also for guests feels separate from the monastery in several senses, particularly because it is outside the perimeter wall and is a house right next to other ordinary houses in the village. In the trash bin at the cottage, again, there is very little trash and what is there is in tidy little plastic sacks. It does not feel welcoming from the outside (a neighbor's car is parked in the drive) but inside it is very similar to Bec House and has the interior feel of the monastery.

Back by the main building is the Chapel that was built in 1991. It is a magnificent structure in keeping with the architecture and local materials of the site and adding a modern, light, airy feel on the inside. Before entering, in a corner, are cut and polished tree trunks from the original beams of the old house, ie. dating back to 1602 --

one with a clay bowl and holy water, and one with a Zen bell on a pillow. The windows in the Chapel are of an excellent standard, but some of the windows in other parts of the property are not. In the English climate all windows should be at least double glazed, if not triple glazed with argon fill to be most energy efficient. Radiators and storage heaters are in evidence. Small potted plants are in each of the window sills in the hall leading to the chapel. There is a statue of Mary on another polished wood tree trunk, next to a large candle on a smaller tree trunk. It is evident that the Chapel is where most of their attention flows -- it is beautiful, well designed, furnished, and has the feel of being the heart of the place. Large, multi colored tapestries made by some of the nuns hang in the chapel: "Day unto day takes up the story and night unto night makes known the message." The altar is hand made of three polished tree trunks with another polished ancient tree piece on top. Between the three base tree trunks is another flat cut piece of tree with a vase filled with flowers arranged by one of the nuns (to professional standard).

Inside, near the chapel on the way to Brand House, is the shop selling Turvey Abbey goods as well as a restroom with four toilets -- simple, welcoming, and effective. Brand House is where the guests usually dine. It used to be a barn and was converted, with the high beamed ceiling still in evidence. There are compost buckets for leftover food and tea bags, much of which goes to the goats, and paper and plastic recycling. A huge tapestry drapes one wall; a handmade stone mosaic another wall. The space makes the most of natural light -- is well lit, painted off white, and open.

In the main building is a parlor for guests to dine in when there are only a few staying at a time. It is also a place for the nuns to meet with friends or family, or to have a private meal with them. Usually the nuns eat in the Refectory, a large room in the main building. On the day I am filming, the places have already been set. You can very readily hear the street noise from this room. A sign in the corner is for listing the number of guests for the day at each of the meals. In the back of the Refectory is a

washing up area, a boiling water tap for tea and coffee, and large cabinets. Mugs are made by the monks.

The pantry is very well organized, stocked with floor-to-ceiling shelving and containing such items as pinto beans, wheat germ, red lentils, mung dahl, trays of eggs, a large box of individual packets of potato chips, etc. There is a bread making area with an old fashioned scale, large sacks of flour, and an industrial size electric mixer. On this day in August, I counted fourteen bread tins waiting to be filled. In the kitchen is a gas stove, metal shelves, white tiles, spice racks, wooden cabinets, a large sink. It is not too neat, yet orderly. There is a microwave and a meat or cheese slicer and two refrigerators (American-sized). Outside, near the kitchen is a well concealed yet spacious area for waste = four dustbins for standard waste, one for compost, pallets used to transport fruit and vegetable from/to the gardens. Inside, in the hall area next to the kitchen is a large deep freeze. Nearby is a big basket of apples, a lovely wicker basket full of beans from the garden, and a sink. There is a recycling box full of newspaper.

Next to this area is a laundry room with large baskets marked, "cotton", "normal", "colored", and "wool." A large dryer is evident and a sink, as well as many wooden cubicles (probably where each nun's clothes is placed when washed and folded).

Near the kitchen but down a half level is the boiler room. There is a well-insulated boiler, coats, some drying laundry, a storage area of light bulbs, lots of pairs of Wellington boots, work habits. This area was somewhat dirty and messy.

Ravenswood is the name for an area of private rooms (cells) off the chapel. On the outside it is an exquisitely beautiful and healing space: a path bordered with flowers, quiet, an exceptional life-size mosaic of St. Benedict in the trees with birds. Inside there is an extra room with freezers and dairy. As well there is a room for furniture storage which seems to double as a space for tea and coffee with a sink and a stove. Upstairs is a general office with three or four computers with printers, a fax, and filing

area. A bathroom for the disabled has been fitted in Ravenswood.

In the back of the main building -- what was originally the front of the house when it was a family dwelling -- is a large, flat lawn that is discreetly marked private. There are chairs and benches around for private reflection, or for watching the many rabbits go in and out of the many warrens. In February there is a meadow area which is covered in daffodils. The back of the main building is of an interesting and complicated design. There is a statue of the Virgin, a bird table, and a very colorful mosaic sun dial. Paned lead glass are still distinctly in evidence in the large windows to the library. Inside, the library is a massive room, probably once used as a great hall. It doubles as a community room for meetings. It is a very special room with well crafted wood carved doors, shelves, walls, and ceiling. There are lots of books in evidence, including novels.

Off the large library is the sewing room in one corner, and beyond that, through a set of doors, is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel for private prayer that contains icons that Sr. Marie made. There are kneelers and meditation stools around the room, icons, tapestries, simple flower arrangements, and an icon with candles at floor level in the center at the front of the room.

The sewing room, which opens into a small enclosed garden at the back, has floor to ceiling modern windows and doors allowing a lot of natural light into the space. There are lots of colorful materials on lots of shelves, books, priests' vestments (just made), machines, and long flat tables to work on. On one table is the magazine, "Inspirations for Your Home." It feels like a well loved space. On the day I was filming, a guest, Chris a retired gardener, is creating rock gardens for the nuns and chatting with one of the nuns with the art room door open. The sound of the traffic is loud, even at the back. Paths around this art room area out to the goat house and around the back lawn have the feel of a nature trail though they are not marked as such.

The wooden goat shed is also a well-crafted and attractive building. There are nine goats living there as of August 1997. They are healthy and exuberant animals.

There is a long run from the goat shed. On the fence around the goat shed are tied broccoli bunches – the largest vegetable garden is nearby and when various plants are harvested some of the leftovers get given to the goats (e.g. stalks from broccoli and cabbage). The goat shed is within an orchard of young trees. Large compost piles are in a corner of the property near the goat shed in various stages of decomposition. They are rectangular heaps built up with muck from the goat shed layered with straw. Nettles (signaling soil fertility) are colonizing some of the piles.

The vegetable garden near the goats is the main vegetable growing area. It is in a good location with a low fence surrounding beans, carrots, beets, onions, leeks, lettuces, etc. It is a vibrant place and the nuns have bought a new freezer to accommodate all the produce. However, it takes a lot of labor; the nuns are not sure if they will keep it going. Weed killer is used.

Beyond the lawn and vegetable garden is a mixed woodland area with a winding path. It has a natural but managed feel. Leaf compost piles decompose in a far SE corner, near a wood and stone ruin that looks like a tower. It is used by some nuns for hermitage time. It needs significant work if it is to be made into a proper shelter for guests. Circling the entire structure on the inside is an engraved inscription: “Sure is he that is persuaded in his breast to trust all times. That man is blessed and happy.”

A stone wall runs the perimeter of the back part of the property near the ruin and over this wall is a gully (four to five feet deep by six feet wide) filled with inhospitable stinging nettles and brambles. A farmer in the next field is cutting the pasture with a tractor. Lots of insects, butterflies, and birds are evident. There is a pond in the mixed woodland complete with wetland indicator species (e.g. water lilies). A tire swing hangs from a huge horse chestnut.⁴⁵ Farther along the path a bonfire site is smoldering; it is often in use burning vines, etc. Compost sites for decomposing kitchen waste are near the bonfire site, in the old orchard where most of the apples grow and are

⁴⁵ Mother Prioress said --“it is actually a Linden (lime) tree that is the tallest in Bedfordshire” – though Sr. Vivian thinks it is a horse chestnut after all.

harvested. Two caravans used for holidays by the nuns are in view (there are three caravans on the property). This is the quietest part of the property, but also the least attractive. A large buddleia is attracting butterflies. An old wood shed without windows has many strings of onions drying from its rafters.

At another corner of the property, near the private house on the other side of the perimeter wall, are more gardens -- vegetable, fruit, and flower. Some cabbage is growing through black plastic. There is a rain collection barrel and six large cold frames and the third caravan here. Another area of garden is sectioned off by a stone wall and metal gate behind which are big fruit cages with red and black currants, gooseberries, strawberries, etc. There are irrigation hoses for the fruit. Multicolored flowers in an array of varieties are loaded with butterflies. According to Sr. Celeste there are some flowers at least all year round. Several types of squash, rhubarb, zinnias and cosmos are in evidence. It is neat but also wild with brambles in some areas. A metal and glass lean-to greenhouse is along the stone wall; it gets lots of sun and is out of the wind. The greenhouse is used throughout the year for seedlings and overwintering large potted plants. Outside the greenhouse there are large plastic trash barrels used for rainwater collection and irrigation. More flowers: irises, roses, poppies (drying), rose hips.

Out of this garden, on the left, is a gate to the monks' area where a few free range chickens are pecking about their yard. You can hear choir practice in the chapel from here. Off to the right is an apple shed with neatly arranged pots (plastic and terra cotta), bow saws, spades, trowels, gloves, buckets, peat moss, grow bags, wheelbarrows, rakes, braided onion sets, poppies drying, and ladders. There is a hermitage space on the other side of the apple shed, under the same roof.

A stone arch between the apple orchard area and the path to the back of the main building is covered in vines. Another gate leads to the Easter Garden (which has been redone since this video). In the Easter Garden are the remains of monks and nuns from

the communities, marked under three wooden crosses. There is a reflective pool with water lilies and dense plant life, chairs for sitting and reflecting, and metal plaques around the perimeter with the Stations of the Cross. From the path in front of the enclosed Easter Garden it is not far back to the area behind the Chapel and its mosaic plaque inscribed "1991."

Sr. Scholastica shows me the original plans they made for the current configuration of Turvey Abbey when they were moving there. She states that "things have changed from the original idea, and not all the plans were implemented, but many were."

Dr. Fritsch, in his fax dated January 21, 2000 has written this comment about my video:

Your video tape had good photography of the grounds of the Abbey. In the early part around the immediate main buildings I was unable to hear about half or more of your voice due to the heavy traffic. They certainly need some sound barriers of some sort. The sound improved as you entered the inner courts, the goat areas, the gardens, berry areas, orchard, and the meadows. These were apparently away from the roads. The flowers and grounds are beautiful and you show the characteristics of the place quite well. While the tour was quite scenic and detailed, I was left without a map or a sense of directions (I only heard a general direction once but there could have been more). This was shot before our walk through in September [in Baltimore] and I am sure you would have added directions if you had done it after the Baltimore trip. It was the difficulty I always have when viewing an area I had not observed. I feel somewhat lost and frustrated while truly intrigued. One's bearings are important.

I am uncertain what you have done with the Abbey study. I never once heard a critical remark such as 'this would be a good site for solar applications,' though I could have missed some. I am intrigued as to what you came up with in your own assessment of the property. If you have any arrangement of priorities I would like to know them.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have described and given voice to the daily reality and physical surroundings of the nuns of The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey, Turvey, England. This reality is important to understand as it is the foundation for both the analysis of Chapter V (“What I Learned”) and the synthesis and interpretation of Chapter VI (“So What?”).

What has been described in this chapter comes from the data found in participant observation, interviews, and the questionnaire. The areas of the daily reality I describe were based on the communities and their buildings and the explicit values found in the written documents Turvey Abbey uses to explain itself to the wider world: “Living According to the Rule of St. Benedict”; *Vita et Pax* (Life and Peace) including Liturgy and Ecumenism; “Seeking God by Living out Gospel Values”; and “Developing Spiritual Awareness of the Unity of All Creation and the Simple Beauty of Everyday Life.” Finally, I described the communal “Buildings and Landscape.” The purpose of this chapter was to capture for the reader the essence of the Turvey Abbey nuns and the place in which they live.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF DATA: WHAT I LEARNED

In Chapter IV I remained very close to the data. I described what I found through the two primary methods of this case study (participant observation and the twelve interviews) and the two secondary methods (the ecological survey and the questionnaire). The data was selected according to explicitly named values stated in the literature of Turvey Abbey.

In Chapter V, I analyze what I have learned from Chapter IV. From the explicitly named values I move to looking at the *implicit* values and issues found at Turvey Abbey. Yet, I still remain close to the data. Two of the essential questions which are focused on in this chapter are:

- How does the data fit together?
- What is coming together as a pattern?

This chapter is organized according to the patterns of themes which emerged across the four data gathering methods. The essence of the chapter is still description, but it is organized according to themes, patterns, and implicit ideas rather than according to the pre-defined and explicit categories like "The Daily Reality" and "Giving Voice to That Reality" found in Chapter IV. The four methods I have used do not determine my findings here. Rather, larger issues or ideas that overlap several of the data categories are analyzed according to the original research questions, rationale, and purpose defined in Chapter I. Again, the core research question to be considered is:

- How has the way of life of nuns in a monastic community been a sustaining one?

The following questions stem from this question: How do monastic nuns live? Why do they choose to live a self-limiting life? Do the beliefs, practices, and attitudes of nuns constitute a sustainable way of living? How do we know that? Who are nuns?

These original questions give orientation to this study. Of my data I ask the question:

- What are the issues confronting the nuns?

I go back to the original questions and purpose and key concepts of this study for orientation in selecting these issues. Issues that are relevant are those recurrent statements and/or patterns within the data that strike me. My analysis is the way that I organize this chapter in the certain way that I have with the categories that I've described. It is significant that this chapter sticks close to the data and tells the reader how I've made significance of it. I have listened closely to the data for what the categories should be and for the data's own words.

I have now analyzed the data and selected the following implicitly known issues or themes: "leaving each other free"¹; openness; space to find one's true self; silence; a deep attraction for something more; faith and trust; attachment and change; ordinariness; and a balanced life: rhythm and regularity. The rest of the chapter will be based on fleshing out these themes. Notice, however, that within each implicitly named theme will be references to the explicitly named values of Chapter IV (e.g. The Rule of St. Benedict, *vita et pax*, etc.).

"Leaving Each Other Free"

Freedom is a very significant concept for human life, and in particular in a situation where eighteen people are sharing the same buildings, and doing so for mostly twenty-four hours a day without leaving the property to go and pursue individual interests. According to the questionnaire, the nuns at Turvey Abbey own two cars among eighteen persons, and most of the eighteen do not leave the grounds of Turvey Abbey. A few do, with restrictions, according to the needs of the community for shopping, travel, etc. But at least five times across the day all of the community is required to be in Chapel for the Divine Office or Liturgy.

¹ The quotes indicate that I am using the phrase in the way it was worded by the nuns themselves.

“Leaving each other free” is a concept that is implicitly understood among community members, though it is not cited in any of their literature. I heard this phrase time and again from the nuns to refer both to an attitude and a behavior that was significant to their community. Sr. Vivian refers to it directly in this passage:

Well, you see when you're living together like we do here you have to give each other a lot of space and that's where solitude comes in. I mean, solitude is about having your own, being in your own space with God and...not interfering with...not intruding in other people's space. That's what silence is about as well, some of it...allowing people's...when I first came here I thought it sounded really cold blooded to leave people to sort of sink or swim and it was called 'leaving people free' and you know I thought it was terrible. But I can see the sense of it now as I have been here longer because you have to work out your own salvation. You can't...you can't be carried by people in this kind of life. It's like you know, going across the desert. You can't expect people to carry you...carry your...you have to carry your own luggage and um you have to know what luggage you're carrying as well (laughs) and so space is very important. It's very important that we leave each other free to grow...because otherwise...you would just become very small.²

This passage touches on solitude, silence, and space while discussing “leaving each other free.” This sort of intersection will occur frequently among the themes in this chapter, but is particularly involved in this section, “leaving each other free.” The concept involves many aspects of relationship in both attitude and practice. Further, “leaving each other free” is a concept that takes different forms for different nuns, especially in the way that they speak of its influence on their lives.

Sr. Scholastica was born in Liverpool, England, on March 22, 1949 and her strong Liverpudlian accent still gives voice to that place. She was just under twenty-one when she joined the Catholic Church as a student in her last year of university. She went to Ghana as a physics teacher and “by coincidence” joined The Little Sisters of Jesus as a postulant. The sisters there suggested she try monastic life; Sr. Scholastica “would never have gone near the Benedictines because I thought they were kind of snooty, you see (laughs).” She agrees with a sister of The Little Sisters of Jesus that their life wasn't the right life for her. She says they are contemplative, but that “they have a

²From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 20.

very unstructured kind of chaotic life and Sister Consulate pointed out that I was very attached to the Divine Office.” Sr. Scholastica had a big hand in the move from Cockfosters to Turvey, particularly on the practical details of designing and building the new chapel, the landscaping, and the overall blueprints of the new monastery. And what were the elements of living at Cockfosters that suited her?

I like manual work rather than study. I think it suits. I think...it obviously suits me to have a more ordered sort of existence than a kind of jungle. It wears me out very quick to try to deal with people funnily enough, but the basis of this community of people is minding their own business and that's an element... I'd never come across that. I mean before it didn't give anybody any space at all....I mean I was basically blacked out for getting involved in Christianity in the first place. I joined the Baptist Church and I could never cope with that; my parents, there was never any openness about it. I mean I couldn't be let be and do what I wanted, you know, all sort of crammed up.³

Sr. Scholastica describes an experience she has had where she didn't feel “left to be free” in this way:

I lived with [Miss Jones]....When she said she wasn't well, I'd probably say 'what's the matter' and she'd probably say 'oh well I've got a headache or a stomach ache, it's the wrong time of the month' or something or other, and we wouldn't do that here. And so although I'm living right next to people, or twenty foot down the corridor from people, or...I don't know what's the matter with them other than there's something the matter if you like and it's not my business to ask them.⁴

When a nun enters Turvey Abbey she knows that “leaving each other free” is part of the life. There is an expectation that everyone practices this, even though some struggle with it, believing it to be uncharitable. According to Sr. Scholastica, however, “when you have twenty people keep coming and asking you 'are you all right' then you see the value of people not doing so.” The people who do do this she doesn't feel are all that popular.

We don't rush to help or organize people, but you will find that the other way round somebody is willing to take the thing off you immediately because they

³ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Scholastica, August 27, 1997, pp. 8-9.

⁴ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Scholastica, August 27, 1997, p. 14.

think you need help and you're not free. That's another reason, always very strong about letting these people be free to do things their own way. It can sound like a most terrible uncharitable kind of situation you know, but I mean there's always a discernment and we're never rigid about actually, I mean I've seen somebody awhile back -- we don't talk while we're washing the dishes -- and one day somebody was very uptight about some person and she chatted away for the whole time because she was talking to somebody who was in a terrible state over something that had happened and she just happily chatted through the whole thing. That's exactly the right thing to do you know, and she just kept by that person who was just kind of seething and covering up....But you have to use your intelligence on this. I mean there's no cut and dried set of....I mean you get everything you can imagine....⁵

"Leaving people alone", or "leaving each other free" involves an expectation of minding one's own business or, in Sr. Vivian's words, "protecting each other's solitude -- being together alone." Yet for some, particularly the newer members who are not used to this attitude or way of behaving, it can be a very difficult experience, even alienating. Sr. Mary Catherine, one of these younger nuns points to an isolation she feels at Turvey Abbey.

I know people here are very accepting but they don't know me, I've only been here three years and because of the set up it's a very slow process of getting to know you. So I do feel quite isolated here, and should I show that bit of myself or should I not? And I am to a certain extent afraid of 'wow, this is me' in case the 'this is me' isn't right. Whereas having grown up with my family and friends who just seem to happen along the way and you just know that they'll like you or they'll ring you because they want your company, whereas here you'd never get somebody seeking you out because they wanted company. You don't get phone calls from Sister Perpetua, it just doesn't happen and fair enough it's probably, it's just communication, appreciation and all that on a different level, and it's just tuning in to that level which I haven't accomplished yet.⁶

Sr. Rose, also one of the younger nuns, comments:

The thing that occupies my mind a lot at the moment is free time. When I first came I thought 'gosh, I've never had so much free time' it was enormous....Now you don't know what to do with yourself, free afternoons. 'Oh what to do all by myself.' The usual things that we would do to refresh ourselves, it was a great shock. I was a great buyer of clothes and books and things, you know you couldn't do that. You couldn't just get in the car and go for half an hour and look in the

⁵From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Scholastica, August 27, 1997, p. 12.

⁶From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Mary Catherine on August 29, 1997, p. 18.

bookshop for something. So you have to make up your own thing.⁷

Sr. Rose's description of her difficulty with free time is part of a process in coming to live monastic life, and presents some of the challenges for a modern person in doing so -- weaning oneself off buying things as a basis for life, learning to be on one's own, learning to make things, etc. Each individual nun who is undergoing this shift in life (from modern secular life to monastic life) will experience some level of distress. As such, "leaving each other free" is a method to enable that transition to occur, even if it is difficult, rather than remaining stuck somewhere in between. It is a process of maturation. The end result is freedom of self, rather than enslavement to attitudes and behaviors (e.g. buying as a way of worship) which are known to be un-free in monastic wisdom (as well as elsewhere).⁸

Mother Prioress adds this to the topic of "leaving each other free", or the things that bring freedom:

Silence, privacy, the monastic approach of discretion which is a very hard one to... actually I was just having a chat with someone yesterday about it. It is a hard thing to get a hold of. It is learning where to reach out, and where to stand back, which is something that you must learn in any sort of loving relationship. But again it is something that we have to practice very strongly. You have to learn it, the problem is in a community you have to learn it not with one person like in a marriage, but with eighteen. It is very different and can be very confusing, it can be hard to learn where you should interfere, where you should interact, go into something, and where you should step back and just let it ride. That takes a lot of learning. A lot of humility to learn that. And it will be different for different people....[in the liturgy, if someone forgets something] the sort of basic rule is 'if it's going to cause more disruption by correcting it than leaving it then leave it.' But if it needs to be corrected you correct it, you do that in as discreet a way as possible.⁹

"Leaving each other free" also allows the diversity within the community to flourish, and to not be a hindrance. For example, Sr. Vivian comments:

...We've got about four or five nationalities. But the backgrounds are very

⁷ From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, p. 6.

⁸ "Leaving each other free" might also be a way to avoid always trying to please others.

⁹ From transcription of my interview with Mother Prioress, August 28, 1997, p. 11.

different...very different among the English...there are very different religious backgrounds....I think your community spirit in life depends on making the best of what you've got, so I think whatever you had, you would have to learn to grow in it. You know, it's a...a bit like a garden I suppose. You've just got to let things grow. You look after them and give them the space to grow.¹⁰

Again, "leaving each other free" is about giving space and protecting solitude, or, as in a garden, just simply allowing others to express themselves in the unique way that they may do so.

Closely related to the topic of "leaving each other free" is the issue of caring. There is a way of caring which is unfamiliar to most people living in mainstream America and even Britain which is in evidence in Turvey Abbey and assists the person to become free. Mother Prioress describes it this way:

I think the caring thing can be compulsive. It can be, coming from, it can be serving me rather than the person that I am caring for, and that is true anywhere. That is not different in a monastery than in any other environment, that one has to sort out 'am I doing this for me or for them?' Especially if it is in the guise of 'I am just doing it for you' but it is really 'I am doing it because I need it' that is a real pitfall, I think it is one that women fall into because we are told and told and told that we are meant to be carers, that we are the ones that have to care, and that is true, I am not against that. But we can then only feel happy, satisfied, complete if we're actively caring and stuffing care down people's throats. So that would be one aspect. Altogether people need space. One of the things that is very important in a monastery is that you go through things, and one of the things that a certain style or way of caring can do is stop people from going through things. What is really needed is to be there for them so that they can go through. If you are growing through any sort of crisis, you can even describe it as disintegration or reorientation, whatever, you can only do that within a safe environment but it is often necessary, I mean, a lot of us do experience that we are sort of taken apart and put back together again. That is a very frightening thing to have happen. And if you are not in a place that is fairly safe in terms of environment then it is hard to do that. It is stupid to do it. You resist it because it would be too dangerous from a psychological point of view or spiritual even. Sometimes I think of the community....as a womb or sometimes as a big playground, whatever you want, something that creates a certain kind of safe boundaries in which certain kinds of activity can take place in a safe an environment as possible....It takes several approaches before you are willing to go through it, but you can stop, because it's painful to go through it and recognize that for someone else by caring you can stop it. Just foster and hold it. So I would say that a lot of the caring that we do is much more holding, supporting

¹⁰ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 25.

rather than actual interference.¹¹

Mother Prioress connects caring to allowing one to grow through crisis -- a significant aspect of another theme in this chapter, "Space to find one's true self." Sr. Rose makes the connection between "leaving each other free" and taking responsibility for one's self.

The thing is you have to look at your own routine and say 'I'm feeling strain in my body.' Nobody is going to look at your work and think 'Ah, notice Sr. Rose is doing x, y, and z and then is lifting Mother Lucia five times a day and then cooking the dinner. You know that's going to be too much.' I don't get the sense of being overworked. So you have to take responsibility for yourself.¹²

"Leaving each other free" is to allow for the other person to generate personal responsibility. As well, "leaving each other free" involves a way of relating. According to Sr. Angela:

People work pretty hard at trying to live up to the ideal in the Rule of how they should treat others and sometimes they make it and sometimes they don't. I mean that is also true for me. But, in actual fact, seeing people constantly picking themselves up and making the effort again is a real plus that I hadn't actually given very much thought to before I came but, yes, there is actually something maybe very enabling and certainly something very positive about living in an environment where people will genuinely treat you with respect and courtesy and not just on a superficial level because they genuinely have a concern. It's very positive to live like that. It's also very enabling because what it does is it actually enables you to do the same if you are always getting that sort of treatment then it tends to make you feel, make you look a bit more at yourself and put yourself out more to return it. For me, especially coming from small staff rooms that tend to be a bit bitchy, a bit sharp, a bit too competitive, coming from that to this it was a real eye opener. I mean, that is not to say it's perfect because lots of times it drives me up the wall and like I say there are lots of times people fall short but there is that kind of underlying thing of 'well they will pick themselves up and try again.'¹³

Sr. Consolata suggests there is a "critical balance between the commonality of the

¹¹ From the transcription of my interview with Mother Prioress, August 28, 1997, pp. 10-11.

¹² From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, p. 12.

¹³ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Angela, August 29, 1997, pp. 20-21.

life and preserving solitude for each other on a social and human level.” This “preserving solitude for each other” is another way of getting at “leaving each other free.”

Openness

In the section entitled “Giving Voice to That Reality” from Chapter IV, under the subsection “The Community”, I described the values of Turvey Abbey as stated in its literature. Within the quoted material there is a phrase which I would like to focus on here: “We seek God by trying to live out Gospel values within the monastery, in love and service, *open always to the needs of the contemporary world.*” What does it mean to be “open always to the needs of the contemporary world”?

Sr. Angela was born in 1962 in Glasgow, Scotland and lived twenty miles from there until she was seventeen when her parents moved to Portsmouth, Hampshire in Southern England. She didn’t leave Scotland right away but a year after her parents so that she could finish up her secondary education (high school equivalent). So during that year she lived with her paternal grandparents. She was a cradle Catholic and went to Catholic schools. Not going to Catholic schools would have been “inconceivable in the West Coast of Scotland if you’re Catholic.” Much of her growing up years were spent in a sectarian divide with Catholics on one side and Protestants on the other, though “it wasn’t so segregated, it wasn’t quite as bad as say Belfast where people lived in different areas, though there was a bit of that.” In actuality most of her dad’s family were Presbyterian and her “mum’s mum is from an American Evangelical church called the Church of the Nazarene.” I, like few people she knows, had heard of this church. In her words:

I did meet people from other churches. I had a rather odd idea about what they were like. I went to college because Dad’s parents had stopped going to church and my mum’s mum had stopped going because after she had married my granddad he would not allow her to go. Apparently nobody thought this was strange then. That her dad was...husband would say ‘well you don’t go to church. If you’re not going to be a Catholic, you don’t go.’ But nobody seemed to think that was weird, maybe

it wasn't then.¹³

Given this background, when she first discerned coming to Turvey Abbey Sr. Angela was struck by the "openness" (as well as the ordinariness) she found there. By openness in this context she was referring to a liberal rather than a conservative bent to the Catholicism being practised there. Unlike in her native West of Scotland, where there is practised a deeply traditional form of Catholicism amidst a sectarianism between Catholics and Protestants (particularly Presbyterians) she found Turvey Abbey to be Catholic in an "open" way, focused on unity, and bringing people together across divides.

Yet, there is another meaning to the word "openness" which refers to closure. The predominant impression from those on the outside of monastic living is that those who live within are "closed." This reference can mean physical space alone (e.g., "my aunt is a nun shut away in a monastery in Wales") or physical and ideological space (e.g., "my aunt who is shut away in a monastery in Wales must be a really devout Catholic in line with conservative Vatican views"). Though the enclosure is a determining factor in their lives, it does not follow that the nuns are closed thinkers (or feelers) in mirror image to their enclosure. And, in this day and age, they do go out when necessary to visit family and friends. In fact, through enclosure they become open -- a topic I will come to again in the section entitled "space to find one's true self."

As the nuns are enclosed, living in the same place all the time, they must confront attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in themselves and others which they may not like. There is no choice because physical escape is not a possibility.¹⁵ Sooner or later conflict and difficulty will be dealt with. According to Sr. Rose "a certain degree of independence" is needed to live the life. She says:

I'm convinced -- and that's a rather tricky one -- you think you are terribly

¹⁴ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Angela, August 29, 1997, p. 4.

¹⁵ This is not to mean they can't actually leave if they choose. There is a saying at Turvey Abbey: "The locks are on the inside, not the outside."

open until something comes along and Aha! (laughs) Ten years on I would hope that I would be able to be accepting of changes, and to be supportive of opportunities that people coming along will have for our community.¹⁶

Are they, however, "open always to the needs of the contemporary world"? Sr.

Carmen has this to say:

We feel as a community that we can help all those situations, mothers and fathers with children [what have you]; that they have the support of our prayers. That [those prayers] will be to empower them and help in all situations....There are the peace in the world, the community, the church, all the needs of all of those who are coming to us, that they all have the power of prayer to help each other. For our own communities we pray for our own families but more than that...if you pray then Christ can use that work in the way He wants to. To pray without ceasing. Again I am sure on Sunday the Eucharist can be very beneficial for people who come to participate and I know that we have a prayer in community, that they are remembered in our prayers during the week, that gives them strength. But especially [it is important] that we do it consciously, so not as a routine.¹⁷

Sr. Vivian describes their prayer and conscious effort at becoming connected with people "on the outside" in this way:

People like [social workers, teachers, refugee workers] are in touch with the suffering and the pain of the world on the top level if you like. They're in among the mess, but there's another level when the pain of the world can...get to you and be in you...and you can be with it in prayer and so many people in our society -- like people living alone, young or old or people who have got temperamental problems -- they feel as if they don't fit in anywhere. They're...the suffering of the world is in them. If they can only realise that they are actually with Christ on the cross in that ordinary...the ordinariness of their lives and that is...that is how the world has been saved by people accepting their suffering, their ordinary, everyday suffering of which they can't avoid anyway...with Christ, and I think that's very important...that in us somewhere is a desire for 'something great.' You know, a single minded desire and it's to get in touch with that desire...¹⁸

Sr. Carmen, and the members of the community, are rooted in seeking God. It is from this foundation that they base being "open always to the needs of the contemporary world." The attitude is to be always open to the outside world, particularly and keenly

¹⁶ From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, p. 22.

¹⁷ From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Carmen, August 28, 1997, p. 12.

¹⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 18.

its sufferings and needs, but their behaviour is different from what an ordinary person might assume, expect or demand. They focus on welcoming prayer intentions, and people, into their defined schedule of monastic life rather than going out, physically, to people in need and administering caring (note the section previous), money or other forms of aid.

The nuns at Turvey Abbey do keep up with world events (including disasters) by reading the newspapers (*The Guardian* and *The Independent*³), talking about it in community recreation time, and reading articles (Catholic papers, *The Tablet*, journals). Sr. Vivian said that “when the Gulf War was on we used to put the news on at certain times of the day and listen to it together and anybody who wanted to could come and listen to it.” She adds, “we’re not out of touch with what’s happening in the world.” However, no matter what the needs of the outside world are, their schedule of prayer continues. They do not interrupt this, as a whole. Their main focus of being open to the outside world is in prayer, not travel, donations, or an emotional response built on worry.

Sr. Celeste in a talk she gave in August 1996 had this to say about monks and nuns: “we flee the world [in terms of silence and stability, etc] for the good of one’s soul and return to the world with love and greater compassion and help bring the world to its fulfilment in God.” Again the paradox: solitude within community, openness within closure.

Space to Find One’s True Self

Sr. Celeste is one of the middle aged nuns who entered relatively late in her life. She was born September 28, 1950, in Lancashire, England, and entered Turvey Abbey in January 1987. She was very involved in Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church from the time she was twenty five and is “sure that had a profound influence [on entering the monastery] because I needed to be introduced to that form of spirituality,

³ The two large circulation, national newspapers with a predominantly liberal, intellectual readership.

that kind of freedom of prayer.”

As a scientist, Sr. Celeste’s ideas clarify what she really wants in life. For her “a family and all the commitments that go with a long-term relationship” wouldn’t allow her the time for prayer that she wanted. She knew that “I did want a community” and in her career as a teacher “that was quite difficult to fulfil.” Though she did look at an active apostolic order where she could continue teaching, “it seemed to me that I wouldn’t have had the community... They lived in small groups in small houses and were in danger of becoming ships that pass in the night, you know, having to meet each other on the stairs (laughs) or having to pray together once a week.”

Sr. Celeste thinks “a good life -- in the sense of being fulfilling -- is one in which one has the space to find one’s self, one’s true self.”²⁰ She believes this “finding one’s true self” must begin with prayer and time alone with God.

Sr. Angela wasn’t aware of “having missed it in my own life, having space to be on my own.” She was “always with people, always rushing around doing things” but it had “never occurred to me to organize my life so that I had lots of space to myself.” She is now “very aware of being very glad when I get quiet times to myself.” She admits that this may be an effect of living very closely with other people, “because even in silence you are aware that there are people there.” In the beginning, when she first entered, however “you just don’t know where to put yourself, you dread...community holidays, free time, individual holidays...because it’s just all this space and you’ve no idea what you are going to do with it.” She claims “you really have to get a grip on yourself and find things to do.” For her the transition to enjoying space rather than dreading it “took a good couple of years.”

I asked Sr. Rose, who has only lived the monastic life for three and a half years and who is engaged in sorting out her past and assimilating her present, if she had a word of advice for people who are outside the monastic life. She had this to say:

²⁰From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 15.

Get to know yourself. (pause) Get to know what you really want. That's what I've done....A lot of talking with Sr. Vivian....The more I get to know myself the more I can see this and that....Sometimes just living the life, just doing it, you can get to know yourself...Letting my life wash over me in a sense.²¹

Sr. Vivian also addresses this concern, but in response to my question if she had "time to reflect on the way the outside world is moving and had a chance to put a mirror up to the world, what would you say might help?"

Well, I think very often they don't want help. But sometimes you do get people who do want help and they realise that there is something awry or amiss and if they're young people, I usually try to say 'well, what do you want...what do you really want? What is really important?' and get in touch with that in yourself, and not to, um, be swayed by pressures of television and advertising and false needs that are put into us by other people's...other people trying to...like the way the media tries to tell you 'you need this and you need that and if you haven't got the latest this, that and the other then you are going to be miserable.' Not to be swayed by that kind of thing or by peer pressure but to find out what you really want. And when it's older people...so many older people feel totally rejected and despised by the...They just feel they are totally useless and...in a sense they are the ones who are carrying the world really by their suffering and their -- I mean the whole contemplative thing of being aware of the pain in the world = at a deeper level than you would if you were a social worker or a teacher or if you were working in a refugee camp as one of my friends is doing now....²²

In her view, Sr. Vivian thinks that people don't want to hear what she or others in the community really have to say. Why?

I'm saying 'what do I say to people who come here' because I think...I don't think people want to hear what you have to say you know. I think...we're like the marginalised who are in a sense largely dismissed by large tracts of society but the place is always full of people who are coming because they are searching for something and sometimes they are highly successful professional people and sometimes they are really sad people who feel rejected by society. In a sense, it's to get in touch with their deepest level of being that we have to say 'well what is going on in my life in this desire that I've got or in this situation or the suffering I've got' and to realise that that's the level on which we get in touch with...with the divine. You know...it's not easy to explain.²³

²¹ From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, pp. 23-24.

²² From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, pp. 17-18.

²³ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 18.

Throughout literature, the fool, symbol for the marginalised, has been the point of wisdom within farce or situations the society of the age can't quite get a grasp of. Going to the fool, or hearing the fool, is often the act which the king or prince does in order to transform tragedy to goodness and restore order (witness many of Shakespeare's works). Yet, the fool is always derogatively known as "The Fool." Comparatively, the community at Turvey Abbey, and monastics in general, are known in contemporary society as "eccentrics", if they are given acknowledgement at all; they are in belief and practice modern day fools. And, like the fools of old, the nuns find themselves in the company of the great, the powerful, and the enfranchised who come to them for words of wisdom, comfort, and meaning. This meeting however does not occur by the community going out to them, but by the world coming to them. Finally, the fool often talks in riddles, or ways of speech that are not normal to the society. So too the language of the nuns is often about God and the religious which in our society can now be said to be peripheral or "not normal."

Sr. Mary Catherine talks of a kind of claustrophobia she feels in the community, as she is growing into it in herself:

Sometimes, sometimes it is just...I suppose to a certain extent it struck me that I would be a different person really, not a totally different person, but I would just show certain bits of myself to different people because I suppose it's like (indistinct) with a certain group of friends, you know, depending on what they are all like, with the wild ones I would be a little bit wild, still the less wild of the lot of them. It would be just like having a different role in each camp and they rarely all came together. I often wonder now if I would want the different bits seen, whereas here you haven't got that, here it's the same audience regardless of which role you be in. It's...I think it's claustrophobic.²⁴

The self involves space, inner and outer. In monastic life physical movement in the outer realm, or the lack of it, does not inhibit the development of self, or finding the true self. Rather, paradoxically to some, restricted outer space provides enlarged inner space. "Leaving each other free" and protecting each other's solitude are both ways of

²⁴ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Mary Catherine on August 29, 1997, p. 18.

enlarging the inner space while in relationship. According to Sr. Vivian:

The outward space, there's not a lot of it. That's why the inward space is very important, that we don't go into each other's rooms. We leave each other...you've got that space that you know is your space and nobody else can come into it. We don't impinge on each other's space in other ways too you know. People don't interfere with each other's work or you know try and take... on themselves the things...it's very important to let people be free and to grow freely.²⁵

Sr. Vivian admits that she is "a bit territorial. If people interfere in my job...that's my job, right; get off!" She thinks that some people "are more interfering than others; that's human nature, but you have to make your parameters clear." Also, she readily admits, "you have to be ready to accept that people will not always respect [your boundaries] and deal with those things when they happen." Sr. Vivian also said that not having the physical movement she was accustomed to in her apostolic order is not "the most difficult thing" about monastic life "because there is so much movement going on in the inside."

Discoveries in contemporary atomic physics have shown the boundaries of what we considered space have been pushed out much farther than ever anticipated. Both outward into astrophysical space as well as inward into nano space. The film "Mind Walk", based on Fritjof Capra's thought, has the physicist character at one point explaining to the poet and the politician about the notion of space as physics has come to understand it in the 20th century. They are walking through Mont St. Michel in France and come to a large room, mostly empty except for a table, some pillars, and the like. She moves around the pillars and knocks on the table and mentions that the table is only solid in our perception; it is largely made out of space. Then she goes on to demonstrate what exists inside an atom and the relative sizes of an atom's component parts: an orange is to a neutron as a cherry is to a proton. The atom itself is comprised of as much space as the room they are standing in.

The space around us is much larger than we perceive. It does not crush us but

²⁵ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 21.

opens up and reveals further and further dimensions of itself. So too in the world of our perception in general. As we close off physical space around us -- by limiting our travelling, by staying at home, by making and buying local goods and services -- we become more aware in detail of the space inside, as well as outside of us.

By the time I came to Turvey Abbey in August of 1997, Mother Lucia had begun to deteriorate outwardly. First she was wheeled into the chapel for Office throughout the day, then she was wheeled in only on occasion, and finally she was bedridden. As well, in the beginning I could talk with her during community recreation. But within a year I was not able to communicate verbally with her. She was cared for by the nuns until her death, and they observed and participated in her dying. Sr. Vivian made this point about her inner self in the midst of her evident outward deterioration:

Even with Mother Lucia, God only knows what's going on inside of her because she was the most powerful, vigorous, independent...artistic, creative, intelligent you name it individual but she's got nothing of that left...nothing. She can't read, she can't listen to music, she can't do anything with her hands, she can't stand up by herself, she can't do anything, and yet...you know...she laughs. And sometimes she has fits of laughter you know and she can't get out what she's laughing at. She just can't tell you, she's laughing so much. So what is going on in her inward landscape must be incredible, you know....it must be.²⁶

Silence

I knew a woman, I'll call her Ellen, who talked all the time. From morning to night, if you were in her presence she would talk. I watched the pattern of her talk, how it raced from one topic to another, sometimes without a pause. I noticed my own bodily reaction: sometimes I was angry, sometimes I pitied her, and sometimes I felt a deep physical sensation of being ill, as if I had been physically assaulted. I also noticed that no matter how hard I tried I could not totally tune Ellen out. Neither could I totally listen to her.

I remember that Ellen had few friends, a marriage that was constantly conflicted and even violent, and had daughters who found her overly demanding and difficult. Ellen

²⁶ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 21.

often felt she was excluded from her children's lives, and from society. Ellen would repeatedly tell her children, "I hardly know you. You never tell me anything." Those same children would respond, "I try to include you but you will never know me because all you do is talk at me."

Many of us inhabit a world of noise, whether it is by virtue of human talking or technology. What is it like to live in silence? Sr. Scholastica in her interview with me made this comment about silence and living life in silence:

I've always been struck by one line somewhere that there was a certain monk in the monastery and he knew this man was his friend although they had never spoken (because of the common rule of the monastery)...I consider there's truth in that. But it actually drifts more onto the question of you may not have said it verbally but you are communicating all the time by body language and stuff....probably you've already given the whole thing away before you've opened your mouth I think, somehow.²⁷

Mother Prioress thinks that silence is relevant to anyone's life: "silence and space because that's built into us, but it is very frightening when you first come into it." Most people, she adds, move from the house to the car without missing more than two bars of music. For her, now, after living the monastic life for some time and not having constant music or sound, she "can't stand" to have constant sound; she cannot "sit here and have a conversation with someone with music in the background." She simply can't do both which she says is

something I've unlearned, which I think is a good thing actually. If you are talking to someone and listening to music at the same time you can fool yourself but you are giving half or less to both....If you are digging, then dig; if you are thinking, then think.²⁸

This is a sensitivity, Mother Prioress explains, born of the life she is living. As I have discovered at Turvey Abbey, there is a relationship between silence and sensitivity. When you no longer listen to radios, televisions, or the amount of chit-chat that most people listen to on a daily basis, your senses are affected. In my time at Turvey Abbey I

²⁷ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Scholastica, August 27, 1997, p. 16.

²⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Mother Prioress, August 2, 1997, p.

was aware that when I left I didn't want to listen to the radio while driving; driving was enough stimulation. In cultivating stillness and living silence there is a sensitivity to life that emerges, one which all the nuns have to a lesser or greater degree. Sr. Vivian comments:

Well I've got a little Walkman thing (portable radio) but I rarely listen to it....If I've got spare time I want to read I don't want to listen to the radio....But we don't listen to it generally....We don't have television thank God. I mean we'd never had it when I came but there had been certain...you know, certain people saying 'oooh you know what about getting [a television]' but the community really doesn't want television. There is a general feeling that we don't want it because it destroys community spirit. It might be nice sometimes to get it...at Christmas time Mother Prioress gets a video and there are sometimes good programs that would be nice to watch but...we only have two half hours free in the day to be together and I mean, you know, you just....we haven't time really to sit watching television.²⁹

Sr. Scholastica claims she is "very sensitive to objects" and thinks she is "just waking up as far as people are concerned."³⁰ Sr. Rose talks extensively about her own sensitivity. For example:

I know how hard it is to pray in a group, to be sitting next to people who perhaps might do things....I become so attuned to people's voices that....We actually don't go on family visits as a rule but I had been just recently a couple of weeks ago. It was quite interesting. I was very sensitive to noise levels, sensitive to noisy conversation that I felt was going to break into a fight. It wasn't, it was just my family talking and being themselves. But I was very sensitive to their noise and physically to the luxury of soft carpet under my feet, soft towels and a range of things in cupboards.³¹

Sr. Rose finds her sensitivity difficult a lot of the time, particularly as it relates to people. In her words:

What I find the hardest thing is to have too much contact with people every day. Sometimes I don't [cope]! (laughs) It can be just from circumstances that I maybe only have twenty minutes in a day to myself, which can take its toll. It can, or sometimes I can just weather it. Not having to relate helps. I mean I enjoy talking, I do, it's a peculiar thing. I enjoy being with people but I do find that the fact that we're going from one thing to the next to the next....Because of

²⁹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 23.

³⁰ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Scholastica, August 27, 1997, p. 5.

³¹ From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, pp. 8-9.

this sort of life you get a real mirror on yourself.³²

Sr. Rose feels she gets support mostly through “having a decent conversation once a week” with Mother Prioress. She finds that she needs this time and if she doesn’t get it she “gets annoyed.” She counts on it as her right as a Junior. It is a time when she is “able to say what’s been happening during the week even if I can’t get to the point of sorting it out myself.” As well, Sr. Rose feels a strong need to “be able to say ‘this has happened in this situation’ and look at it.” In five years time she hopes that she has “more of a sense of how to pace myself and to do something useful with my sensitivity. I’m told that it’s very useful.”

Most of the nuns claim to be “highly sensitive” to the sights and sounds found in newspapers, radio, and film. Each year at Christmas time the community sees a video and usually it is a disappointment. According to Sr. Rose:

When we do hire a video at Christmas and can watch things, I’m often disappointed. (laughs) It’s funny that. I’m often disappointed. It has to be something really good, in terms of production, storyline, everything for it to hold my interest.

Was that the case before?

No. You become very sensitized to what’s on the screen.³³

Sr. Rose says that she does listen to the radio even though she’s not supposed to. Sometimes she finds it difficult to be able to hear the announcer say “and this and this person was murdered” and then go on to give the score of Manchester United (a professional English soccer team) “as if they don’t really realise that this is somebody who was alive and now is dead.” She finds it difficult to listen to that sort of thing.

According to Sr. Vivian, the obstacles to deep silence and the *Contemplatio* aspect of *Lectio* is being too cerebral or technical and being too rushed (trying to get through too much). Part of silence is cultivating stillness.

³² From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, pp. 18-19.

³³ From the transcript of my interview with Sr. Rose, August 27, 1997, p. 26.

In my notes from August of 1996, I wrote "silence stills problems and emotions in a way talking never does." And "I know almost no details of these people's lives but I 'know' them." I wrote at the end of Compline on one of my visits:

I think that now is the most beautiful and peaceful part of the day, as rays of the sun withdraw into wholeness for the night. Slow, slow like the silence and song of Compline, we, the sun, slow to sleep. Especially around 8pm on the 8th day of the 8th month, all seems absolutely as it ought to be. I don't want to be with people now. Or in conversation. My body/mind is in movement toward sleep and a "peaceful death" if God wills.

Sr. Celeste would say that "through silence, problems are solved." Likewise Dom Julian would say "problems are solved through the filtering process of prayer." Perhaps for women and men this is a difference, or perhaps for one person at a certain time one is true and then the other, or maybe both at the same time. Sr Vivian asked a group of retreatants I was with: "How do you know the effect of Dunblane on yourself and the world? By listening in silence."³⁴ She adds, "silence allows you to be in your inner space."

Some people, like Ellen, may have deep inner issues that are unresolved. Talking may be a distraction that allows these issues to remain repressed. From my experience in the monastic setting, silence frees those inner voices and feelings, troubling as they can be, to float to the surface where they can be dealt with. In society there may not be a safe space in which to let that happen, or you may have to search to find it. At Turvey Abbey, this safe space is encouraged in daily life. Practices like "leaving each other free" allow for the silence to take effect and thus to heal, renew, and free one to live more transparently.

In modern life outside of a monastery I think one of the reasons e-mail is so popular is because it is a silent occupation. Most people hear so much talking and voices through radio and television that it's a rekindled joy to be able to communicate to others

³⁴ On March 13, 1997, 14 children and 1 teacher were murdered by a man in Dunblane, Scotland, as they were on the schoolground playing. This kind of killing virtually never happens in the UK, and its emotional ripples are still being felt today.

in a way that isn't verbal. So instead of calling up a friend, or going by for a visit, we e-mail. We need the silence -- and the communication.

A Deep Attraction for Something More

Sr. Vivian entered Turvey Abbey in 1988, after thirty three years as a Sister of Mercy. She had entered at fifteen, gone to university on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy, and been missioned to Kenya for many years. Yet through all those years she was aware of "a deep attraction toward the kind of life that was not active apostolic but more monastic and contemplative." She "did try to tell people, but nobody would listen to me." She realised however "that this thing about the monastic life...every time everything was going well for me it would raise it's head again and I'd hammer it down. I'd say, 'shut up!'" At forty she realised she couldn't "just live with myself for the rest of my life" if she didn't explore monastic life.

Along a circuitous route, then, Sr. Vivian found her way to Turvey Abbey. She arrived during a very difficult weekend at Turvey Abbey -- Dom Edmunds had just died -- but was unaware of it because of the hospitality she received from the community. In her words:

It was the worst possible weekend I could have come. I saw Mother Lucia for about half an hour. She was great, mind you. She was able to put aside...I mean when I found out afterwards what had gone on that weekend, I was astonished that she had let me come really....She appointed somebody else to look after me, Sister Kathleen. I slept in the guest house but I joined in the work periods and I ate at the Refectory and I joined in [Divine] Office, sort of sat at the back and it felt...it just felt right. Somehow. It felt you know the *Vita et Pax* thing, life and peace. That's what it felt like, life and peace. ¹⁵

This "feeling" Sr. Vivian had can be described as "something more" or perhaps "a feeling of home." Often difficult to articulate, this feeling nonetheless points to a desire to be in a place that one recognises from within. "The unknown remembered gate," as T. S. Eliot poetically wrote. It took Sr. Vivian thirty three years to get to Turvey Abbey, but she "knew" it when she found it. Many of the nuns describe a similar

¹⁵ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 10.

experience, particularly the younger ones who are closer to the time of their entering.

However, a feeling of home does not displace difficulty. According to Sr. Vivian:

I think everybody would find it different I suppose. When you come late to a place you already have your own values and attitudes established, so for me the hardest thing [about monastic life] was unlearning a lot that I had learnt about silence and about community and about obedience and humility and ...things like that. And as you get older and the superiors get younger...of course obedience gets harder because you think you know better and sometimes you do know better and um it's difficult. And I suppose like anything in life you never can be sure...you never can be absolutely sure.¹⁶

This feeling of home also pertains to people outside the monastic enclosure. I, too, have felt it, but not in a way that draws me to become a nun; and yet part of me is "deeply attracted" to a place which allows me to express myself as a nun. Sr. Vivian discusses the archetype of the monk as relevant to all of us.

The archetype of the monk is in everybody only we're often not in touch with it. The archetype of the monk is that in us somewhere there is a desire for something great. You know...a single minded desire and it's to get in touch with that desire. Most people think well 'I want a good job.' That's not their deepest desire. It's usually happiness, or peace or um well, I mean you can say God.¹⁷

Sr. Vivian describes a woman who came to her at one point who had "got into an emotional mess" and "felt that her life was an absolute mess." This woman had asked around to find out who could help her and was somehow led to Turvey Abbey and Sr. Vivian.

She works on some sort of government level project on housing. She's a highly intelligent woman...And she had no faith, was not brought up in any kind of religious background....She had found herself in a state where she simply didn't know where to go and what to do next. Now, I don't know how she got here, I mean somebody must have told her to come here. It's really helping a person like that get in touch with what is going on inside them and to realise that there is a spiritual landscape inside and to find your way through it and to see which way you think you're going and try and listen. It's just such a privilege. Somebody who's never had...never been to church, never had any sort of you know and they're coming up against this...and having experiences of sort of you know, real transcendent experiences. This woman was saying, 'What do I do?' And I said, 'What do you want to do?' She looked at me in astonishment. She said, 'if there

¹⁶ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 12.

¹⁷ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 18.

is any kind of God somewhere does he want something off me?' And I said, 'Well you'll have to find out and ask him.' And she said 'Well, but when?' And I said, 'Well here.' And she looked absolutely dumbfounded because you know...people have this idea that you've got to hear somebody from out there telling you, like God out there telling you what you should do. Whereas if you don't know what's going on in the depths of your own being...I mean that's where God is that tells you what to do or where to go or what to...that's why I said 'what do you really want.' She had come to a stage where she felt the whole of life was cracking up and it made her...you know, try and find out what's gonna happen to me and start from a basis of fear...Well fear wasn't quite the word actually...confusion maybe. You see, so many people don't get to that stage. They just...they're so caught up in their jobs and their careers they don't get to it until there's a disaster or something goes wrong.³⁸

Sr. Vivian thinks there are "people who don't realise they have an inner house or they never go in to it, or they're scared, and so they spend all their time beautifying the outer." Sr. Vivian mentions that "you occasionally meet people who do come to it early" and that these people "don't have a materialistic attitude to jobs and they want to know what's the meaning of everything."

According to Sr. Celeste "nothing else in my life's experience suggests an alternative that would be worth anything." This is a sentiment repeated by several of the nuns. When Sr. Celeste was a student she realized that her faith and commitment "were both very immature" and that she really "needed to bring my faith life, religious life to a greater maturity." This was at a time when she was single and full of the freedoms of that time of life. What was most meaningful for her was to focus on her faith life.

Sr. Angela describes a shift in perspective that's occurred to her since living the monastic life as it's lived at Turvey Abbey. She feels things like the desire for shopping just drop off.

At first you feel strange because you think, 'well if these drop away what is there?' What happens? ...There must be enough other things holding you that in actual fact what happens is you realize they weren't actually very important in the first place. It used to seem important that I did lots of shopping, had lots of nice things to wear, but in actual fact it just isn't relevant any more....it's still

³⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, pp. 30-31.

very important to see friends and family, for me anyway, that's the big thing...Yes, and to have, when you see them to actually have real contact with them. My family weren't at all happy about this, but they are coming round and one of the reasons they are coming round is because when they come they get to see a reasonable amount of me. They actually get to spend a reasonable amount of time with me. The Office takes over an awful lot. That seems to, I mean, filling gaps is the wrong thing to say but that seems to expand to encompass lots and lots and it's maybe in that context that the other things aren't important any more because that actually is much more important. Yes, I mean that's probably the main thing, that for me would take the place of other things.³⁹

According to Sr. Mary Catherine:

There is something in me that just knows I will stay here. There is just some, I don't know whether it's the fact that you are living with people who you know are as committed as you are to...growth, to spirituality, to becoming focused on whatever, there is just something here which is worth putting up with that, putting up with those difficulties.⁴⁰

In Sr. Celeste's words: "There's an underlying peace and joy. I've probably been happier here than I have ever been before."⁴¹ As well she speaks of being "more myself and less an image" than she's ever been before. The experience of self is also tied up with a feeling of home. One's inner home can often mirror one's outer home, or at least one's desires can mirror the place they choose to live in.

Is the attraction for "something more" an attraction for monastic life or a deepening of living with and for God? For the nuns, the answer to this question is both/and.

Faith and Trust

Trust is an attitude as much as a lived behavior. The Turvey Abbey nuns give out trust, and thereby make themselves trust-worthy. When Sr. Vivian arrived at Turvey Abbey after much set-back on her road to monastic life, she describes her first contact

³⁹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Angela, August 29, 1997, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁰ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Mary Catherine on August 29, 1997, p. 10.

⁴¹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 4.

with the community:

I wrote to Turvey Abbey. I mean I sent them all the information -- it was four pages of typed A4 [8.5 x 11.5 paper] you know outlining the discernment process and when I was sure they would have got it I rang up and said 'Did you get my letter?' to Mother Lucia. She said, 'Yes' and so I said 'Can I come and see you?' and she said 'Yes' so I said 'Well I have only got one weekend left. (laughs) Can I come next weekend?' and she said 'Yes' so I came down with a friend...she drove me down and it was a terrible weekend to come because the Prior of the, the Superior of the monks had just died that weekend...[but Mother Lucia] said 'Yes, you can try it' and I said 'Do you not think I'm too old?' I would be 48 by the time I [entered]. She said, 'Oh, you could live to be 88.' (laughs)⁴²

Sr. Vivian had been trying for thirty years to get someone within the church to listen to her and allow her to discern her calling to monastic life, even though she had joined an active order at age fifteen. Other monastic congregations she tried said they wouldn't accept her because she was already finally professed to the Order of the Sisters of Mercy. Yet, Turvey Abbey said yes, and accepted her as having a genuine calling, no matter what the circumstances. This "yes" is a feature of trusting. Mother Lucia (and thus the community of Turvey Abbey) was not relying on a rule book or a set of regulations and permitted Sr. Vivian to enter.

I have had a similar experience and know the pivotal occasion such trusting can bring about in a person's life. After several years of hearing a little voice in my head say "go to a convent", I decided to follow through on this calling, even though I knew somehow I wasn't meant to be a sister (nun). I got hold of a list of women religious in New Hampshire and began calling them to ask if I could come and live with them for a year. The first four communities were either hostile, afraid, or simply said "no." However, on the fifth try, I called -- still unsure of what to say but trying to get it out - and the sister at the end of the line, Sr. Vivian Patenaude (Religious of Jesus and Mary) quietly said, "go on." It was a watershed moment: to be listened to, in spite of how crazy it all sounded. Sr. Vivian (RJM) asked me a few questions about myself, then suggested I come to meet the community. Within a day I was welcomed to come and live

⁴² From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, pp. 9-10.

there for a year.

I ended up living with Sr. Vivian Patenaude and the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Goffstown, New Hampshire for two and a half years in a mixture of convent and Christian community living. The trusting they gave to me, in spite of my situation, and in spite of the difficulties that emerged in the time I was with them, has left me with a vivid memory of trust and faith. It is a something that once you have experienced it, you in some way have a piece of and can pass it on. It is now how I try to live my life: trusting in the unknown, trusting the people who come across our paths for whatever reason. It is the "yes" experiences of life.

But where does the trust that Sr. Vivian (RJM) showed to me and Mother Lucia demonstrated to Sr. Vivian (Benedictine) come from? According to Sr. Carmen:

The faith you get with Baptism...has to grow and I pray for it, also, increase my faith because He is doing this. I have to let Him do it, let Him do it. If you only let Him do it...because if you are baptized, people who live from Christ, but you have to have trust, it is difficult to reveal all influences....⁴³

And you must also trust that if the world ends or monasteries close or whatever it is, that that is also in the design of God's thought?

Yes. So because Abraham was promised an heir and he was already over a hundred and Sarah... but they believed, they believed at the crucial moments... Nothing comes out of nothing and everything is interconnected.⁴⁴

Faith and trust are the core issues for Sr. Carmen, as her transcript attests. Faith, and trust sustain her and, she believes, sustains the world. The prayers of the community are believed to sustain people outside (as well as inside) the monastic enclosure.

For Mother Prioress faith and trust go hand in hand with the survival of the community.

It's in God's hands! Our community is a very fragile entity. It could fall apart.

⁴³ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Carmen, August 28, 1997, p. 13.

⁴⁴ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Carmen, August 28, 1997, pp. 13-14.

part of it could fall apart overnight....There is something in it that is very fragile. I'm very aware that it is held together by the Holy Spirit. We have to do our bits, to be as wise and as good people as we can be on a human level. It's no bad thing to be aware that it's God who's holding it all together.⁴⁵

Faith and trust are also the core tenets of Sr. Agatha's life. When I asked her if she had any regrets in life, she responded:

No...I never think 'if only this or if only that.' Of course some of the things in our life are very sad and I lost my mother when I was ten years old, it was a dreadful thing, but I never thought 'oh if only she had stayed alive.' No, it wasn't God's will and there was good out of it. My father married again. He had a wonderful second marriage, it was beautiful. I think of everything like that, everything that happened whether I was sad or even my deafness....He sees that something good comes out of it. Even my deafness, I was very very down, very depressed about it but then somebody said to me, 'You will see in the end it will be a blessing' and that was true. It has become a blessing by my accepting it and not worrying any more about not hearing what people are saying. I sit down upstairs in the community room and not knowing what they are talking about. Well it doesn't matter. I like to be there and sometimes when they talk they say to me what happens and sometimes they don't. But that is everything. Everything that happens has a being, the world is made of God and good will come out of it. That's what I can tell everybody -- accept it and learn....⁴⁶

In the community, trust is continually practised between the nuns. For example, Sr. Vivian mentions the issue of travel in the community:

You sort of decide these things with the superior, with our Prioress and...I think the community trust each other enough to know that...well, for instance, one of the younger ones went home for three or four days recently. Now, you know it didn't make the rest of us think well 'she's gone home well I should be able to go home' because you know the circumstances are different. We don't want to have a rule that says we can all do this or that or the other. We think it's more important to go by...to trust the way the community's developing. I mean maybe it will come eventually that we want to write it into our constitution that we can go away, I don't know. Perhaps it will, perhaps it won't. Depends on the balance....⁴⁷

In Sr. Vivian's view, one of the major qualities of what makes a monk (nun) is

⁴⁵ From the transcription of my interview with Mother Prioress, August 28, 1997, p. 20.

⁴⁶ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Agatha, August 28, 1997, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁷ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 15.

“hanging on.” Hanging on is trust, belief, and faith wrapped up into one phrase. If somebody else is experiencing deep doubt in life – or, an absence of trust and faith – she feels “if it’s somebody else then there’s nothing you can do...you can’t give anybody belief.” But, what you can do for yourself she describes in this way:

When it’s yourself you just have to hang on. I mean you know it’s like...yeah it’s like being in a desert or being in a dark place you just... Something that helped me, I read in a book once. When a person is lost in a desert in the middle of a sandstorm what you don’t do is go around, wandering around trying to find a way out. You stay still. And I think that’s what you have to do in the monastic life. you stay still, and realise that the doubt is part of the world’s experience of life. Or lack of faith. It’s just hanging on, I don’t know. I think you know...you don’t feel like this when you’re in it. You just...it’s easy to reason about it afterwards but it’s a case of just hanging on.⁴⁸

Doubt, what is it as distinct from not believing in the first place?

Doubt is another thing. I mean doubt...doubt is a feeling that you’re not sure you believe. That’s a different thing. That’s a sort of dark night of the spirit or of the soul. People go through that. [But] I mean...people who have no basis of any kind...no desire for any kind of...other, you know...that’s not doubt. Yet it’s amazing the way God moves people....⁴⁹

According to Sr. Celeste, “faith in God depends on accepting the authenticity of religious experience.” If you do, she says, “it can change us.”

Attachment and Change

The community at Cockfosters realized what changes computers and technology will bring if they go that route, so they chose to leave the school where they were and move in a different direction. Parents of the children were angry and could not understand why the community would do it, saying “won’t you miss the children?” The community moved to Turvey. When Sr. Celeste decided to enter Turvey Abbey in 1987 at thirty seven years of age, her spiritual friends reacted with hostility because, as they saw it, she was moving outside of normative behavior.

Sr. Celeste admits the nuns “may all joke at times that ‘we only own our pens and

⁴⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 19.

⁴⁹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 30.

our handkerchief" but we know who we are without the pen and handkerchief." She, like many of the nuns "wasn't satisfied with the material things I had, they didn't fill the needs in my life." Instead, what she and other nuns miss, and still have some level of attachment to, is freedom of movement -- driving a car to see a friend, travelling to some foreign destination. When she entered, Sr. Celeste found it "shattering" to lose her job and her clothes; as if her identity had gone. After ten years at Turvey Abbey, she finds it "easy to let go of the jobs that I have had, so far."

Sr. Celeste is fond of a phrase which includes the meaning of attachment and change: "We have to release our prim little grasp on our own destiny." This "release" involves a pattern of "giving everything and then clawing it all back and then we realize we're not giving anything and we let go, release."⁵⁰

Three of the nuns -- Sr. Scholastica, Sr. Celeste, and Sr. Mary Catherine -- are scientists, as well as monks. Sr. Celeste talks to people about being a monk and a scientist and "people are constantly amazed" that she is both. As well, most are "terribly intolerant about the fact that scientists can believe." The "man in the street's view" is that religion is against science.

In these many examples, the nuns and their way of living underlines a flexibility of thinking which is outside the norm of both thinking and behavior. Their behavior can and often does engender a reaction of anger from people living secular lives who tend to be more rigid in their thinking and behavior. In this respect, who is more free? The person living a monastic life, or the person who is "free" to do anything?

The Catholic Church underwent profound changes in the 1960s during the four sessions of Vatican Council II. Vatican Council II was the twenty-first ecumenical council, initiated by Pope John XXIII and held in Rome from October 11th to December 8th, 1962. The other three sessions were held during the pontificate of Pope Paul VI (in 1963, 1964, and 1965). There were sixteen significant documents produced by Vatican

⁵⁰ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 15.

Council II which radically impacted the church in all parts of the world. Within these documents were constitutions, decrees, and declarations, some of which discussed the church's understanding of its religious communities, worship as the heart of the church's life, the renewal of religious life, ecumenism, the dignity of the human person, and a focus on cooperation in finding solutions to the outstanding problems of our time.⁵¹

Though I was born in 1965, and have never experienced the Catholic Mass said in Latin, I can appreciate the immense changes Catholics born prior to that time have experienced. A friend, born in 1956, still remembers the Latin Mass as well as an often brutal and repressive approach to Catholicism which I never experienced as a "post-Vatican II baby." The focus of Vatican II was renewal and "opening wide the windows of change." As a first grader my homeroom teacher was a Dominican nun -- a nun who wore a knee length skirt and played the guitar. When my father met Sr. Charlotte he blanched. The liturgy I grew up with had contemporary music including electric guitars, his never did. These guitars and even drums were played with folk type singing at the front of the church where once there was only traditional and often sombre organ music in the balcony behind you. The altar and the priest faced the people (rather than away from the people), the priest and the parishioners held hands during the Our Father (never before), and homilies where the priest told humorous stories that pertained to our lives, even children's, embraced a gentle morality rather than a fire-and-brimstone one. These may be cosmetic changes to some, but to others they represented profound, and difficult, changes that went to the heart of their religious practice, belief, and comfort.

This experience of Vatican II and its effects also can be heard in the voices of the nuns of Turvey Abbey. For example, listen to Sr. Vivian as she speaks of two changes brought about in religious life in the 1960s: the monastic enclosure would now allow

⁵¹ See *The Essential Catholic Handbook, A Summary of Beliefs, Practices, and Prayers*, A Redemptorist Pastoral Publication, St. Louis, MO, Ligouri Publications, 1997, pp. 256-257.

monks and nuns to visit family, and their habits would either be modified or replaced with ordinary clothes.

I'm sure that the younger people have a lot to say about being monastic in this day and age. In a sense, I started so young that my ideas of monastic life go back to the 1950s and 60s. I find some of the changes quite difficult, and I'm in two minds about whether they are good or not. You know, even when I go to see my brother [who is a priest]. In a sense I haven't been to see my other brothers. They come to see me.⁵² So you know, I am a little bit ambivalent about some of the changes. But I think changes have to come otherwise we...you know and they do come and they are coming um like [with the] habit. I mean this [pointing to her veil] is a modified headgear but in some ways I can't see why...we couldn't just wear ordinary clothes around about the place, you know and have a choir, choir dress. On the other hand I can see that that means putting...putting the work of God up there as if it was somehow separate from the rest of your life and that you are going to dress differently for it which is not the point. So there's a whole lot of pros and cons about nearly everything.⁵³

In the community at Turvey Abbey, however, "more than half of the community are not from Catholic families" according to Sr. Vivian. These nuns have not had a religious background or are converts from other religions to Catholicism. This diversity provides a kind of breadth and depth to discussions in the community on the way the liturgy, prayer, and the like are or ought to be. Not all nuns from the pre-Vatican II days will think alike about certain changes (e.g. clothing). Likewise, not all nuns that are post-Vatican II will think alike. Yet, there is a multifaceted expression of belief, attitudes, and behaviors brought about by different ages, cultures, and nationalities within the community of Turvey Abbey. This "melting pot" can make decision-making more difficult but the process in getting there vibrant and creative.

Ordinariness

The experience I have had in discussing this research with others outside of a monastic context is that people perceive monks, nuns, and monastic life as extraordinary

⁵² Prior to Vatican II it would be very unusual for a monastic nun to visit any of her family members. The family would be expected to come and visit her in her monastery. However, if a family member was also a religious (priest, nun) it may have been more permissible to go and visit them.

⁵³ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, pp. 15-16.

or exotic. Sr. Scholastica told this humorous story about her first meeting with a nun:

I had this picture of conventional religious, you know. They had a great big house and everything highly polished and spent most of the time dusting beds in a long corridor, you know. (laughs) I mean that was my kind of picture of nuns. I'd never spoken to a nun in my life. The first time I met a nun was when I went to the Chaplaincy on Gower Street and there was a bunch of them playing football (soccer) down the corridor with a dog.⁵⁴

Sr. Vivian believes a hallmark of the life is its ordinariness and the fact that nuns and monks "are ordinary people." She describes her childhood years in a working class Catholic family as poor and ordinary. In describing her life at Turvey Abbey, the adjective she uses most is "ordinary." I asked her what she thinks has kept the Benedictine tradition going for 1500 years?

Well, you know I think it's because it's ordinary. (pause) One of the things you have to get through to the guests when they come here is we are very ordinary people. You know, there's no scope in [St. Benedict's] Rule for way out, ascetical, heroic practices you know. It's ordinary...we just you know...we get up in the morning, we do our job, we eat, we work, we sleep, we keep the house going, we keep the gardens going, we look after the animals, we look after the guests, we go to bed and it's all prayer. But it's very ordinary. It's not heroic, and I'm sure that...I mean...there's an element of heroism in it. I mean if you think of what people's parents think now....When I asked to become a nun, my parents thought it was a privilege for the whole family that I wanted to be a nun. Nowadays, it's a disaster for the whole family if you want to be a nun. So there's an element of heroism for younger people now coming into it, just giving up the sort of freedom and all the rest of the stuff that they could have had which was a lot less in my day. When I was...in the 1950s and 60s you had a lot less freedom anyway.⁵⁵

Sr. Vivian is aware that many people's impression of monasticism is that it is exotic. She thinks that "perhaps it's because of the clothes. Perhaps we should just wear jeans all the time and then put a robe on to go to the chapel." Perhaps. But maybe the fact that simple clothing, with little variety to it, is seen as "exotic" is more a reflection of the culture we live in and how far it has moved from the ordinary than any inherent expression of the exotic by Turvey Abbey. As our discussion of the ordinary

⁵⁴ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Scholastica, August 27, 1997, p. 5.

⁵⁵ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 13.

progressed, Sr. Vivian pointed to the popularity of Celtic and Benedictine spirituality retreats in society.

The Benedictine spirituality [retreats] that we do here, they're very popular because...yeah, because it's basic stuff. It's like, it's very ordinary really. It's...it's you know listening to the.... I've just been reading a really nice book on Celtic spirituality called *Listening to the Heartbeat of God* and it's all about that you know. Hearing, listening, learning how to listen to God in the ordinary man's life....⁵⁶

According to Sr. Celeste,

I am sure that nuns come in just about every shape, size and personality that's possible, and each one of us as a human being has their own vocation, their own ways of (indistinct)...So I think nuns are all different and good nuns are all different. We see in our old ladies perhaps good nuns. Possibly that goodness is their acceptance of all that happens to them. And their joy and their peace...Their simplicity, their sense of praise, they're very very ordinary things, but it makes them beautiful people to be with.⁵⁷

What attracted Sr. Angela to Turvey Abbey?

Probably its openness was the first thing that attracted me. There were two things. My initial reaction the first time I came was it was much more open than I expected it to be. The other thing that attracted me once I had got to know it a bit more was that it seemed very ordinary, it didn't seem anything either remarkable or pious or holy, it just seemed a very ordinary sort of place and that was a real pull for me. It was the sense that I wasn't doing anything particularly unusual. In actual fact I am still convinced that this life isn't anything really out of the ordinary realm of human experience and I am more convinced the longer I am here. Because from what I've seen of the things I've gone through since I've been here that I connect and are connected to me being in this situation they are actually very similar to the experiences friends are having who are of a similar age and a similar stage in life but in very different lifestyles. So, in actual fact, it's the ordinariness of it for me that is something that is quite important.⁵⁸

Further, Sr. Angela explains the ordinary in monastic life at Turvey in this way:

It's very hard to put your finger on what's actually ordinary. We do the same things as other people, I mean. We have our times of work, we have our times

⁵⁶ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, pp. 28-29.

⁵⁷ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 9.

⁵⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Angela, August 29, 1997, p. 15.

when we are not working. We spend more time praying than lots of people would or we pray more publicly than lots of people would. That's something that's different. We have the same worries, the same anxieties, the same blocks in our prayer that you experience anywhere else. And just because we're saying the Divine Office every day doesn't mean that we feel any more like saying it than I would have done before I came. (laughs)...On all those levels you are still concerned about how you are feeling and what you'd like to be doing and what you'd like to be eating and all those things are...and I'm still concerned that -- I mean maybe this isn't true for everybody -- that I look reasonably smart and reasonably decent and that I have decent books to read. But those things mattered before and are still somehow important and that's not actually very different from the concerns of other people, really. We're still concerned to make our living, I mean that's a big thing. We couldn't actually sustain our life if we didn't earn our living. You're still concerned when people come that they are made to feel welcome in the same sort of way, well for me anyway, I find in the same sort of way I would have had friends come to visit me before.⁵⁹

What is out of the ordinary for Sr. Angela is not being defined by her work as most people outside of a monastic context are. As well, in reading magazines particularly, she sometimes feels it's such a different life than the one she is living. As an example, when she first entered "one or two of my friends sent me *Cosmopolitan*, which I read just to see what the effect was and largely what's in that doesn't actually match very much with the life I'm leading, so I cut them up and made cards. (laughs)" She adds that "several of us [nuns] read them and all had the same reaction: lovely paper. It's nice after all these years to find something useful to do with *Cosmo* because I hadn't before. (laughs)" Now her friends bring her chocolate instead of magazines.

Another aspect of ordinariness Sr. Angela brings up in her interview is that "it is perfectly doable" to seek God, and balance, on one's own, in whatever context one finds oneself. What can appear to be out of the ordinary may actually not be. She expresses this in an example of how she saw monastic life at first:

I had known the monks at Downside for ten to twelve years by the time I started to think about doing this and hadn't ever picked up that sense of this being an ordinary way to live and that's partly because of their set up and partly because they have a huge public school. And you tend to see all of that and a Gothic church and all those sorts of things and of course I hadn't seen it from the inside. In actual fact on the inside -- I've seen a bit more of the inside since I've been here

⁵⁹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Angela, August 29, 1997, p. 23.

-- but it's not actually very different from what we're doing, it just looks different from the outside.⁶⁰

Turvey Abbey is in an ordinary setting: the small village of Turvey. With its traffic noise, village neighbors, similar architecture, and three pubs Turvey village is an ordinary place. Within and yet outside of it Turvey Abbey goes about its daily rhythm.

"A Balanced Life": Rhythm and Regularity

I asked Sr. Vivian in my interview with her what she thought the best bits of monastic life are. She replied:

If I was giving a talk about it I would be able to say well it's very balanced, a balance of prayer, work, study. It's very much geared to living a natural life, within the balance of nature. I mean we go to bed when it's dark...we go to bed not too late. We get up early when it's light, sometimes before it's light. So there's a balance of what it must have been like in earlier centuries which is sound and healthy and good. We have a very natural, very good, healthy diet. A lot of the stuff we grow ourselves. We've learned to live together. All those things are good. I love living in the country. I love looking after the goats. I love singing so I'm lucky that I sing in the Office, and I'm Cantor. All of those are naturally satisfying.⁶¹

Sr. Celeste as well has this to say:

...life is long and life has rhythms and because we're not being stimulated out of [those] rhythms = we have to maintain a home but -- I think one becomes more aware of those rhythms and becomes more accepting of those rhythms....And that sense of rhythm and length of days, it's steady.⁶²

For Sr. Angela "it (life at Turvey Abbey) really does seem to be at a kind of base level a very good and a balanced life." The regularity of the schedule of monastic life (see Appendix) may be natural, healthy, and good but it also presents challenges to one's human nature. One of these is getting up in the morning, every day, for the Office of Readings, which many nuns find difficult to greater or lesser degrees. Sr. Carmen said

⁶⁰ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Angela, August 29, 1997, pp. 25-26.

⁶¹ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 13.

⁶² From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 10.

in my interview with her the following:

I feel very much in the early morning sometimes it is most hard to start with the Office of Readings because it is early and I feel there are many, several who cannot manage to do it....For me sometimes it is hard, and I understand the language and yes we take it positive but what I want to say is it is not always easy to start the first Office but I feel also very much if I keep to it I could stay that way. I feel every day very rewarded because when I have come to my Lectio after breakfast, after this regularity of early morning, I feel always a great consolation, and feel very much the presence of God, and I feel just because of that [I will] be faithful to it. You get, on the other hand, the reassurance of 'yes, I am here' and if I let that go I will not get that. In the Mass for example [sometimes] I feel just blank, no feeling, but I do it. I stand there in faith, I receive also the deliberation in myself that I feel that Christ is here, I am the living one and...His Spirit brings [things] alive. I feel that in the community, the community spirit of Christ renews. It brings me out of myself, out of my lethargy, my lowness. I feel revived and I am very grateful. You see I bring myself to it in faith, and trust, and faithfulness because that has sustained me.⁶³

For Sr. Carmen the regularity (and being obedient and faithful to it) strengthens her faith and joy, and helps her to transcend herself. For people who are outside the monastic context, what they might see is something entirely different. For example, in Sr. Vivian's words:

Some people, people on the outside looking in, say 'I couldn't stand all this. It's the same over and over.' It's very...very much not saying this is...there is always something happening. If you take the small differences that take place in the Liturgy and so on. Within one's self it's never the same...you know, it's like the inward landscape. You're going up and down mountains and across deserts. You might occasionally come to an oasis but...all of that is going on. Now I think people largely outside the monastic life are not aware of their inward landscape, even though they've got one.⁶⁴

The stimulation and amount of different types of stimulation in modern (non-monastic) life can dull our senses to the small and subtle. When I was an After Care Teacher for Third to Fifth Graders in 1992, I used to take the children on nature walks. Some of these children had ADD and HDAD.⁶⁵ The school – Villa Augustina, where I was

⁶³From transcription of my interview with Sr. Carmen, August 28, 1997, p. 11.

⁶⁴From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 20.

⁶⁵ ADD is Attention Deficit Disorder and HDAD is Hyperactive Disorder with Attention Deficit.

living in the convent -- had 125 acres of land, including ponds and an old quarry. During the first day of our walk the children were energized and happy. On the second day they were disappointed that I was taking them on the same route. And on the third day they complained. In walking twice through the same path they believed that they had already seen it all, even though that path was several acres long. They needed to be taught how to see. When the children learned to "see small", the world opened up for them. They found constant newness within the old. Before long they had difficulty grasping the immensity of the plantlife, wildlife, and the changes that occurred even in a single day.

Each day the nuns at Turvey Abbey "walk the same path." Sr. Vivian sees their job praying the monastic Office as "an absolutely central focus to everything we do" and that although the routine that they follow is repetitive, it is also flexible and renewing.

St. Benedict says that 'nothing should be preferred before [praying the Divine Office]. So everything comes to a standstill when that, you know when it's time for Office, and that's very important. That and meals are the only two fixed things. I mean, it looks as if we're all doing the same thing at the same time but we're not really. The only thing we do at the same time is meals and the Office. We have different amounts of work, we have different amounts and kinds of work and it depends on the individual. Again, that's sorted out with the superior. Some people have more manual work, some people have less; some people have more work with the guests, some people don't see the guests at all. It varies. So it's not a...it looks like a very highly rigid structured day but in fact it isn't really. It's just the meals and the Office. I mean you have to eat together unless your...you know people can come late if they're doing a job or something but you can't just eat when you feel like it. I mean when you've got twenty people the place would be bedlam. (laughs)⁶⁶

Mother Prioress relates that the regularity found at Turvey Abbey is a kind of boundary providing a safe environment, a boundary that allows for the exploration of self and its growth through trauma.

Well a lot of the safety of the environment, which has got other functions, helps you to see clearly sometimes, but regularity -- like the regular Office, the timetable -- you can keep doing that as a sort of lifeline while everything else is falling apart. You can just keep within that. Sometimes I can see -- this is another subject -- we have a sister who was heading into dementia but in fact

⁶⁶ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Vivian, August 27, 1997, p. 17.

was not. We didn't see it because the rhythm of life was so programmed into her that she kept on following the rhythm. She was quite bonny but the rhythm kept her going. The rhythm will keep you going...it will hold you in a way.⁶⁷

Mother Prioress also mentions this aspect of the regularity of the life. In her words:

I am finding the balanced nature of the life...that regular call to prayer and being reminded that at least God is to be worshipped...something very important. It is one of the great things about monastic life...When the bell goes you drop everything and go to Office. [We're] not letting certain kinds of activities which by their very nature are quite omnivorous, eating up everything that is available, hold sway. There is a kind of catch. [The Office] stops you from letting a job [become] just completely engulfing, devouring everything else that's important in life.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ From transcription of my interview with Mother Prioress, August 28, 1997, p. 11.

⁶⁸ From transcription of my interview with Mother Prioress, August 28, 1997, p. 15.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETATION AND SYNTHESIS: SO WHAT?

In Chapter V, I described the larger issues that have emerged over the course of the data collection. Clearly there is a significance to those issues, but what is the deeper significance? In Chapter VI, I ask the question "So What?" to the data analyzed in Chapter V and go back specifically to the main research questions stated in Chapter I, the Introduction.

As well, in this chapter, I flesh out the significance of this research for others beyond Turvey Abbey, this PhD committee, and, in particular, environmental conservation. In other words, what are the implications of this research for the wider world? As an example, I ask the question: How is everything I have laid out in Chapters IV and V helping us to expand our understanding of sustainability? I go back to the original questions and key concepts -- sustainability, relationship -- and, hopefully, reach a richer understanding and application of those concepts.

Because this is a single case study, I have focused on one monastic community of nuns. What can we take from this specific context, Turvey Abbey, to other contexts? Is there any significance beyond that of Turvey Abbey? Answers to these questions involve transferability rather than generalization. Conceptually some of the ideas (for example what I've learned about sustainability) can be generalized, but the site (the Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey) is of course unique.

Synthesis

Freeman Dyson in his acceptance speech this year for the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion stated: "Science and religion are two windows that people look through, trying to understand the big universe outside, trying to understand why we are

here. The two windows give different views, but both look out at the same universe."¹

It is Ash Wednesday 2000 as I write this. The priest at Mass presses his thumb into the ashes, and as he makes the sign of the cross on my forehead he utters (yet again, another year on), "From ashes you were born, to ashes you will return." Death, life.

I am eighteen weeks, five days, pregnant. The life, the baby within me, is quickening. I can feel the beginnings of movement as this life, independent yet dependent, kicks, somersaults, hiccups. Life, death.

The Lenten season within the liturgical year begins anew. We're reflecting on our mortality while holding ever before us the vision of eternal life. Beginnings, endings, death, life.

The cycle of death and life -- a rhythm central to all living creatures (and the earth as a whole) in seasonal cycles -- is part of the rhythm practiced within the monastic enclosure. Death is not separated from life, and suffering from joy. These things are linked, and known to be linked.

Sr. Vivian gave a talk in February of 1997, on a retreat (appropriately called "Pre-Lent Weekend") in which she discussed the history and practice of Lent throughout the ages.

Originally Lent was meant to be 'the growing of light', the lengthening of day, the coming of life, not misery. The emphasis is on journeying to the light and to transformation. The journey may go through pain, but still it is going toward the light. The Middle Ages turned Lent into a 'spiritual athletics' where an individual tried to give up more and more...The real fast we are to be concerned with however isn't how much we can deny our bodies, but to be honest, just, etc, while dropping say chocolate. 'Giving up' must be about love, not just for the sake of fasting or to compete with a neighbor! We are to refrain from things which keep us from God, alignment. Lent is a time of balance -- of light and dark, sorrow and joy, death and resurrection, etc. Even though we're all approaching death and experiencing sorrow, the joy ushers in the death and comes to the resurrection. We can move with confidence and strength through death.²

¹ Steve Connor, Science Editor, *The Independent (UK)*, 22 March 2000.

² From a talk given by Sr. Vivian to a group of retreatants, February 8, 1997.

Mother Lucia was dying. She was not sent to a nursing home, but was cared for in her home which was the monastery until she died. All the nuns in some way participated in her dying. By this action they each came to know death a bit better, and could reflect on the place of death and decay in their own lives and the world around them.

In Lent we are encouraged to ask the question: What is it in me that I must fast from? This question will hopefully bring about a greater awareness of self and that which we need to change, become aware of, for us to be able to experience transformation. Some of the things we can notice are patterns of negativity, and a refusal to face what's happening in our lives; these are significant barriers to transformation.

The wilderness is the place where Christianity, Judaism, and Islam began. It is also the place where our transformation begins, internally if not literally in the physical world. And, wilderness is the holy place of deep ecologists. Wilderness is the place where the ecological and the religious meet in their most profound convergence. When God provided manna in the desert to those driven there by the Spirit, it meant God was providing for us in ways we may not expect -- "manna" means "what is this?" In the wilderness of the religious pilgrim seeking to see the face of God, or in the wilderness of the ecologist who wishes to deeply know the essence of living earth, one must listen and be aware of what is going around. All kinds of dangers abound in the wilderness -- snakes, a hardening of one's heart, pain, bitterness, suffering -- and we must all ask ourselves, no matter what brings us to the wilderness: What do I need to be free of? Being transformed, according to Sr. Vivian, means "something has to die coming from within." She also adds, "the desert is where I am, and the promised land as well -- God is within, and without, the monastery equally."

Gary Snyder, that great American poet, recites his poem "Without":

the silence
of nature
within.

the power within.
the power
without.

the path is whatever passes-no
end in itself.

the end is,
grace-ease-
healing,
not saving.

singing
the proof
the proof of the power within.³

Within, without. As above, so below. Mr. Snyder may not use what we would refer to as normal religious language but the meaning is much the same as in the traditional religious sphere. Poignant, rich. The nuns of Turvey Abbey would be able to identify with the essence of Mr. Snyder's knowing, and he with theirs.

I move now to the primary research question: How has the way of life of nuns in a monastic community been sustainable, i.e., sustaining their lives and life itself? And, a secondary research question: Do the beliefs, practices, and attitudes of nuns constitute a sustainable way of living? How do we know that?

The physicist and author of *The Tao of Physics*⁴ and *The Web of Life*⁵, Fritjof Capra, says that "ecologically sustainable communities are the great challenge of our time" and that "the new coherent 'systems' view of life is a unified view of mind, matter, and life beyond the Cartesian split."⁶ How does deep spiritual or even deep ecological awareness "fit" into such discussions? Perhaps we can begin answering this question by looking at the current work on sustainability or environmental indicators.

³ Gary Snyder, "Without", *Turtle Island*, London, Shambhala, 1993, p. 9.

⁴ Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 3rd Edition, Updated, Boston, Shambhala, 1991.

⁵ Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life*, London, Harper Collins Publishers, 1996.

⁶ From my notes of a talk Fritjof Capra gave at Blackwell's in Oxford, England, on October 30, 1996, to herald the publishing of his latest book, *The Web of Life*.

Environmental Indicators

In this section I will focus on three groups who have produced standards or set of environmental indicators: Sustainable Seattle, the OECD, and The Balaton Group. Then I will draw connections between their work and my own research at The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey.

In 1998, a volunteer citizens' network in Seattle, Washington, "began to define and research indicators of sustainable community to measure their region's progress." They came up with forty indicators (e.g. solid waste generated and recycled, air quality, ethnic diversity of teachers, neighborliness, etc) which could be measured and assessed as to whether they were "moving toward sustainability, moving away from sustainability, or neutral." A key point to note is they do not say "they are sustainable" or "they are not sustainable" but "moving to or away from." "Neighborliness" is one of the ten indicators they cite where there is "not sufficient data to reveal a trend."

These indicators:

are intended to be used by citizens and policymakers to guide behavior changes that will steer our community on a more sustainable course. The indicators are a call to action -- to spur critical thinking, to inspire us to reconsider our priorities, and to leverage actions that will ensure our community's long-term health. It is time we do much more as individual citizens, business people, and policy makers to create a truly sustainable Seattle. Achieving this goal is the most important legacy we can leave for future generations.⁷

It is significant that although an indicator like "neighborliness" is difficult to measure, it is still considered significant enough to make the list of such indicators. We may say that a sustainable community may also involve qualities like love, care, forgiveness, but how would we measure those qualities? As well, how would we measure "deep spiritual awareness"? The answer is, we can't. In Fritjof Capra's work on structure, pattern, and process as the building blocks of systems theory, he states:

There is a long history dividing natural science and philosophy. On the one hand

⁷ Sustainable Seattle, "Indicators 1998 Summary," *Indicators of Sustainable Community 1998*, Seattle, WA, 1998.

is the study of structure, matter, and quantity which can be identified through the question: What is it made of?

On the other hand is the study of pattern, order, and quality which is identified by the question: What is the pattern? This latter question leads to an abstract description of quality and relationships.⁶

If we are looking at environmental indicators to assist us in understanding our environment and our human input, we are looking at both structure and pattern. According to Dr. Capra, to talk of the "pattern" in a complex system like nature is to speak of "a configuration of relationships among the components that determines the property. They are put together in a certain order. To describe the materials is immaterial, so to speak." However, "'structure' is the physical embodiment of the pattern. In living systems they constantly change and therefore processes are vital." ("Process" is "the activity involved in the continual embodiment of the pattern in the structure. There is a continuity which connects the pattern and structure through embodiment.")⁷

When we are considering indicators of such a complex and living system as nature we are to take into consideration structure, pattern, and process. Not all things, particularly quality and relationship, can be known by measurement (i.e. structure) alone. Sustainable Seattle has gone a long way to creating a "move toward" sustainability by their very act of measuring indicators, but we must also be aware that because something cannot be measured (and therefore included in a list of indicators), does not mean it is not an aspect of sustainability. Even though it cannot be measured specifically, it still can be a core quality of sustainable relationship (see comments in the The Balaton Group indicators to follow).

The OECD also assesses environmental indicators, defining "indicator" as "a

⁶ From a talk by Fritjof Capra given at Blackwell's in Oxford, England, on October 30, 1996.

⁷ From a talk by Fritjof Capra given at Blackwell's in Oxford, England, on October 30, 1996.

parameter or value which points to, provides information about, describes the state of a phenomenon/environment/area, with a significance extending beyond that directly associated with a parameter value." An "environmental indicator" is defined as "all indicators in the Pressure-State-Response framework, i.e. indicators of environmental pressures, conditions, and responses." OECD's focus and interest is on sustainable development in order "to assess and monitor the state of the environment and detect changing conditions and trends." "Environmental indicators are increasingly seen today as necessary tools for helping to chart and track the course towards a sustainable future."¹⁰ The goal they have in mind is "a sustainable future." Their indicators include greenhouse gas emissions, traffic density, land use, etc., indicators that are all measurable by quantitative methods, however perfect or imperfect they may be. No indicators are included which are qualitative or non-measurable.

The Balaton Group is "a fifteen-year-old international network of scholars and activists who work on sustainable development in their own countries and regions." In a five-day workshop held in 1996, they drafted a document called "Indicators and Information Systems for Sustainable Development." In this draft document indicators are considered to be "a natural, ubiquitous part of everyone's life." They also call them "signs, symptoms, omens, signals, tips, clues, etc." As such, "indicators come from values (we measure what we care about) and create values (we care about what we measure)."

The draft document states: "Clearly some values (and hence indicators) are place- or culture-specific, others are common to all humanity. Some are quantitatively measurable, while others -- which may be equally important -- can only be felt qualitatively."¹¹ The authors of the document go on to state:

¹⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Environmental Indicators*, OECD Core Set, Paris, Heade of Publications Service OECD, 1994, p. 8.

¹¹ The Balaton Group, Draft Document: "Indicators and Information Systems for Sustainable Development", 14 May, 1996, p. 10.

Indicators are partial and imperfect reflections of reality. Of necessity, they are based on uncertain models. The map is not the territory. The grade is not the knowledge in the head of the student. The stock market price is not the value of the company. No indicator is the real system. Indicators are abstractions from systems, and furthermore, they are abstractions from abstractions, from *models*, or sets of assumptions about how the world works, about what is important and about how things should be measured....All our models, mental and formal, are false. None of us has perfect or complete information about the world. We don't understand everything that is happening. We're unclear about what causes what. Even with the help of computers, there is a limit to the degrees of complexity we can handle....It helps to maintain humility about our models as we search for indicators for sustainable development. Sustainable development is a social construct, referring to the long-term evolution of a hugely complex system -- the human population and economy embedded within the biogeochemical flows of the planet. Our models of this system will always be incomplete. Our measurements will be unreliable. We will be making decisions under great uncertainty.¹²

The authors go on to state that "despite their difficulties and uncertainties, we can't manage without indicators." And, "we can only put our minds, hearts, and souls to the task of finding the best indicators possible." Why? Because "without them we fly blind. The world is too complex for us to deal with all available information. We have to simplify; we have to choose and use a set of indicators small enough to comprehend."¹³

The Balaton Group uses "the Daly Triangle, which relates natural wealth to ultimate human happiness through technology, economy, politics, and ethics" to provide "a simple framework for ordering and relating natural, economic, human, and social capital." This is a hierarchy from ultimate means to ultimate ends -- from natural capital, built capital, human capital, social capital, to well-being. As the authors compiled lists of indicators which fell into these categories, they discovered that ultimate ends were "beloved indicators" and included such items as: time spent with relatives per year; proportion of free time; percent of lifetime in meaningful, fulfilling activities; average number of minutes spent daily in meditation of any kind; human openness; number and size of places of rest and beauty; ability to enjoy/celebrate life;

¹² The Balaton Group, Draft Document: "Indicators and Information Systems for Sustainable Development", 14 May, 1996, pp. 12-13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, The Balaton Group, p. 15.

contentedness of those around me in the community, etc.

These “beloved indicators” were about what they cared about as individuals within the Balaton Group, what they found to be person-specific. They are also phrased in such a way as to be measurable. Throughout their draft document, the authors indicate time and again that this is a process they are involved in, one which is imperfect, yet “a continuous task of learning and improvement.” They conclude that “we need to learn, but we need to waste no time with our learning, and at every stage along the way we have to do the best we can rather than waiting around for perfection.”¹⁴

Of the three groups that are developing environmental indicators that I have included in this paper, the Balaton Group comes closest to what I have understood from my research: Sustainability -- whether in terms of living or development -- is as much a process as a goal, one which is imperfectly achieved.

However, using indicators is only a piece of the puzzle which is sustainable living. The Balaton Group emphasises that “we can’t manage without indicators” and “without them we fly blind.” I do not accept this assertion. What the Balaton Group is saying focuses on fear as a rationale for working on and creating more and more indicators. Indicators are a worthy pursuit in their own right, but not on their own perhaps the best form of knowing about and dealing with the complex living system which is the earth (and universe). Indicators are necessary but not sufficient.

In the next section I want to synthesize what I have learned from my own research into indicators at Turvey Abbey. I will do this by looking again at the environmental assessment I did with Will Reed, the ERAs of Dr. Albert Fritsch and his team at ASPI, my own thoughts from nearly four years in the field, the studies I pursued at Schumacher College, and during my year as a Visiting Student at Linacre College, Oxford University. Then, in the section after that I will come back and pick up the notion of fear and trust.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, The Balaton Group, p. 50.

The Environmental Assessment at Turvey: Whither Indicators

I am making the assertion that sustainable living is not only definable through environmental indicators but also through relationships. Sustainable living relies on rigorous exploration into the patterns and processes which are involved in a complex system of relationships. In this case study, I have inquired into indicators, but have especially tried to explore relationships between individuals and their selves, between individuals and their community at Turvey Abbey, and between that community and the outer world (including human and nature).¹⁵

That is not to say that an inquiry into the state of Turvey Abbey's property and buildings was not needed. An assessment which seeks to determine the limits of the environment in which the sustainable living takes place is important, even vital. This ecological assessment should not be pushed aside in deference to discussions of trust and fear, love, etc. The religious and the scientific, again, belong together in a seamless whole, both in attitude and behavior.

My conclusion is that the baseline survey that Will Reed and I performed on Turvey Abbey indicated areas of sublime beauty as well as areas which needed improvement; but there was no indication of desecration, exploitation, or disease. There was a balance of wild (untamed by human) areas side by side with areas of human impact and stewardship. This environmental assessment had been primarily to ascertain what condition the property of Turvey Abbey was in overall and, as an indicator, to discern whether there was any true exploitation going on which would have severely compromised the community. I did not perform a complete ecological audit because such an inquiry would have been beyond the scope of this level of research. As a method, an

¹⁵ I do not make a separate distinction by using the terms "human" and "nature." The human should be seen as being part of nature. However, I use these terms for clarification. As well, "nature" is not only in the realm of the outer world but should be included as integral to self and community. In addition, "community" is not used in the specialist language of the ecologist here but rather as a word to encompass the social, physical, etc. environment in which the nuns live.

environmental assessment was secondary but still significant to the aims of the study. Why? Because it is an indicator of where the community stands ecologically.

How did I come to the conclusion that I did, that Turvey Abbey is not a place of desecration, exploitation, or disease, but one of sublime beauty with areas in need of improvement? Referring to the baseline survey and the nine sites Will Reed and I assessed (please see Appendix), we can make this conclusion. In addition, there are many areas of knowledge which have converged within me which led to an understanding of what an area of beauty looks like and what an area of exploitation looks like. These contributing areas of knowledge include: my studies in natural resources at the University of New Hampshire leading to this degree; conferences given on all aspects of the environment (e.g. "God, the Environment, and the Good Life", complex systems thinking); extensive conversations with leading thinkers; thoughtful reflection; intuitive response to the environment as I come into contact with it; weekend deep ecology retreats learning to listen to the land; reading international and local newspapers and listening to appropriate radio programs; courses at Schumacher College (Dartington, Devon, England).

As well, I have learned about beauty and exploitation by making my home in one place. With a consciousness of trying to be as sustaining of life as possible, particularly over the last four and a half years, Paul and I have lived in five acres of countryside in Buckland in the Moor, Devon, England. I have learned what I didn't know before when I was moving from house to house every year. This includes, primarily, what being a householder is, and all that that entails, such as learning the questions to ask and the solutions for issues like: What can we recycle and where do we take it? What do we do with the stuff we can't recycle? Where should we buy our food/clothing, etc? What building materials and design are available, at what cost, to use for our new extension? What is the water quality of the stream running through our property? Who makes decisions on the Dartmoor National Park where we live? How should we

solve the problem of the open sewage pit at the bottom of our land? How does our community cope with a mentally ill and sometimes violent neighbor? Thinking about and living in one place causes such questions to arise, brings about a shift in perception, and allows us to see a place and its complexity in terms of beauty, sacredness, fullness as well as perhaps in terms of exploitation, desecration, emptiness.

One of the ways to get access to a complex system like nature and then to be able to assess it, is through appropriate simplification. An important example of this pragmatism if you will is the work of Dr. Karl-Henrik Robert.¹⁶ He is a cancer scientist in Sweden who wanted to draw up a consensus agreement with the country's prominent scientists about "the basic information anyone needs to handle environmental issues. The Natural Step is a consensus process which started with scientists agreeing to some basic environmental information."¹⁷ The consensus document agreed on two concepts of relevance for business: quality and system conditions.

"Quality" was defined as "concentration and structuring of matter"; "system conditions map out prerequisites for a cyclic economy and can be used like a compass to guide planning and investments."¹⁸ In the document, nature is said to be "continuously producing quality by reconcentrating and restructuring waste into valuable resources, therefore a loss of quality is indicated by the presence of waste and diminishing resources." With reference to Turvey Abbey, there is very little in the way of waste of any sort and there is evidently an increase in quality of the property from when they moved there to the present.

Throughout evolution the earth has experienced a continual increase in quality. The surface has become steadily cleaner and capable of supporting more complex forms of life. Humanity is now experiencing evolution-in-reverse. Each day

¹⁶ Dr. Karl-Henrik Robert is a good illustration of a "good enough" approach, which I discuss more fully at the end of this chapter.

¹⁷ James Greyson, *The Natural Step 1995, a collection of articles*, Bristol, England, Kall Kwik, October 1995, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Greyson, p. 5.

this goes on diminishes everyone's prospects for prosperity, health and, sooner or later, survival. We know we must urgently reestablish a global economy which pays its debts as it goes. We will know when we are successful because wastes of all kinds will no longer accumulate. ¹⁹

The Natural Step agrees that in a sustainable economy the following four system conditions would be in practice:

- I. Substances from the Earth's crust do not systematically increase in nature -- so all unrecycled minerals are phased out.**
- II. Substances produced by society do not systematically increase in nature -- so materials like PCBs and CFCs are phased out.**
- III. The physical basis for nature is not systematically diminished -- so overharvesting, habitat depletion or human infrastructure are not to encroach on nature's productivity.** ²⁰
- IV. There is fair and efficient use of resources to meet human needs -- so basic human needs are met everywhere by doing more with less.** ²¹

The nuns at Turvey Abbey -- based on the Baseline Survey, the Ecological Assessment, the questionnaire, and participant observation -- recycle as many materials as they can within the county in which they live (Bedfordshire). They do not knowingly use PCBs or CFCs. They do not overharvest or build more buildings beyond what is needed, and they focus on basic human needs by doing more with less. By assessing Turvey Abbey according to the four systems conditions of The Natural Step, they can be considered to be living in a highly sustainable situation -- as much as they can be given county and national laws and structures, buildings and materials that they

¹⁹ **ibid., Greyson, p. 6.**

²⁰ **I am quoting from *The Natural Step* here, but point the attention of the reader to the conundrum that humankind is part of nature yet apart from it. This recurring conundrum affects the language we use. In this passage the intent seems not to be dualistic thinking which makes a specific division between the human and non-human but distinction; the human, as part of nature, can affect the context of nature negatively.**

²¹ **Synthesized from James Greyson, pp. 6-7.**

moved into when they moved to the property, and the like.

The Natural Step focuses on economic and business concerns primarily, which is good enough on one level. At a larger scale still, we can explore sustainable livelihoods in terms of regional and national policy. The North American Regional Consultation on Sustainable Livelihoods has published a paper called "Principles of Sustainable Livelihoods" which stipulates this public policy:

Sustainable livelihoods are supported by political, economic and social policies that enable mutually beneficial relationships to develop among people and the whole community of life. Economic globalisation, on the other hand, primarily advances supranational corporate interests, and is often inimical to human and environmental well-being....Socio-economic security and equity, meeting the needs of all and promoting authentic human development should be the overall goals of policy formulation.²²

Whatever level of the system we explore -- the personal, the monastic community, the business enterprise, or the regional/national/global economy --the point being made is the same. It is about establishing a system which "pays its debts as it goes" (the urgent desire of The Natural Step). Yet, we can pay our debts at the sociological as well as the economic level. At Turvey Abbey "paying one's debts as one goes" is both a behavior and an attitude owned up to by each individual which enables the community to function well. Similarly, for the global economy to flourish in a sustainable way the participation and involvement of individuals is required. At Turvey Abbey I find evidence of individual participation in policy making, individual accountability, and a community sense of "the common good."

Sr. Scholastica relates the following story in my interview with her:

If I get into an argument with somebody, I know as a tradition I would say this to the Prioress. We've just got that tradition. If I break something I'm supposed to own up, not just drop it in the bin and forget about it and the same goes for relationships with the community. That's an ancient tradition.

A part of Benedictine tradition?

²² North American Regional Consultation on Sustainable Livelihoods, "Principles of Sustainable Livelihoods", January 13-15, 1995.

Well yes a monastic tradition.

Is it 'fix what you break'?

Not to fix it, no, well just to own up to having done it and in the good old days they used to bring a piece of [what they'd broken] to this 'chapter of faults' where people kind of owned up that 'this has gone' and 'this has been dropped'You were supposed to, if you dropped a plate, you were supposed to take a piece of the plate to say you'd broken it and I'd always assumed that meant that at least you could explain what you were talking about.²³

Within monastic enclosure, even if the desire was to avoid owning up to breaking something or breaking relationship with someone, one is encouraged to do it anyway. This is not often the case in the wider non-monastic world. We often find it difficult to recognise that our homes and the people within them, our town centers, our roads, our planet are in their own way monastic enclosures that require us to take personal responsibility for "paying our debts as we go" if we are to remain clear, connected, and happy.

Thomas Berry has another approach. He has cited "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe." (See Appendix for a copy of these principles.) Without discussing individual responsibility, Berry instead focuses on the Universe. He takes us into a vision of the Universe which is to bring about unique responses (co-creativity) from within individuals. Berry thinks that the universe "is best understood as story: a story known in the 20th century for the first time with scientific precision through empirical observation."²⁴ By teaching this Universe Story, much like the Original Instructions taught within Native American circles, for example, or other religious narratives, we are moved in a core part of our being to "make meaning" or perhaps to make our lives reflect the meaning that that story holds.

²³ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Scholastica, August 27, 1997, pp. 18-19.

²⁴ From a short paper by Thomas Berry, "Twelve Principles for Understanding The Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe," 1990.

It is significant that in the responses to the questionnaire that I sent out to the twenty six monastic communities, all ten respondents thought social power was either the lowest rated value or opposed to their values. As well, one community gave this comment: "as a contemplative community we support/recognise many values connected with relationships (trust/love/honesty...) and care for creation, but this type of 'evaluation' runs counter to our contemplative thrust." I think that what this community is referring to is that evaluations in the form of the questionnaire I sent are not in line with how they live their lives -- the difference between living life qualitatively and living life from "the outside looking in."

Finding generalizations from Turvey Abbey of how humans love their lives, the system resonates at the same frequency no matter what level we are examining: one person and their beliefs, Turvey Abbey, ten other monastic communities, or the human enterprise as a whole.

The Notion of Fear and its Connection to Sustainability

In Chapter V I described the implicit value of trust found at Turvey. I found that what the nuns are saying about life and sustaining life is embedded in contentment and confidence -- which is the opposite of fear. What ought we who are working in indicators or sustainability research pay attention to in this?

I asked Sr. Celeste: What makes your life here sustainable? She answered:

...primarily the grace of God and we're holding on to that. If we lost sight of that then this would not be sustainable. So that really has to be primary. Aside from that, I think (pause) walking this energetic type of balance in all sorts of senses, but perhaps particularly in this moment being open to outside influence and being closed so that we retain the essential quality of life. Certain kinds of contact with human beings, but also in terms of things like technological progress. I do think it's important to...use what is important to that person and then in a sense let it show that the world is still good.²⁵

Sr. Celeste, and all the nuns I interviewed, have an "inner confidence" which I assume stems from their belief in God, and what God has revealed and given to them in

²⁵ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 12.

their lived experience. I trust that their known religious experience is valid and worthy of trust. In the mainstream world, including that of environmental activism, many of the people I encounter do not have this inner confidence.²⁶ Rather, there is a very real sense of worry, anger, and even despair that simmers under the surface. Most environmental activists worry that we as humans are destroying the planet. This worry stems from their belief system. And the belief that underpins this worry is usually: "I am/we are as humans in charge of making sure that the Earth functions as we think it should. We must maintain responsibility for it. There is no 'Great Spirit' or 'God' who is more wise, knowledgeable, omnipotent, or universal than we are." This belief is the antithesis of what the nuns hold dear. In my experience, there is very little discussion, in eco-activist circles, about God and trusting in God. A belief in a monotheistic God is often suspect and even ridiculed as irrelevant, mumbo-jumbo, and/or dangerous. This same attitude was expressed towards faith in the Enlightenment era.

As we are in the 20th and 21st centuries attempting to reestablish a link between religion and science, it would seem time that sustainable living research also explore its possible links with religion. However, most studies on sustainable living do not address this issue in its own right. Rather, such studies focus on creating a certain kind of building with certain kinds of materials, the balance of sources and sinks, hazardous wastes, recycling, etc. Sustainable communities usually have some way of embracing an open, non-dogmatic spirituality, but as regards the main religions in the West -- Christianity, Islam, and Judaism -- and their specific practices, there does not seem to be a comfortable fit.

Sr. Celeste is fond of a phrase which includes the meaning of attachment and change: "We have to release our prim little grasp on our own destiny." This is another attitude noticeably absent in modern day environmental activism; most environmental activists believe that it is up to humankind to save the planet. Again, no mention of God

²⁶ I have also met several religious men and women who do not have this inner confidence, or an environmental ethic either.

and “holding us in the palm of His/Her hand.” But, also, “saving the planet” can be a focus on what the many are doing, rather than the individual. A person may become so focused on the whole that they lose sight of “putting one’s inner house in order”, as E. F. Schumacher suggests. The “release” Sr. Celeste is mentioning involves an inner dimension within a person. This inner dimension includes a pattern of “giving everything and then clawing it all back and then we realize we’re not giving anything and we let go, release.”²⁷ It is a kind of inner ebbing and flowing that has its own constant yet natural rhythm. In many spiritual disciplines from the world’s traditional religions “letting go” is a core practice which does not just happen once, but is an ongoing, lifetime practice. Again, this is a focus on the means, or the present moment -- “letting go” -- rather than on an end or the future -- “saving the planet.”

When I asked Sr. Celeste “What reward does ‘releasing’ bring?” she answered:

Freedom. And with freedom, joy. Because I suppose...you can’t have everything! One realizes I think there are probably situations where you don’t have everything you want, but I think it’s coming to an awareness of one’s place in the universe and for me that place in the universe is...in God’s hand, if you put it that way, or a universe which is -- I’m not sure I like this, but -- the womb of God. One is, in one’s place it would...not standing over and against a void...but having a place in the universe alongside the Creator.²⁸

I believe that the nuns recognize their place in the universe is “in God’s hand” and that this attitude and belief frees them of deep worry and fear which leads them to a freedom that allows creativity to flow -- the main tool of sustaining life. In the religious context, the more one “lets go and lets God” the more one co-creates the world, making it a beauty-filled place. In the classic eco-Buddhist philosophy, it is the principle of co-arising.²⁹ In the context of Deep Ecology, the more one listens and knows the natural world the more one finds one’s place there and won’t exploit it.

In the context of a God-centered world and in terms of sustainable relationship I

²⁷ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 15.

²⁸ From the transcription of my interview with Sr. Celeste, August 27, 1997, p. 16.

²⁹ See Joanna Macy’s work, especially her book *World as Lover, World as Self*.

am struck by how much the monastic context relates directly to what is also true in a married context. Sr. Agatha's discussion about "when you take the vow it becomes easier, things become easier", is true for some married people, myself included. Her comments that "here you can't afford to clash" with your sisters is also true in my home with my husband. To be in a state of clashing, or to have it be a common aspect of one's home life, is destabilizing. I have found, like Sr. Angela, that the way through clashes is often to recognize that God loves that person as much as He/She loves me. We need to try to see that person as God does.

So again we see that sustainability has an embedded quality that is beyond both measurable indicators and beyond conventional environmental awareness. The scientist must remember "the map is not the territory." The activist must remember that being righteous does not take one to wisdom. And sustainability abides in wisdom or deeper truth.

In the realm of relationship with others that are not living with you in a monastery or in a married relationship, I think the point still holds that "we can't afford to clash." The entrenched positions that are found between environmentalists and businesspeople and the like are destabilizing and contribute to the overall destabilization of the planet. There is a place for challenge -- of self and other -- but it must be in the context of a desire for resolution. Sometimes I think the clash between environmentalists and businesspeople is kept alive as a subterfuge for not dealing with what's really at issue. In the absence of trust and joy, when one's belief systems lead one to fear and worry, where is the real meaning?

Good Enough Sustaining Living

Put in a secular way, "seeking God" can be equated with "seeking life." Within each are two notions: first, that one is actively engaged in seeking, and second, that what one is seeking is life or God, not destruction or exploitation. The concept of "sustainable living" is to be seen as "sustaining living" -- with the emphasis on action, repetition,

renewal. It is crucial to understand that attitudes and behaviors are formed by intentions. If the intention is to get somewhere -- i.e. to a state of sustainable living -- then the goal is somehow static and "achievable" at some point in time. By emphasizing "sustaining" in the progressive tense we are drawn in our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to establish a pattern of action and being that is in constant need of reevaluation and growth. There is, however, an end to be headed toward -- life or God - - but the focus is on the sustaining or the seeking as much as it is on life or God. This is a way of living in balance and harmony with the rest of life.

Sustaining life means we are focused on our relationships to self, community, and the outside world. In seeking life or God one is letting be, not exploiting people or the environment for our own gain or profit. The intention is to not step on "the lesser" or the other to get anywhere. One is open to the growth within one's own self. In seeking God our focus is on listening to and acting on the word of God as it is revealed. In seeking life our focus is on listening to nature (to the "stones speaking" as some native people might describe it) and acting on the instructions given by the Great Spirit. We are becoming.

How do we tell what is "sustaining" and what is not? Perhaps an attitude, belief, or behavior is "sustaining" when it simply doesn't exploit. There are many accounts of when nature is left alone to do what it does best it flourishes of its own mysterious accord. Martin Buber's terms "I and Thou" are relevant; nature treated as an "it" means you've done some level of exploitation. And exploitation, at some level, originates in fear and control. If one trusts that somehow "all will be well, all manner of things will be well", paradoxically one is likely to work towards the good and the sacred. In addition, if you are aware of creation as God's it moves you away from exploitation of it. At Turvey Abbey I believe that the nuns see nature as an image of God. Or, if I am wrong and they don't see nature this way, they act as if they do.

Sustaining living is in the relating and in the individual self. If you're exploiting

yourself, you're holding on to your self. You must stop, stay still, and let go. In doing so, you become transformed. There is a part of ourselves that is the future and not definable, that's not just the past. We live in a process of self-transcendence and becoming if we let go and stop being oppressive. To the degree we oppress ourselves and hold back from experiencing a transcendence of ourselves we also suppress others -- human and non-human alike.

What does living a life of grace mean? They are not just words, but a way of living. St. Benedict says: "if you keep the Rule it will keep you." He knew it would sustain them. So what is sustainable living here?

For secular society, seeking life as a principle can lead to similar ends as seeking God, at least in terms of behaviors toward self, others, and nature. Yet it would appear that in a secular society there isn't such an all-encompassing centrality as seeking God for fulfillment and integrity of the human. According to Dr. Paul Brockelman in a conversation we had about this topic, "when you live attached to 'gods' you live in some way determined -- you give yourself over to it. God, however, is transcendent, ultimate, infinite and when you center your life around God, it's more than money, power." Centering on God, then, is a freeing of oneself to change and grow.

The nuns at Turvey Abbey are certainly not ecologists, and not all religious people are living sustainably. But the nuns are living a life that is sustaining in a bedrock sense -- open to possibility, not encroaching on others or nature or self. Peter Marshall in his book *Nature's Web*, includes a section entitled "Green saints and heretics." In his view "Christianity may be the most anthropocentric religion in the world" yet "there has been an ecological undercurrent which has tried to bridge the gap between humanity and the creation and to stress man's responsible stewardship." His first example of this view is St. Benedict.

The sixth century St. Benedict of Nursia was the first to call for a new attitude to nature. He founded the abbey of Monte Cassino in Italy and his followers spread his monastic system throughout Europe. Not only was he a pioneer of a theology of the earth but he has been called 'the patron saint of those who believe that true

conservation means not only protecting nature against human misbehaviour but also developing human activities which favour a creative, harmonious relationship between man and nature.' [quote from Rene Dubos, *A God Within*]

St. Benedict was the first to encourage monks to employ themselves in manual labour as well as religious exercises. He implied in his writings that labour is a kind of prayer which creates paradise out of chaotic wilderness. The Benedictine monks drained swamps, cleared forests, improved fields and tended gardens. In their sheltered life, they worked as farmers and builders, establishing close contact with the natural world in their daily and seasonal rituals.

Benedict stands in the green pantheon for stewardship and husbandry....The kind of improvement of nature undertaken by followers of St. Benedict is precisely the kind of development that defenders of the wilderness today are trying to stop. Mankind, Benedict believed, was in charge of the world and ought to manipulate nature to his own best interests, even if nature was ultimately God's property and not his own. His self-interest might be enlightened but it is self-interest none the less.³⁰

Mr. Marshall goes on to explain that "the green saints and heretics" such as St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventura, Johannes (Meister) Eckhart, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin are all unable to go beyond "the traditional Christian concern with man's domination and control of the world." My response to this charge is twofold. First, each saint and "heretic" that he names is in chronological order -- this is significant. No person stands alone. It is relevant that each saint will have influenced the thinking (and being) of those that follow. Though none may express the holistic and all-encompassing ecological "green ethic" Mr. Marshall is seeking to find, when we put them together they do represent a rather nicely rounded picture of such.

Second, Mr. Marshall is merely looking at writings -- which in the case of St. Benedict are limited and must be interpreted. He is not looking at the lived experience of the actual monks and nuns who live within the Rule (in the case of St. Benedict) or people who have taken Meister Eckhart's and de Chardin's teachings to heart. At Turvey there are weekend courses devoted to a deeper understanding of Meister Eckhart's

³⁰ Peter Marshall, *Nature's Web An Exploration of Ecological Thinking*, London, Simon & Schuster, 1992, pp. 113-114.

writings, for one. No where within St. Benedict's Rule is there an aim to repudiate or oppress the natural world, even though there may be "enlightened self-interest." He may not be perfectly ecological -- in attitude, mystical connection, or behaviour -- but he is "good enough", or rather the monastic way of life seems sustaining and thus "good enough."

Another significant aspect of my research is "good enough sustainable living." The current emphasis in determining whether a person, business, or place is "sustainable" assumes a yes/no decision: "GM is unsustainable in its practices in the Great Lakes" or "Turvey Abbey is a sustainable community." This linear categorization is based in a kind of quantitative mindset that requires proof for validity, based on either/or determinations. I believe, on the contrary, that the essence of sustainable living, or sustaining living, is built on qualitative foundations. The either/or mindset for assigning categories of judgment and truth does not work here. Rather, sustainable living is on a sort of continuum from unsustainable tendencies to sustainable tendencies. Few people are at either extreme end, and most of us -- our attitudes, household sources and sinks, buying behaviours -- are somewhere in the middle, able to slip toward an unsustaining way of living or toward a sustaining way of living depending on the quality of our lives, and the structures and institutions we find ourselves in.

In the questionnaire I sent to the twenty six monastic communities, I asked these questions: What factors or indicators might you use to assess the long-term health and vitality of your community? What would improve the quality of your life? Are there any specific environmental factors -- for example, noise, water quality, toxic waste -- which impact upon your community negatively? What are the most positive aspects of the environment (physical, social, natural) in which you live? According to the (given) definition of sustainability, how sustainable is your community? In what ways could your community better fit the (given) definition of sustainability? In what ways is your community most nearly meeting the definition of sustainability? Given the

following range (from 1=totally sustainable to 10=totally unsustainable) where would you put a value for your community?

Please refer to the Appendix for specific answers to these questions. But notice for a moment answers for the last question. They are essentially divided between “1s” and “6s” with additional comments such as:

“6 - given current numbers we are edging towards unsustainability as more and more people are needed just to keep the place ticking over. We are also eating into our ‘spiritual capital’ as there is less time than in the past for study, Lectio, etc.”

“1 - with the qualification of new vocations”

“1 - God is all powerful”

“6 - I think we have a balanced community with regard to age and health. No one can be certain of the future. Financially secure at present.”

“I don’t understand the word value as you use it here. We live as we do and continue to do so by God’s gift. Nothing is ever totally sustainable in this world.”

The comments and the designations of “1” == totally sustainable == or “6” == edging towards unsustainability indicate both the presence of trust in the future and fear of the future. They also point to how they deal with and view loss in religious vocations, an aging population, health issues, and so on.

Our very humanity is in question. Are we capable of perfect sustainable living? Are we capable of being perfect human beings? Or is our perception of what perfection really is appropriate? If death includes life, and joy includes suffering, cannot perfection include imperfection, and sustainable living include its own variations of imperfections? At this stage of discussion, sustainable living is often set aloft as some sort of utopian convergence of place, attitude, and behaviour. We do not live up to such lofty endeavors, for our humanity implies that we do not know all, cannot be all, cannot do all. By assessing whether or not we are living sustainably, on the basis of perfection -- in attitude, belief, and behaviour -- we are chasing our own tails and will be inevitably discouraged.

Instead there is, within the lived experience, the insight that sustainable living can be good enough. Each of us has a role to play, and each of those roles create a whole

which is greater than the sum of the parts. The nuns of Turvey Abbey have a role to play and do it "good enough." The Findhorn community in Scotland is also "good enough" – and of course there are many other examples. Yet, we can find flaws and imperfections in the way they are sustainable, the ways they are sustaining living, what "more" they might do in that regard. That in itself does not mean that they are "unsustainable."

But, you may ask if all is relative does that mean no one is truly unsustainable? Yes and no. As individuals, or even as corporations, true unsustainability can be said to be like true evil – there isn't a lot of it around. Instead there are many shades of grey. Within Philip Morris, the tobacco giant, there are surely individuals who are good caring human beings. There is, however, the fact that as a corporation Philip Morris knowingly tried to addict millions of humans to a carcinogenic product for corporate profit. This corporate behavior can be considered to be against life, and sustainability. It is appropriate to be tough on such companies, and to demand that they begin to alter the structures and processes which bind individuals to a web of destruction, deceit and exploitation.

The nature of institutions and how they affect individuals is not properly addressed at almost any level, in any sphere, as we have become somewhat cynical (or is it naive?) about their power. It would be interesting to explore the paradox further that some institutions are unsustainable systems being run by human beings with instincts of sustainability. Institutions do affect individuals, and we are right to fight against the propagation of institutional greed. It is important to note that real human beings, who want to feed their families, support their communities, and the like work within such corporations – at least that seems to be true. These individuals are not totally against life, or sustainability, but are complicit in a system which acts in that manner. The challenge facing the mainstream environmental movement is to choose between ameliorating the worst effects of corporate behavior or to resist the corporate system and seek to replace it. The risk of the revisionist route is that in ameliorating, one is

lending succor to the instigators of the problem; the risk of the revolutionary route is that it ignores the possibilities for change that are becoming apparent within some corporations (e.g. Ben and Jerry's).³¹ Yet to go into detail about the scope of corporate intentionality and/or inadequacies is beyond the scope of this case study.³²

I resisted making this dissertation a matter of "proof" for the reason that sustainability is an ongoing, complex web of relationships not lending itself easily to declarations of black and white simplicity (i.e., "This is unsustainable", "That is sustainable"). Instead, I chose to focus on the nuns as well as the place known as Turvey Abbey to discern how and why they/it functions. By understanding how and why others see, believe, and act as they do, we can better understand our own ways of living sustainably or not so sustainably. As humans we are self-reflective beings, and the reflections of others influence our very lives and the quality and way in which we live them. St. Benedict was a saint, but he was also an ordinary human being, one with limited vision. We should give him, as well as ourselves, the credit of that.

Turvey Abbey and the outer world

Thomas Berry, in a conversation with Thomas Rain Crowe of the magazine *Resurgence*, stated his reasons for entering a monastery at the age of twenty:

I recognized I couldn't survive in the world the way it was becoming. I joined the monastery to find meaning. I saw that the monastic tradition was aligned with the wider rhythms of nature -- the daily rituals of prayer reflecting the diurnal cycle, the seasonal liturgy reflecting the seasonal cycles. Here, I was interested in finding answers to three primary questions: 'Where are we? How did we get

³¹ Even though Ben and Jerry's is currently (as of April 2000) being traded like any other stock it is still able to maintain its environmental commitment while ownership is being transferred to a multinational.

³² The Rule of St. Benedict supports an institutional framework leading to sustaining life. Other institutional frameworks can similarly institutionalize behavior in the opposite direction. The joint stock corporation focusing exclusively on the creation of shareholder value has the potential to be such an unsustaining framework. In some cases this potential is already being fully realised.

here? and What do we do about it?"³³

For the next forty years, while being a monk, Thomas Berry studied, taught and travelled the world writing such important books as *The Dream of the Earth* and *The Universe Story*. In my conversations with him during the fall of 1995 I asked him about being "a follower of Christ" and he calmly responded that "he'd never had a problem with it." Though I didn't ask him at the time whether monastic life helped or hindered his writing, I believe he would have said it allowed him to see and do what he has written about. So too, in my conversations and prayer time with David Stendi-Rast, he said that he most wanted to "get back to my cell [in his monastery on Big Sur, California] where I feel most at home."

I have not sought in my research to establish a link over time between monastics and their thoughts and writings, but there would seem to be enough evidence to point to the monastic life being one which fosters an ecological, and transcendent, mindset. Many of the great ecological thinkers were monastics, and sought out that lifestyle. Perhaps Thomas Berry will be seen in that long line of tradition – St. Benedict, St. Bonaventura, St. Francis, Meister Eckhart, etc. His contribution to the thinking that came before him may be this:

Unfortunately and mistakenly, we are attempting to make humans self-referent and everything else human referent. Yet, the cosmos itself is the only self-reference and must be at the heart of all our systems – political, economic, educational and religious. There are some important principles of the universe that must be appreciated. The first is diversity. It is the first manifestation of the differentiation and of simple identity. The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection. The second is subjectivity. The universe is a community of subjects, not a collection of objects. We are members of the great universal community. We participate in this life; we are nourished by this community; we are instructed by this community; we are healed by this community....Our great work is to shift to a mutually enhancing mode of presence. I do think that we have passed over a threshold of sorts, in which we have become much more conscious of the issues, and that a new sensitivity to the natural world is coming

³³ Thomas Berry, in the article "Creative Universe" found in *Resurgence* No. 195 July/August 1999, p. 25.

into being.³⁴

While the nuns at Turvey Abbey had not heard of Thomas Berry until I spoke of him, and had not read any of his books until I gave Sr. Celeste a copy of *The Universe Story* for their library, they have manifested in their lives the principles he is speaking of -- diversity, subjectivity, community, "a mutually enhancing mode of presence." Throughout America there are religious communities springing up in various places, dedicated to Thomas Berry's thinking.³⁵ Yet, without recognising what they do as akin to Thomas Berry, the nuns nonetheless live out in simple ways in their day to day lives much of what Thomas Berry speaks of. These nuns, like 1500 years of nuns before them, have a tradition which is ordinary, simple, and deeply effective in living a sustaining life.

In the 1600s, Galileo's daughter known as Suor Marie Celeste wrote over one hundred letters to him, some of which described her life in the monastery of the Poor Clares of San Matteo. In these letters she expressed how they worked long hours to sustain their economy, grew fruits and vegetables to feed themselves, did all their own cleaning and cooking, and produced articles for outside sale such as fine embroidered handkerchiefs, lace, herbal medicines, and bread in the summertime (when it was too hot for anyone else to bake).³⁶ It was a difficult life, and some women of the time were still forced to "take the veil" (though it was outlawed in the Council of Trent in 1563), but Suor Maria Celeste, like many other women before and after her found their place there. She was considered to be the greatest comforter and ally of her father during his time of trial with the Vatican. He wanted her specifically to manage his affairs during

³⁴ Thomas Berry, in the article "Creative Universe" found in *Resurgence* No. 195 July/August 1999, p. 26.

³⁵ In fact, Dr. John Carroll is beginning a book on this subject, and is travelling to many of these communities all around the United States to study them.

³⁶ Dava Sobel, *Galileo's Daughter, A Drama of Science, Faith and Love*, London, Fourth Estate, 1999, p. 115.

his long separation and trial in Rome, even though she was within the monastic enclosure. As well, Galileo had the continual support of her monastery -- in prayer, word and deed.

Suor Maria Celeste offered a form of stability to Galileo which he treasured. So too, the nuns of Turvey Abbey offer the outer world stability -- in prayer, vows, and deed. By their stability they offer a kind of healing to those of us who live frantic, ever travelling lives. They represent an alternative. As the sense of place and home created by staying in one place is eroded (at least in the "developed" world), we are able to see what it was like, what it is still like, to stay in one place and, in fact, to have a "sense of place" at all.

Whither?

In the modern world there is a case to be made that as time and space collapses (in the physical sense), our perception views "space", which we are less and less familiar with, as somehow threatening. We begin to feel less able to cope with any space around us. Or within us. Most of the nuns claim they find it excruciatingly difficult in the first phases of life in the monastery to cope with free time and the space afforded to them to grow as an individual. They are unused to it, don't know what to do with themselves.

If the human population continues to grow, and we stop moving ever outward into "undeveloped" green belts, we as humans will need to learn to live "in place." As such, the skills monastic nuns and monks have developed over 1500 years may be useful to us. As I progressively moved from active, directed retreats to silent ones over the years, I found the most difficult element was letting go into the space of silence, and importantly, an uncluttered mind. By this I mean that in a silent retreat of a few days or more there are restrictions placed around reading material, TV watching, talking, and general busyness. It is an amazing exercise to realize how much of one's life is spent in doing and filling one's own space, both around and inside oneself. Reading fills thoughts, TV

fills the head, talking fills the empty silence. Without others, without things to fill us, we are faced with what appears to be an emptiness of self. At this point we can truly, abjectly panic. All sorts of breathing, sleep patterns, emotions, and thoughts can arise from the disruption.

I liken this process to going off caffeine; the first days are horrendous and even painful. But sooner or later, if you go through it by just staying with it and not filling the space, you come to a place of calmness, in greater and greater chunks. Eventually you even find that you need the space, this space, to just be wholly in your being and body. No matter what my life is with my husband, and no matter how many children we have, I will always need this space. I cannot sustain living without such space. In some parts of the world you can see in the faces of people that they know this inner space. They know its importance. As a cultural entity it isn't lost so much as left behind and forgotten in our culture.

I think teaching students of sustainable living how to be silent is the basis for life skills which will enable people to live sustainably. In being silent we hear, and can listen, and eventually become sensitive enough to hear stones speak. We cannot hear the stones, Great Spirit, the Universe, God speak when our heads and bodies are filled with thoughts, feelings, and movement. We must stop. First, we must stop and slow down. I would say this is a core tenet of sustaining living. The second is faith, the ability to let go to God and to life.

I know that growing up in my parent's home until I was eighteen, then living as a single person "in the world" until I was thirty two, and now living as a married person that life has had consistent elements in it. One of these is that details may change but the simple act of living is difficult. Life is difficult. Can we say that going to live in a monastery changes one? Yes. But does it change the human so fundamentally that their life before and after becomes unrecognizably dissimilar? No. Monastic life is ordinary, it is similar to other human lifestyles. Yet, what it does allow is the expression of and

encouragement of living a life of belief, trust, and faith.

In the natural world we find that “life finds a way” through all measures of trials. What is it that makes a human capable of self-reflection, what enables her to find a way through the hurdles we name and see in our path? Perhaps it is the simple, open, ordinary act of faith. Not a faith in something or someone that becomes a battleground between believers, but the simple, unadulterated act of living.

Life as lived according to the nuns of Turvey Abbey indicate this: they are predominantly joy-filled, content, aware that their life is somehow meaningful, and sensitive in a world which often lacks these attributes. We desire these attributes and recognize in them the mark of fulfillment. They are indicators in their own right of living life well, and thus sustainably.

But how does this relate to sustainable living? Throughout time there have been points in history and pre-history where evolution or creation in all its unfolding might have gone another way. Science in fact tells us it is remarkable that we exist at all. And yet environmental thinkers consistently impart the message that “the earth will all end tomorrow if we don’t change our ways.” Is this true?

It is true that there is scientific reason to believe that human attitudes and behaviors are changing the natural balance of life on earth, including a fragmentation and imbalance in how we live life. It is also true that there have been continual peaks and troughs of evolutionary creativity throughout time. The present era is seeing the most powerful extinction spasm since the end of the Tertiary era 65 million years ago.¹⁷ But life itself has never been extinguished. Why worry? Perhaps it is not because there is a fear that “life” will end, but fear that “I” will end. In addition, we humans often seem to exhibit excessive hubris in believing that we could actually mastermind

¹⁷ See Richard Fortey, *Life: An Unauthorised Biography, A Natural History of the First Four Thousand Million Years of Life on Earth*, London, Harper Collins Publishers, 1997, particularly the diagram of time in the inside of the front cover. As well, see Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin, *The Sixth Extinction, Biodiversity and its Survival*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1996, for additional perspective.

such a catastrophic blow, that we believe we have the power to kill off life or even prevent such extinction.

What are we left with? Quietness, after the worry leaves. In Corinthians we find that "...but the greatest of these is love." Faith, hope and love do seem to be a trinity which reinforce each other. As both St. Paul and Augustine said, "to have faith is to have hope and love." To exist lovingly, to share love with all humans and creatures, is perhaps the hallmark of a believing person, one who has faith and hope. The nuns of Turvey Abbey have faith and hope and love. They are related and responsible for themselves and each other in their corner of the world.

Endpiece

Thomas Stearns Eliot in Section V of his poem "Little Gidding" captures the essence of movement and stillness, and sustaining life as a process rather than sustainability as an end point. I leave you with his words.

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always--
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well
All manner of things shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.³⁸

³⁸ Thomas Stearns Eliot (T.S. Eliot), "Little Gidding", Section V, found in Helen Gardner, Editor, *The New Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1950*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 897.

GLOSSARY

Sustainability Terms

Anthropic principle: Places conditions on theories of the origin of the universe are constrained by the necessity to allow individual human existence. There is a strong (teleologic) anthropic principle, and a weak anthropic principle. The weak anthropic principle is basically a selection principle -- out of the many universes, we live in the one that allows life to develop.

Sustainability: A sustaining way of being involving more than inputs and outputs.

Sustainable development: Living in a way which does not deplete non-renewable resources or overwhelm and destroy the environment in which a culture or subculture is set. Involves the alleviation of poverty, secure livelihoods, integrated health care, the reduction of maternal and infant mortality, education and services for the responsible planning of family size, the improvement of the status and income of women, the fulfillment of women's personal aspirations and individual and community participation.¹

Sustainable living: A way of living that is enduring and that supports life in all its forms. This sustaining way of life involves change and continuity -- adaptability to new situations while maintaining continuity of meaning and behavior.

Sustainable relationship: A web of interconnections among human, biota, spirit, and cyclic life processes; growth is viewed in terms of fulfillment and well-being, living in health, and preserving the integrity of the whole system as well as the intrinsic value of each individual.²

Monastic Terms³

Ascetics: People who have adopted a means of self-discipline in order to have greater union with God. Asceticism can be exercised internally as discipline applied to the mind, heart, and will, or externally through renunciations signified by the voluntary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience or by various forms of fasting, bodily mortification, and austerity.

¹ Sitarz, Daniel, *Agenda 21, The Earth Summit Strategy To Save Our Planet*, Boulder, Earthpress, 1994, p. 47.

² This is my own working definition.

³ Many of the terms in this section are taken from the Glossary within *The Essential Catholic Handbook, A Summary of Beliefs, Practices, and Prayers*, Liguori, Missouri, Liguori Publications, 1997.

Apostolic: An active, not contemplative, order of religious men or women. Related to "of the nature or character of the Apostles."

Bec House: The name of the guest accommodation of the nuns at Turvey Abbey.

Benedictine spirituality: The practice of prayer and life developed by the followers of the Rule of St. Benedict. Those who embrace a Benedictine spirituality choose life in community in which each member supports each other, own all goods in common, pray the Liturgy of the Hours in community, reflect on the Scriptures and related spiritual reading through *lectio divina* and prefer nothing other than Christ.

Brand House: The name of the place for eating if you are a guest of the nuns at Turvey Abbey.

Bursar: A treasurer. A person in charge of the funds or other property.

CAFOD: The official overseas aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Charism: Extraordinary gifts or graces of the Holy Spirit given to individuals for the sake of others.

Choirmistress: A nun whose job it is to prepare and direct the community in sung prayer.

Coenobite: One who is a member of a monastic community.

Compline: The seventh and last of the daytime canonical hours of prayer. Compline is to be sung or said immediately before retiring for the night.

Coptic: Of or pertaining to the Copts, the Monophysite Christian Church in Egypt. A Copt is an Egyptian not of Arab descent.

Cowl: A hooded sleeveless garment worn by monks. Also, a full cloak with wide sleeves worn by members of Benedictine orders.

Divine Office: The sung office in choir, also known as the Liturgy of the Hours. A set form of hymns, psalms, readings, and prayers recited (or sung) at particular times of the day. The name formerly used for the public prayer of the Church designed to sanctify the hours of the day. The revision of this prayer is known as the Liturgy of the Hours.

Dom: Master: used as a title preceding the names of some Roman Catholic ecclesiastical and monastic dignitaries, especially of Benedictine and Carthusian monks.

Ecumenism: A movement which seeks to bring about the unity of all Christians. This movement is beginning to include non-Christians.

Eremitic: Like a hermit, one who lives alone.

Extern: A person who comes to a monastery as a guest, who participates in prayer, but has not taken any vows to be connected to the monastery in a formal way.

Formation: In monastic life, the act of forming a person into the ways of the community. The novice is helped to discern her vocation, and is formed both in the essentials of the Christian life and in the charism and spirit of the monastery. (Note that in ecology, "formation" is a mature community of plant species adapted to particular conditions.)

Great Silence: In a monastic enclosure, the time after Compline in the evening until after *lectio divina* the next morning.

Guestmistress: In a monastery, the nun whose job it is to welcome and see to the needs of guests.

Lectio Divina: Sacred readings, such as the Scriptures, read so as to become prayer. Includes *Meditatio*, *Oratio* and *Contemplatio*.

Liturgy: The public worship of the Catholic Church, including the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, the celebration of the other sacraments, and the Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office.

Martyrology: A chronological list of the feast days of the saints with the names given for each date, and some biographical information for each saint.

Mass: A popular name for the Eucharistic sacrifice and banquet, the memorial of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Mass consists of two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In addition there are introductory rites (greeting, penitential rite, the Glory to God hymn on certain occasions, opening prayer) and concluding rites (final greeting, blessing, dismissal).

Monastery: A place of residence where a community for men or women reside under a common rule. In general, a monastery is made up of a church, a chapter house, a cloister, a refectory, work area, and individual cells (bedrooms) or a dormitory.

Monasticism: The way of life followed by those who set themselves apart from society to devote themselves to the service of God. The way of life is also known as contemplative.

Monk: Strictly, a member of one of the monastic orders in the Catholic Church such as Benedictines, Cistercians, etc. Popularly the term is applied to men who belong to religious communities but who are not monks in the strict sense.

Mother Prioress: In a monastery, the nun it is whose job it is to lead the rest of the community, particularly in decision-making.

Necrology: An ecclesiastical or monastic register containing entries of the deaths of people connected with, or commemorated by, a church, monastery, etc.

Novice: Novices are those who begin a period of trial and formation in the novitiate of a religious institute in order to “better recognize their divine vocation” and to “experience the institute’s manner of living.” The period of novitiate must last for twelve months and may be extended to 24 months. At the end of it the novice either leaves or is admitted to temporary vows.

Novicemistress: In a monastery, the nun it is whose job is to supervise the formation of new members, called novices. She helps the novice to discern her vocation.

Nun: Popularly this term is used to describe a woman who belongs to a religious institute, that is, to any “Sister.” Technically, the title “nun” applies in the strict sense only to those women who belong to a religious order with solemn vows (such as a monastery).

Oblate: A person dedicated to monastic or religious life or work, e.g. a lay person attached to a religious community without having taken vows.

Office of Praise or Lauds: The Morning Prayer in the Divine Office of the Liturgy of the Hours.

Office of Readings: The earliest prayer of the day in the Liturgy of the Hours, before Lauds.

Portress: A woman who acts as a porter or doorkeeper, especially in a monastery.

Retreatmistress: In the monastery, the nun whose job it is to create, plan, and organize retreats held at the monastery, particularly those for guests.

Rule of St. Benedict: Written by St. Benedict of Nursia around 530 A.D. it is called “a little rule for beginners.” It contains directions for all aspects of the monastic life, from establishing the abbot as superior, the arrangement of psalms for prayers, measures for correction of faults, to details of clothing and the amount of food and drink.

St. Benedict of Nursia: Born about A.D.480 he became a hermit around the age of twenty and lived this way for many years. He founded a series of monasteries, beginning at Subiaco, Italy. Around A.D. 525 he founded a monastery at Monte Cassino and there developed his monastic rule. He is known as “the Father of Western Monasticism.” He died circa 546.

Schedule of Monastic Life: The daily routine followed by a monastery, including times for prayer, Mass, work, *lectio divina*, meals, and recreation.

Vatican Council II: The twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church held in Rome for four sessions between 1962 and 1965. It began under Pope John XXIII (the first session) and finished under Pope Paul VI (the other three sessions). The teaching of Vatican II had an enormous impact on the life of the Church throughout the world.

Vespers: The evening service of the Divine Office, also known as Evening Prayer or

Evensong. In structure it has an introductory verse; a hymn appropriate for the day, feast, or liturgical season; two psalms and a New Testament canticle; a reading from Scripture followed by a responsorial hymn; the *Magnificat*; intercessions, followed by the Our Father, the prayer of the day, and a final blessing.

Vita et Pax Foundation: Created in the 1920s by Dom Constantine Bosschaerts (1889-1950), of Antwerp, Belgium. Dom Constantine founded the Cockfosters community in North London in 1936. From the Cockfosters community some of the monks and nuns later went on to found Turvey Abbey (1980-1981). The vision of the Vita et Pax foundation centers on ecumenism, renewal of the spirit of Christianity, and the reunion of Eastern Orthodox with Roman Catholic.

Vow: A deliberate and free promise made to God concerning a possible and better good which must be fulfilled by reason of the virtue of religion. A vow is public if it is accepted in the name of the Church by a legitimate superior; otherwise, it is private. A vow is solemn if it is recognized as such by the Church; otherwise it is simple.

Research Methods Terms

Case study: An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Ecological audit-- a method for assessing the presence or absence of factors in a given environment. An auditor looks for the presence or absence of such factors as grey water recycling or an aesthetic view (for example) to determine "how ecological" a site is.

Ethnography -- Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture. The description may be of a small tribal group in some exotic land, or a classroom in middle-class suburbia. The task is interviewing relevant people, reviewing records, weighing the credibility of one person's opinions against another's, looking for ties to special interests and organizations, and writing the story for a concerned public as well as for professional colleagues. The ethnographer writes about the routine, daily lives of people. The more predictable patterns of human thought and behavior are the focus of inquiry.⁴

⁴ From Fetterman, David M., *Ethnography Step by Step*, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol. 17, Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1989, p. 11.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sustainable Living and Ecological Thought

- Andrews, Valerie, *A Passion for This Earth, Exploring a New Partnership of Man, Woman and Nature*, San Francisco, Harper, 1990.
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by Martin Ostwald, Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1962.
- The Balaton Group, *Draft Document: "Indicators and Information Systems for Sustainable Development"*, May 14, 1996.
- Bateson, Gregory, *Mind and Nature*, New York, Dutton, 1979.
- , *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, New York, Ballantine, 1972.
- Beamish, Tony, *No Free Lunch, The Urgent Need for Sustainable Economics*, East Preston (England), Tony Beamish, 1993.
- Berry, Thomas, CP, in the article "Creative Universe" found in *Resurgence* No. 195 July/August 1999.
- , *The Universe Story*, Sierra Club Books, 1997.
- , *Befriending the Earth, A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth*, Mystic, CT, Twenty-Third Publications, 1992.
- , "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe", 1990.
- , *The Dream of the Earth*, San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1988.
- Berry, Wendell, *Fidelity, Five Stories*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1992.
- , *What Are People For?*, San Francisco, North Point Press, 1990.
- , *The Unsettling of America, Culture and Agriculture*, San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1986.
- , *The Gift of Good Land, Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural*, San Francisco, North Point Press, 1981.
- Bertalanffy, Ludwig von, *General Systems Theory*, New York, Braziller, 1968.

- Birch, Charles, and John B. Cobb, Jr., *The Liberation of Life*, Denton, TX, Environmental Ethics Books, 1990.
- Bohm, David, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, London, Ark Paperbacks, 1983.
- Bookchin, Murray, *The Ecology of Freedom*, Pala Alto, CA, Cheshire Books, 1981.
- Brown, Lester R., et al, *State of the World*, New York, Norton, 1984-present.
- Brown, Lester R., *Building a Sustainable Society*, New York, Norton, 1981.
- Capra, Fritjof, *The Web of Life, A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter*, London, Harper Collins Publishers, 1996.
- (Ed.), *Guide to Ecoliteracy*, 1993.
- , *The Tao of Physics*, 3rd Edition, Updated, Boston, Shambhala, 1991.
- , and David Steindl-Rast with Thomas Matus, *Belonging to the Universe*, Harper, San Francisco, 1991.
- , *Uncommon Wisdom*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1988.
- , "Bootstrap Physics: A Conversation with Geoffrey Chew", in Carleton de Tar, Jerry Finkelstein, and Chung-I Tan (Eds), *A Passion for Physics*, World Scientific, Singapore, 1985; pp. 247-86.
- , *The Turning Point*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1982.
- Christensen, Karen, *Home Ecology, Simple and Practical Ways to Green Your Home*, Golden, CO, Fulcrum Publishing, 1990.
- Clark, Edward (Ed.), *Our Sustainable Table*, San Francisco, North Point Press, 1990.
- Commoner, Barry, *Making Peace With the Planet*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1990.
- Costanza, Robert (Ed.), *Ecological Economics, The Science and Management of Sustainability*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Crawford, Patricia, *Homesteading, A Practical Guide to Living Off the Land*, New York, Collier Books, 1975.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, *Flow, The Psychology of Happiness*, London, Rider, 1992.
- cummings, e.e., *100 selected poems*, New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1959.

- Daly, Herman E., and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good, Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1989.
- Davies, Paul, *God and the New Physics*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1983.
- De Chardin, Pierre Teilhard, *Hymn of the Universe*, New York, Harper and Row, 1961.
- De Mello, Anthony, S.J., *Wellsprings, A Book of Spiritual Exercises, Complete and Unabridged*, London, Image Books (Doubleday), 1986.
- Des Jardins, Joseph R., *Environmental Ethics, An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, Belmont, CA, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993.
- Devall, Bill, and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology, Living as if Nature Mattered*, Salt Lake City, Peregrine Smith, 1985.
- Diamond, Irene, and Gloria Feman Orenstein (Ed.), *Reweaving the World, The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1990.
- Dillard, Annie, *Holy the Firm*, New York, Harper and Row, 1977.
- Ehrenfeld, David, *The Arrogance of Humanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Eigen, Manfred, and Ruthild Winkler, *Laws of the Game, How the Principles of Nature Govern Chance*, Translated by Robert and Rita Kimber, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Eisler, Riane, *The Chalice and the Blade*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1987.
- Elgin, Duane, *Voluntary Simplicity, Toward a Way of Life That is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*, Revised Edition, New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1993.
- Eliot, Thomas Stearns (T.S.), "Little Gidding", Section V, found in Helen Gardner, Editor, *The New Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1950*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972.
- Emery, F. E. (Ed.), *Systems Thinking: Selected Readings*, Penguin, 1969.
- Fitzgerald, William J., *Seasons of the Earth and Heart, Becoming Aware of Nature, Self, and Spirit*, Notre Dame, IN, Ave Maria Press, 1991.
- Forrester, Jay W., *Principles of Systems*, Portland, OR, Productivity Press, 1990.
- Fortey, Richard, *Life: An Unauthorized Biography, A Natural History of the First 4,000,000,000 Years of Life on Earth*, London, Harper Collins, 1997.

- Fox, Warwick, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, Boston, Shambhala, 1990.**
- Fritsch, Albert J., SJ, *Renew the Face of the Earth*, Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1987.**
- Fry, Timothy, O.S.B., Editor, *RB 1980, The Rule of St. Benedict In Latin and English with Notes*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1981.**
- Furlong, Monica, *Visions and Longings, Medieval Women Mystics*, London, Mowbray, 1996.**
- George, James, *Asking for the Earth, Waking Up to the Spiritual/Ecological Crisis*, Rockport, MA, Element Books, 1995.**
- Goodwin, Brian, *How the Leopard Changed its Spots*, New York, Scribner, 1994.**
- Gore, Al, *Earth in the Balance*, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1992.**
- Gottlieb, Roger S. (Ed.), *This Sacred Earth, Religion, Nature, Environment*, New York, Routledge, 1996.**
- Greyson, James, *The Natural Step 1995, a collection of articles*, Bristol, England, Kall Kwik, October 1995.**
- Harvey, Barbara, *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540, The Monastic Experience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.**
- Hawken, Paul, *The Ecology of Commerce, A Declaration of Sustainability*, New York, HarperCollins, 1993.**
- Hayter, Earl W., *The Troubled Farmer 1850-1900 Rural Adjustment to Industrialism*, DeKalb, IL, Northern Illinois University Press, 1968.**
- , Beulah O. Hayter, Editor, *From Claim Shanty to the Halls of Ivy, Sketches of an American History Professor (1901-1976)*, DeKalb, Illinois, Northern Illinois University Archives, 1977.**
- Henderson, Hazel, *Paradigms in Progress*, San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler, 1995.**
- Heisenberg, Werner, *Physics and Beyond*, New York, Harper and Row, 1971.**
- Hutchingson, James E., *Religion and the Natural Sciences, The Range of Engagement*, Fort Worth, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch College Publishers, 1993.**
- Jackson, Wes, *Altars of Unhewn Stone, Science and the Earth*, San Francisco, North Point Press, 1987.**

- Jewett, Sarah Orne, *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories*, Garden City, NY, Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1936.
- Keller, Evelyn Fox, *A Feeling for the Organism, The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock*, New York, W. H. Freeman and Co., 1983.
- Kellert, Stephen R., and Edward O. Wilson, *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, Washington, DC, Island Press, 1993.
- Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- LaChance, Albert and John E. Carroll (Editors), *Embracing Earth, Catholic Approaches to Ecology*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1994.
- Laszlo, Ervin, *Evolution*, Boston, Shambhala, 1987.
- (Ed.), *The Relevance of General Systems Theory*, New York, George Braziller, 1972.
- Leakey, Richard and Roger Lewin, *The Sixth Extinction, Biodiversity and its Survival*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996.
- Leopold, Aldo, *A Sand County Almanac, And Sketches Here and There*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1949.
- Logsdon, Gene, *At Nature's Pace, Farming and the American Dream*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1994.
- MacGillis, Miriam Therese, OP, *Education for a Small Planet, Preparing Young People to Open Their Future to Hope*, Genesis Farm.
- Macy, Joanna, *World As Lover, World As Self*, Berkeley, Parallax Press, 1991.
- Mander, Jerry, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1991.
- Margulis, Lynn and Dorion Sagan, *What is Life?*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- Marshall, Peter, *Nature's Web, An Exploration of Ecological Thinking*, London, Simon and Schuster, 1992.
- Maruyama, Margoroh, "The Second Cybernetics", *American Scientist*, Vol. 51, pp. 164-79, 1963.
- Matson, Peter H., *A Place in the Country, A Narrative on the Imperfect Art of Homesteading and the Value of Ignorance*, New York, Random House, 1977.

- Maturana, Humberto and Francisco Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge, The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*, Revised Edition, Boston, Shambhala Publications, 1987.
- McDaniel, Jay B., *Of God and Pelicans, A Theology of Reverence for Life*, Louisville, KY, John Knox Press, 1989.
- Meadows, Donella, and Dennis Meadows, Jorgen Randers, *Beyond the Limits, Confronting Global Collapse, Envisioning a Sustainable Future*, Post Mills, VT, Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1992.
- Meadows, Donella H., *The Global Citizen*, Washington, DC, Island Press, 1991.
- Menzel, Peter, *Material World, A Global Family Portrait*, San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1994.
- Merchant, Carolyn, *Radical Ecology, The Search for a Livable World*, New York, Routledge, 1992.
- Morris, Peter, and Riki Therivel, Editors, *Methods of Environmental Impact Assessment, The Natural and Built Environment Series 2*, London, UCL Press Limited, 1998.
- Nearing, Helen, *Loving and Leaving the Good Life*, Post Hills, VT, Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1992.
- , and Scott Nearing, *The Good Life*, New York, Schocken Books, 1970.
- North American Regional Consultation on Sustainable Livelihoods, "Principles of Sustainable Livelihoods", January 13-15, 1995.
- Odum, Eugene, *Fundamentals of Ecology*, Philadelphia, Saunders, 1953.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development), *Environmental Indicators, OECD Core Set*, Paris, Head of Publications Service OECD, 1994.
- Orr, David, *Ecological Literacy*, State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Plato, *The Republic*, Jowett translation, New York, Vintage Books, 1991.
- Prigogine, Ilya and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*, New York, Bantam, 1984.
- Prigogine, Ilya, *From Being to Becoming*, San Francisco, Freeman, 1980.
- - *The Revised English Bible*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Richardson, George P., *Feedback Thought in Social Science and Systems Theory*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

- Rinpoche, Sogyal, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1993.
- Roszak, Theodore, and Mary E. Gomes, Allen D. Kanner (Ed.), *Ecopsychology, Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1995.
- Roszak, Theodore, *The Voice of the Earth*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1992.
- St. Meinrad Archabbey, *The Benedictine Oblate Companion, A Directive Manual for Oblates of St. Benedict*, 6th Revised Edition, St. Meinrad, IN, St. Meinrad Archabbey, 1981.
- Sale, Kirkpatrick, *Dwellers in the Land, The Bioregional Vision*, Philadelphia, PA, New Society Publishers, 1991.
- Sax, Joseph L., *Mountains Without Handrails, Reflections on the National Parks*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1980.
- Schumacher, E.F., *Good Work*, New York, Harper and Row, 1979.
- , *A Guide for the Perplexed*, New York, Harper and Row, 1977.
- , *Small Is Beautiful, Economics as if People Mattered*, New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1973.
- Senge, Peter M., *The Fifth Discipline, The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization*, New York, Doubleday, 1990.
- Sheldrake, Rupert, *The Rebirth of Nature, The Greening of Science and God*, New York, Bantam Books, 1992.
- Shiva, Vandana, *Staying Alive, Women, Ecology and Development*, London, Zed Books, 1989.
- , *A New Science of Life*, Los Angeles, Tarcher, 1981.
- Skolimowski, Henryk, *The Participatory Mind, A New Theory of Knowledge and of the Universe*, London, Penguin Group, 1994.
- Snyder, Gary, *Turtle Island*, London, Shambhala, 1993.
- Social Survey Division, Office of National Statistics, *Living in Britain, Preliminary Results from the 1996 General Household Survey*, London, The Stationery Office, 1997.
- Spretnak, Charlene, *States of Grace, The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age, Reclaiming the Core Teachings and Practices of the Great Wisdom Traditions for the Well-Being of the Earth Community*, San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1991.

- Sustainable Seattle, *Indicators of Sustainable Community 1998*, Seattle, Washington, 1998.**
- Swimme, Brian, *The Universe is a Green Dragon, A Cosmic Creation Story*, Santa Fe, NM, Bear and Company, 1984.**
- Tarnas, Richard, *The Passion of the Western Mind, Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View*, New York, Ballentine Books, 1991.**
- Thoreau, Henry David, *Faith in a Seed*, Washington, DC, Island Press, 1993.**
- Vernadsky, Vladimir, *The Biosphere*, published originally in 1926; reprinted US edition by Synergetic Press, Oracle, AZ, 1986.**
- Waring, Marilyn, *If Women Counted, A New Feminist Economics*, London, MacMillan, 1989.**
- Weizenbaum, Joseph, *Computer Power and Human Reason*, New York, Freeman, 1976.**
- Whitehead, Alfred North, *Process and Reality*, New York, Macmillan, 1929.**
- Wiener, Norbert, *Cybernetics*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1948; reprinted 1961.**
- , *The Human Use of Human Beings*, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1950.**
- Willers, Bill (Ed.), *Learning to Listen to the Land*, Washington, DC, Island Press, 1991.**
- Wilson, Edward O., *The Diversity of Life*, New York, W.W. Norton and Co., 1992.**
- , *Biophilia*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1984.**
- Zeldin, Theodore, *An Intimate History of Humanity*, London, Mandarin Paperbacks, 1995.**
- Zukav, Gary, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters, An Overview of the New Physics*, New York, Bantam Books, 1980.**

Monastic Life and History. Women's Studies

- Adels, Jill Haak, *The Wisdom of the Saints, An Anthology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987.**
- A.I.M. (Aide Inter-Monasteres), *Monastic Bulletin*, English Edition, Worcester (England), Stanbrook Abbey, published twice a year.**
- Alston, G. Cyprian, *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume II*, Translated by Susan Birkenseer, Online Edition, Kevin Knight, 1999.**

- Anderson, Lorraine (Ed.), *Sisters of the Earth, Women's Prose and Poetry About Nature*, New York, Vintage Books, 1991.**
- Anderson, Sherry Ruth, and Patricia Hopkins, *The Feminine Face of God, The Unfolding of the Sacred in Women*, New York, Bantam Books, 1992.**
- Arnold, Eberhard, *Why We Live in Community (with two interpretive talks by Thomas Merton)*, Farmington, PA, The Plough Publishing House, The Hutterian Brethern Service Committee Inc, 1995.**
- Bellah, Robert N., and Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart, Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, New York, Harper and Row, 1985.**
- Brockelman, Paul, *These are the Days of Wonders and Miracles, The Spiritual Significance of Contemporary Cosmology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.**
-, *The Inside Story, A Narrative Approach to Religious Understanding and Truth*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992.**
- Carmelites of Indianapolis, *The Women's Prayer Companion, Praying Life Events and Celebrating Women of Inspiration in Breviary Format*, Indianapolis, Carmelite Monastery, 1994.**
-, *The New Companion to the Breviary with Seasonal Supplement*, 5th Printing, Indianapolis, Carmelite Monastery, 1988.**
- Casey, Michael, *The Undivided Heart, The Western Monastic Approach to Contemplation*, Petersham, MA, St. Bede's Publications, 1994.**
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching*, Manchester (UK), Gabriel Communications, 1997.**
- Chittister, Joan, OSB, *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily, Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1990.**
- Cloke, Gillian, *This Female Man of God, Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350-450*, London, Routledge, 1995.**
- The Commission on the Economics of the Contemplative Life, *A Directory of Monastic Hospitality*, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire, England, Anthony Clarke Publishers, 1994.**
- Cooper, David A., *The Heart of Stillness, The Elements of Spiritual Discipline*, New York, Crown Publishers, 1992.**

- Corrigan, Felicitas, *Friends of a Lifetime, The Nun, The Infidel and the Superman*, London, Collins Publishing Group, 1990.
- Davies, Oliver (Trans.), *Meister Eckhart, Selected Writings*, London, Penguin Books, 1994.
- Dean, Eric, *Saint Benedict for the Laity*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1989.
- De Mello, Anthony, SJ, *Awareness, The Perils and Opportunities of Reality*, New York, Doubleday, 1992.
- Desbuquois, G., SJ, *Charity*, Notre Dame, IN, Fides Publishers, Inc, 1965.
- De Vries, Irmgard Suzanne, Editor, *Abbot Constantine M. Bosschaerts, OSB* (Translated from the Dutch by the nuns of the Vita et Pax Foundation, The Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey, Turvey, England), Antwerp, Belgium, The Archabbey Monte Oliveto Maggiore, 1988.
- De Waal, Esther, *A World Made Whole, Rediscovering the Celtic Tradition*, London, Harper Collins, 1991.
- , *Seeking God, The Way of St. Benedict*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1984.
- Dodson Gray, Elizabeth, *Come Inside the Circle of Creation: The Ethic of Attunement*, Reprinted from *Ethics and Environmental Policy*, 1994.
- Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992.
- Durka, Gloria, *Praying with Hildegard of Bingen*, Winona, MN, Saint Mary's Press Christian Brothers Publications, 1991.
- Ellsberg, Robert (Ed.), *By Little and By Little, The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1988.
- The Essential Catholic Handbook, A Summary of Beliefs, Practices, and Prayers*, St. Louis, Missouri, A Redemptorist Pastoral Publication, Ligouri Publications, 1997.
- Frankl, Viktor E., *Man's Search for Meaning*, New York, Pocket Books, 1963.
- Fromm, Erich, *The Art of Loving*, New York, Harper and Row, 1956.
- Fry, Timothy, O.S.B., Ed., *NB 1980 The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1982.

-----, *NB 1980 The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*,
Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1981.

The Grail Psalms, translated from the Hebrew, Singing Version Arranged to the
Psalmody of Joseph Gelineau, London, Gollins Liturgical Publications, 1963.

Griffen, Susan, *Women and Nature, The Roaring Inside Her*, New York, Harper Colophon
Books, 1978.

Hahn, Thich Nhat, *Being Peace*, Berkeley, CA, Parallax Press, 1987.

Harvey, Barbara, *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540 The Monastic Experience*,
Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993.

James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience, a Study in Human Nature*, New
York, Collier Books, 1961.

John Paul II, Pope, *Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women*, London, Catholic Truth
Society, Publishers to the Holy See, 1995.

Johnson, Penelope D., *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval
France*, Chicago, IL, The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Kelsey, Morton T., *The Other Side of Silence, A Guide to Christian Meditation*, New York,
Paulist Press, 1976.

King, Ursula, *Women and Spirituality, Voices of Protest and Promise*, London,
Macmillan Education Ltd., 1989.

Knowles, Dom David, *The Monastic Order in England, A History of its Development From
the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 940-1216*, (2nd ed.),
Cambridge at the University Press, 1963 .

Labarge, Margaret Wade, *Women in Medieval Life, A Small Sound of the Trumpet*,
London, Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1986.

Main, Dom John, OSB, *Word into Silence*, London, Dartman, Longman and Todd Ltd,
1980.

McNamara, Jo Ann Kay, *Sisters in Arms, Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia*,
Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1996.

Merton, Thomas, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, Garden City, NY, Image Books,
1973.

-----, *Bread in the Wilderness*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1971.

-----, *Opening the Bible*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1970.

- , *The Waters of Siloe*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1949.
- , *Seeds of Contemplation*, New York, New Directions Publishing Company, 1949.
- , *The Seven Storey Mountain*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1948.
- Miller, Ronald S., and The Editors of New Age Journal, *As Above So Below, Paths to Spiritual Renewal in Daily Life*, Los Angeles, Jeremy P. Tarcher Inc, 1992.
- Moran, Gabriel, FSC, and Maria Harris, CSJ, *Experiences in Community: Should Religious Life Survive?*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1968.
- Nicholl, David, *Holiness*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1981.
- Nichols, John A. and Lillian Thomas Shank, Editors, *Distant Echoes: Medieval Religious Women*, Volume 1, Cistercian Studies Series: Number Seventy-One, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Cistercian Publications Inc., 1984.
- Norris, Kathleen, *Amazing Grace A Vocabulary of Faith*, New York, Riverhead Books, 1998.
- , *The Cloister Walk*, New York, Riverhead Books, 1996.
- , *Dakota: A Spiritual Biography*, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M., *Reaching Out, The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*, New York, Doubleday, 1975.
- Oden, Amy, Ed., *In Her Words, Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought*, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1995.
- O'Rourke, Most Reverend Edward W., D.D., *Living Like a King, A plea and a plan for the simple life*, Springfield, IL, Templegate Publishers, 1979.
- Peck, M. Scott, M.D., *The Different Drum, Community Making and Peace*, New York, Simon and Schuster Inc, 1987.
- Pennington, M. Basil, O.C.S.O., *Centering Prayer, Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form*, New York, Doubleday, 1982.
- Pomeroy, Sarah B., *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves, Women in Classical Antiquity*, London, Pimlico, 1975.

- Ramon, Brother SSF, *Heaven on Earth, A Personal Retreat Guide*, London, Harper Collins, 1991.
- Sarton, May, *Halfway to Silence*, London, The Women's Press Ltd., 1993.
- *****, *Journal of a Solitude, An Intimate Diary of a Year in the Life of a Creative Woman*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 1973.
- Sineta, Marsha, *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics, Lifestyles for Self-Discovery*, New York, Paulist Press, 1986.
- Smith, Rev. C. J., Ed., *Diocese of Plymouth Diocesan Yearbook 1995*, Plymouth (UK), E.J. Rickard Ltd., 1995.
- Sobel, Dava, *Galileo's Daughter, A Drama of Science, Faith and Love*, London, Fourth Estate, 1999.
- Storr, Anthony, *Solitude, A Return to the Self*, New York, Ballantine Books, 1988.
- Streng, Frederick J., *Understanding Religious Life*, Second Edition, Encino, CA, Dickenson Publishing Company, Inc., 1976.
- Swenson, Rev. Roger A., *Praying in Time*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1991.
- Taylor, Brian C., *Spirituality for Everyday Living, An Adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1989.
- Taylorson, Robert, *Daily Examination of Conscience*, London, Catholic Truth Society, 1995.
- Tvedten, Benet, OSB, *A Share in the Kingdom, A Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict for Oblates*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1989.
- Van Kaam, Adrian, C.S.Sp., *Personality Fulfillment in the Religious Life, Vol. 1, Religious Life in a Time of Transition*, Denville, NJ, Dimension Books, 1967.
- Waddell, Helen, *The Desert Fathers*, London, Constable and Co Ltd, 1994.
- Walsh, James A., S.J. (Trans. And Ed.), *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Other Works by the Author of The Cloud of Unknowing*, New York, Paulist Press, 1988.
- Ward, Benedicta, SLG (Ed.), *The Desert of the Heart, Daily Readings with the Desert Fathers*, London, Darton, Longman, and Todd Ltd, 1993.
- White, Hugh (Trans.), *Ancrene Wisse, Guide for Anchoresses*, London, Penguin Books, 1993.

Wong, Eva (Trans.), *Cultivating Stillness, A Taoist Manual for Transforming Body and Mind*, Boston, Shambhala Publications, Inc, 1992.

Research Methodology

Behar, Ruth, *Translated Woman, Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1993.

Brown, Lesley, Editor, *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles, Volume 1 A-M*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993.

Burgess, R. G., *Research Methods*, Walton-on-Thames, England, Nelson, 1993.

-----, Editor, *Ethics of Educational Research*, Lewes, England, Falmer Press, 1989.

Dash, Leon, *Rosa Lee, A Mother and Her Family in Urban America*, New York, BasicBooks, 1996.

Descola, Philippe, *The Spears of Twilight, Life and Death in the Amazon Jungle*, London, Harper Collins, 1996.

Dewey, John, *Experience and Education*, New York, Collier Books, 1963.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976.

Fetterman, David, *Ethnography Step by Step*, Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1989, Applied Social Research Methods Series Volume 17.

Freire, Paulo, *pedagogy of the oppressed*, Myra Bergman Ramos (Trans.), New York, Herder and Herder, 1970.

Gombrich, Richard F., *Precept and Practice, Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971.

Henerson, Marlene E., and Lynn Lyons Morris, Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, *How to Measure Attitudes*, Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1987.

Hillway, Tyrus, *Introduction to Research*, 2nd Ed., Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964.

Hoel, Paul G., *elementary statistics*, 4th ed., New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1976.

Jackson, Anthony (Ed.), *Anthropology at Home*, ASA Monographs 25, London, Tavistock Publications, 1987.

- Josselson, Ruthellen, *The Space Between Us, Exploring the Dimensions of Human Relationships*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1996.
- Marshall, Catherine and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 2nd Ed., Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1995.
- Milton, Kay (Ed.), *Environmentalism, The View From Anthropology*, ASA Monographs 32, London, Routledge, 1993.
- Moustakas, Clark, *Phenomenological Research Methods*, London, Sage Publications, 1994.
- Patton, Michael Quinn, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd Ed., Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1990.
- Rudestam, Kjell Erik and Rae R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation, A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*, Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1992.
- Silverman, David, *Interpreting Qualitative Data, Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, London, Sage Publications, 1993.
- Spradley, James P., *The Ethnographic Interview*, Fort Worth, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich College Publishers, 1979.
- Stock, Molly, *A Practical Guide to Graduate Research*, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985.
- Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research, Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, London, Sage Publications, 1990.
- Van Manen, Max, *Researching Lived Experience, Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Yin, Robert K., *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, Second Edition, Applied Social Research Methods Series Volume 5, London, Sage Publications, 1994.

APPENDIX

*



**MAP OF EUROPE AS OF MARCH 2000
UNITED KINGDOM IS THE AREA OF SPECIFIC INTEREST**



COUNTY MAP OF UNITED KINGDOM AS OF MARCH 2000 (WITH ADDITIONAL MENTION ON MAP OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND). BEDFORDSHIRE -- NO. 8 COUNTY IN ENGLAND -- IS THE AREA OF INTEREST. TURVEY ABBEY IS LOCATED IN BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY, ENGLAND.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building
51 College Road
Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3585
(603) 862-3584 FAX

LAST NAME	Clipson	FIRST NAME	Mary Catherine
DEPT	Natural Resources - James Hall	APPL DATE	5/21/98
OFF-CAMPUS ADDRESS (if applicable)	1 Beacon Cottages Buckland in The Moor Ashburton, Devon TQ137HL, ENGLAND	IRB #	2003
		REVIEW LEVEL	EXE

PROJECT TITLE The Soil and Belief: Sustainability and Monastic Life

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed the protocol for your project as Exempt as described in Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46, Subsection 46.101 (b) (2), category 2 .

Approval is granted to conduct the project as described in your protocol. Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to their implementation.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. In receiving IRB approval for your protocol, you agree to conduct the project in accordance with the ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects in research, as described in the Belmont Report. The full text of the Belmont Report is available on the OSR information server at <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/belmont1.html> and by request from the Office of Sponsored Research.

There is no obligation for you to provide a report to the IRB upon project completion unless you experience any unusual or unanticipated results with regard to the participation of human subjects. Please report such events to this office promptly as they occur.

If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact me directly at 862-2003. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,



Kara L. Eddy
Regulatory Compliance Officer
Office of Sponsored Research

cc: File

Paul Brockelman - Philosophy, Ham-Smith Hall



ORDINARY DAYS

(Mondays—Thursdays)

- 6.10 Office of Readings
- 7.10 Office of Praise
Breakfast
Lectio Divina
Work
- 11.50 Eucharist
- 1.15 Dinner
- 2.15 Work
- 4.30 Tea & recreation
- 6.00 Vespers
Lectio Divina
- 7.00 Supper
- 8.00 Compline

Fridays

As on ordinary days except:

- 7.10 Lauds with Eucharist
Breakfast
Lectio Divina
- ~9.30 Work
- 12.45 Midday Office
- 1.00 Dinner

Saturdays

As on ordinary days except:

- 4.00 I Vespers of Sunday
- 6.30 Supper (Brand House)
- 7.30 Vigil Office

Sundays and Solemnities

- 7.10 Office of Praise
Breakfast after 5 mins.
Lectio Divina
- 10.15 Eucharist
- 12.45 Midday Office
- 1.00 Dinner
- 4.00 II Vespers
- 4.30 Tea (Brand House)
- 7.00 Supper
- 8.00 Compline

Vigils of Feastdays & Solemnities

As on ordinary days except:

- 5.30 Vespers
- 6.30 Supper
- 7.30 Vigil Office



MC Clipson
1 Beacon Cottages
Buckland in the Moor
Ashburton, Devon
TQ13 7HL

SELF COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRE

PERSONAL VALUES AND ATTITUDES TO THE ENVIRONMENT

This questionnaire is being sent to 25 monastic communities throughout England. The results will form part of my dissertation in a PhD programme at the University of New Hampshire, USA. It should take NO MORE THAN 60 MINUTES to complete, and I hope that you will find it interesting and enjoyable.

Completing and returning the questionnaire

Please do feel free to write on the back of the form or to attach additional pages of your own. Tick the boxes or circle the dots that most closely approximate your view, or respond in short answers as you feel moved. Your responses are CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS. Please return the questionnaire in a self addressed stamped envelope provided to you by Friday, December 18th, 1998.

Who I am and what this is about

I am a doctoral student at The University of New Hampshire, USA, as well as a Visiting Student at Linacre College, Oxford University interested in understanding attitudes and behaviours toward the environment by nuns. I lived in Villa Augustina Convent (Goffstown, NH, USA) with the Sisters of the Religious of Jesus and Mary for 2 and 1/2 years; I worked with the nuns of the Monastery of the Precious Blood (Manchester, NH, USA) on a thesis paper; and I have been working on this PhD for 4 years. The basis of this questionnaire is taken from extensive interviews and research, much of which stems from my time with the nuns of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey, where I have been most graciously received.

Further information

Please contact MC Clipson on 01364-653215 if you would like further information.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

1

DEMOGRAPHICS

The following questions will be used to compile a profile of monastic life today. Some of the answers will be compared to those given by households to the Office for National Statistics.

How long ago was your current monastic community formed? _____

How you moved in your community's history? If yes, how many times? From where to where? _____

What has been the greatest threat(s) to the continuation of your community? _____

Current number of persons in household: _____

What are the ages of the persons living in your community?
Under 18 _____ 18-22 _____ 23-27 _____ 28-32 _____ 33-40 _____
41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ 61-65 _____ 66-75 _____ 76-85 _____ 86+ _____

What are the ages of community members when they entered?
Under 18 _____ 18-22 _____ 23-27 _____ 28-32 _____ 33-40 _____
41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ 61-65 _____ 66-75 _____ 76-85 _____ 86+ _____

Status of community members upon entering:
single _____ divorced _____ widowed _____
with children (please list ages) _____

Would you say there are more, less, or about the same number of nuns living in your community now as 10 years ago, 50 years ago, 100 years ago, etc?

More less same
10 years ago.....
50 years ago (if applicable).....
100 years ago (if applicable).....
500 years ago (if applicable).....
1000 years ago (if applicable).....

What is the area of the land you own? _____
How would you describe it? _____

What are the ethnic origins of persons living in your community? _____

Number of persons born in the UK? _____
Number of persons not born in the UK? _____
Where born? _____

Persons with limiting long-term illness:
 Under 18 _____ 18-22 _____ 23-27 _____ 28-32 _____ 33-40 _____
 41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ 61-65 _____ 66-75 _____ 76-85 _____ 86+ _____
 What kind of illnesses? _____

Number of persons who are current cigarette smokers: _____

Number of persons who consume alcohol—
 less than 14 units per week _____
 15-34 units per week _____
 more than 35 units per week _____

Please list the sports games and physical activities you participate in:
 Activity: times/week times/month times/year
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Please list the leisure activities you participate in—
 Activity: times/week times/month times/year
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Number of cars in household: _____
 What kind(s) of car(s)? _____
 Amount mileage driven in a given year _____

What are your income-generating streams of work? _____

How many persons are involved (i.e. Economically active)? _____
 How many persons are retired? _____

How many persons are registered to vote? _____

Highest qualification level attained of members of community—
 PhD degree or equivalent _____
 masters degree or equivalent _____
 bachelors degree or equivalent _____
 higher education below degree level: _____
 GCE 'A' level or equivalent: _____
 GCSE grades A-C or equivalent: _____
 GCSE grades D-G/commercial qualifications/apprenticeship: _____
 foreign or other qualifications _____

Tenure of property—
 own with mortgage: _____ own outright: _____ rent from council: _____
 rent from housing association: _____ rent privately: _____

Type of accommodation =
 detached house or bungalow _____ semi-detached house or bungalow _____
 terraced _____

Which of the following goods/services do you own (please tick)?
 CD player _____ microwave oven _____ video recorder _____ home computer _____ home computer _____
 colour television _____ washing machine _____ tumble dryer _____ deep freezer _____ dishwasher _____
 telephone _____ answering machine _____ fax _____ e-mail/internet _____

Have you ever been burgled?
 (Explain) _____

PERSONAL VALUES

Here I am interested in personal values -- your central core beliefs which help you structure your thoughts and feelings. Before you start completing this section, read through the whole list of values, decide which value is the most important to you and circle a "5" against it, as well as marking on the left of that value the word "highest." Next, go through the list and indicate the value that is least important to you -- circle a "-1" if you are opposed to the value and a "0" if the value simply has no importance to you. Again, please mark on the left of the value selected, "lowest." When you have done this, go through all the others.

1. Equity (equal opportunities for all)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
2. Social power (control over others, dominance)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
3. Sense of belonging (feeling that others care about me)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
4. Social order (stability of society)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
5. An exciting life (stimulating experiences)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
6. Politeness (courtesy, good manners)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
7. Wealth (material possessions, money)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
8. A world at peace (free of war and conflict)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
9. Self-discipline (self-restraint, resistance to temptation)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
10. Family security (safety for loved ones)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
11. Unity with nature (fitting into nature)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
12. A varied life (filled with challenge, novelty and change)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
13. Authority (the right to lead and command)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
14. A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
15. Social justice (correcting injustice, care for the weak)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
16. Loyalty (faithful to my friends, group)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
17. Protecting the environment (preserving nature)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1
18. Influential (having an impact on people and events)	5	4	3	2	1	0	= 1

19. Honouring of parents and elders (showing respect)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
20. Honest (genuine, sincere)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
21. Obedient (dutiful, meeting obligations)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
22. Helpful (working for the welfare of others)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
23. Enjoying life (enjoying food, leisure, sex etc)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
24. Curiosity (interested in everything, exploring)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
25. Clean (neat, tidy, etc)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
26. Thriftiness (not wasting things)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
27. Respecting the earth (showing reverence for the natural world)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
28. A comfortable life (a prosperous life)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
29. Social recognition (respect, admiration from others)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
30. Responsibility (dependability, reliability)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
31. Freedom (freedom of thought and action)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
32. Meaning in life (a purpose in life)	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1
33. Other	S	4	U	2	1	0	= 1

SUSTAINABILITY

In this section I am seeking to understand the degree to which you disagree or agree with a given assertion. I have left blank space for you to qualify any response you have made. Please circle your most appropriate response to the assertion according to the following representations:

SA=strongly agree, A=slightly agree, U=neither agree nor disagree, D=slightly disagree, SD=strongly disagree, DK=don't know

	SA	A	U	D	SD	DK
1. The Rule of my community is equally relevant to nuns as well as monks.	•	•	•	•	•	•

2. The Rule which my community follows is equally relevant today as it was 100, 500, or 1000 years ago.	•	•	•	•	•	•

3. Our community is entirely under the jurisdiction of the Vatican. What Rome decides, we follow.	•	•	•	•	•	•

4. Our community is equivalent to any other household: we still have to pay our bills, work, vote, deal with illness and death as the next household.	•	•	•	•	•	•

5. Our community's long-term health and vitality is assured.

• • • • •

Please respond to the following questions in the space provided, or on the back of the page.

1. What Rule does your community follow? If you were to adapt that Rule, what changes would you make, if any?

2. What factors or indicators might you use to assess the long-term health and vitality of your community? Please be specific.

3. What would improve the quality of your life?

4. Are there any specific environmental factors = for example, noise, water quality, toxic waste = which impact upon your community negatively? Please explain.

5. What are the most positive aspects of the environment (physical, social, natural) in which you live? Please be specific.

The following four questions refer to the following definition:

"Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It also means long-term health and vitality -- cultural, economic, environmental, and social."

1. According to this definition of sustainability, how sustainable is your community? Please explain in detail.

6

2. In what ways could your community better fit the definition of sustainability? Please explain.

3. In what ways is your community most meeting the definition of sustainability? Please explain.

4. Given the following range, where would you put a value for your community: (Please circle.)

totally sustainable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 totally unsustainable

Please explain your answer.

Please answer the following three questions as fully as possible.

If you have a word of wisdom to pass on about how to live a good and healthy life, what would it be?

What is the purpose of our lives?

What are our needs?

Finally, who filled out this questionnaire?

Assigned individual _____ consortium _____ volunteer _____ other _____
name of community: _____

7

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS DEMOGRAPHICS

How long ago was your current monastic community formed?

- 1) 1868
- 2) 1904
- 3) 375 years
- 4) 149 years
- 5) "50 years (1948) at Quidenham -- original foundation at Woodbridge, Suffolk in 1912"
- 6) 1860
- 7) "70 years (reformed from an existing house)"
- 8) 11 years
- 9) "70 years ago, 1929"
- 10) 62

Have you moved in your community's history? If yes, how many times? From where to where?

- 1) "Twickenham/Feltham/West Malling/Milford Haven/Gronant/Chester -- 6 places"
- 2) "never moved myself, community moved from temporary accommodation to purpose built monastery Lynmouth to Lynton"
- 3) "Yes. From France to England and 3x within England."
- 4) no answer
- 5) "Woodbridge Foundation 1921 -- Rushmere (Suffolk) 1938 -- Quidenham 1948 -- two other Carmels (Ashbourne and Bramshott) amalgamated with Quidenham in 1960 and 1968 respectively)"
- 6) "no move."
- 7) "Founded in Belgium (from English stock!) Daughter House first in Cockfosters, London; now at Turvey, Beds."
- 8) "Dunkirk 1662, Hammersmith 1795, Teignmouth 1862, Buckfast 1987."
- 9) No
- 10) None

What has been the greatest threat(s) to the continuation of your community?

- 1) "Lack of leadership"
- 2) "aging of members and falling numbers new; Initially, on Foundation, lack of money and hostility of neighbours"
- 3) "The French Revolution -- we were imprisoned in Compiègne 1793-95"
- 4) "lack of numbers"
- 5) "in principle, lack of novices would be, but to date we still have sufficient new entrants that in part this is not a danger"
- 6) "lack of new members"
- 7) "numbers; rapidly changing worldview/expectations"
- 8) "age of present community and too few to accept members"
- 9) "house too small, lack of water, ageing community. All remedied."
- 10) "World War II"

Current number of persons in household:

- 1) 11
- 2) 12
- 3) 33
- 4) 15
- 5) 23
- 6) 11
- 7) 17
- 8) "4 (one is at Nazareth House, Plymouth)"
- 9) 12
- 10) 10

What are the ages of the persons living in your community?

-18, 18-22, 23-27, 28-32, 33-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-65, 66-75, 76-85, 86+

1)					2		2	2	2	2	1
2)				1	3		2	1	4		1
3)		x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x
4)				x	x		x	x	x	x	x
5)	nil	nil	nil	3	3	8	1	2	3	2	1
6)				1	2				4	2	2
7)			2	2	4		3	1	3	1	1
8)										3	1
9)			1	1	1		3	2	3		1
10)				1	3		1	1	4		

What are the ages of community members when they entered?

-18, 18-22, 23-27, 28-32, 33-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-65, 66-75, 76-85, 86+

1)	1	2		1	1	1	1	2	2
2)	5	3		3	1				
3)	x	x	x	x	x				
4)	x	x	x	x					
5)	nif	3	8	4	8
6)	5	3	1	1	1				
7)	check	check	check						
8)	2				2				
9)	2	2	4	2			2		
10)	2	5	3						

Status of community members upon entering:

	<u>single.</u>	<u>divorced.</u>	<u>widowed.</u>	<u>with children (please list ages)</u>
1)	9		2	30s, 40s
2)	11	1		
3)	x	x	x	x
4)	x			
5)	22	1	n/a	n/a
6)	11			
7)	x			
8)	3		1	
9)	11	1		no
10)	All			

Would you say there are more, less, or about the same number of nuns living in your community now as 10 years ago, 50 years ago, 100 years ago, etc?

	<u>More</u>	<u>less</u>	<u>same</u>	<u>n/a</u>
10 years ago.....	X	xxxxxx	xxx	
50 years ago (if applicable).....	xxx	xxxxxxx		
100 years ago (if applicable).....	x	xx	x	x
500 years ago (if applicable).....				xxx
1000 years ago (if applicable).....				Xxx

Community 1: 10 years ago: less, 50 years ago: less; 100 years ago: same

Community 2: 10 years ago: less, 50 years ago: less

Community 3: 10 years ago: less, 50 years ago: less; 100 years ago: less

Community 4: 10 years ago: less, 50 years ago: less

Community 5: 10 years ago: less, 50 years ago: more

Community 6: 10 years ago: more, 50 years ago: more; 100 years ago: more

Community 7: 10 years ago: same, 50 years ago: less

Community 8: 10 years ago: same, 50 years ago: less; 100 years ago: less

Community 9: 10 years ago: less, 50 years ago: more

Community 10: 10 years ago: same, 50 years ago: less

What is the area of the land you own?

- 1) 1 acre
- 2) "about 3 acres"
- 3) 19 acres
- 4) "much green belt"
- 5) "approx. 140 acres"
- 6) none
- 7) "+- 20 acres"
- 8) "we own none"
- 9) "approx. 4 acres"
- 10) 20 acres

How would you describe it?

- 1) "garden in suburbs"
- 2) "stoney poor soil, very steep, terraced"
- 3) "mixed woodland, grassland, orchard"
- 4) "Victorian building with garden; a field surrounding the convent is in our name"
- 5) "woodland- c. 75 acres; arable - c. 45; pasture - c. 2; other (buildings, carpark, road, outbuildings and some cottages rented out) - c. 18"
- 6) left blank
- 7) "part formal garden, part veg/fruit cultivation, part pasture"
- 8) n/a
- 9) "lawns, flower beds, orchard, vegetable plot, field"
- 10) "agricultural"

What are the ethnic origins of persons living in your community?

- 1) "European origin all"
- 2) "1 Swedish, 2 Scottish, 2 from No. Ireland, 1 and 1/2 Argentinian (in fact part Spanish part Scots), rest English"
- 3) "European, Zimbabwean, S. African, Trinidad"
- 4) "English Irish"
- 5) "21 Caucasian, 2 Chinese"
- 6) "1 Dutch, 1 Irish, 9 English"
- 7) "all white"
- 8) "British"
- 9) "mostly British -- 1 Jamaica, 1 India, 1 USA"
- 10) "8 nationalities"

Number of persons born in the UK ?

- 1) 6
- 2) "see above"
- 3) 28
- 4) 12
- 5) 16
- 6) 10
- 7) 10
- 8) 4
- 9) 9
- 10) 3

Number of persons not born in the UK?

- 1) 5
- 3) 5
- 4) 3
- 5) 7
- 6) 1
- 7) 7
- 8) n/a
- 9) 3
- 10) 7

Where born?

- 1) Germany (2), Scotland (1), USA (1), South Africa (1)
- 3) Sweden, Russia (?), S. Africa, Zimbabwe, Trinidad
- 4) Ireland
- 5) Australia - 2, Canada - 1, Hong Kong - 2, Ireland - 1, USA - 1
- 6) Netherlands
- 7) 3 Holland, 2 Belgium, 1 USA, 1 Denmark
- 8) n/a
- 9) India, USA, Africa
- 10) "America, Canada, Australian, European"

Persons with limiting long-term illness:

-18, 18-22, 23-27, 28-32, 33-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-65, 66-75, 76-85, 86+

1) none										
2)									2	
3) "-"										
4)					x			x	x	
5) -	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	NO!
6) None										
7)					1	1			1	
8)										1
9) none										
10) none										

What kind of illnesses?

- 1) none
- 2) "heart disease"
- 3) "-"
- 4) "heart problems and Parkinsons"
- 5) "One of our 63-year olds has osteo-arthritis which limits her movement and attendance at monastic Office to some degree, but she lives quite a regular life otherwise; our 82-year old has had one or two minor strokes and walks only with a Zimmer and needs help with bathing, etc -- some mental confusion, but at other times quite alert"
- 6) none
- 7) "ME-Dementia"
- 8) "arthritis, heart condition (has pace-maker)"
- 9) none
- 10) none

Number of persons who are current cigarette smokers:

- 1) none
- 2) none
- 3) "-"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "NONE"
- 6) none
- 7) none
- 8) "0"
- 9) none
- 10) none

Please list the leisure activities you participate in--

	<u>Activity:</u>	<u>times/week</u>	<u>times/month</u>	<u>times/year</u>
1)	handicrafts			
2)	painting, music making, reading, crosswords, tapestry, embroidery, TV, video, computer games -- can't specify [times/week]!			
3)	gardening		3	
	writing			
	handicrafts	as and when		
4)	T.V.	Once/week		
5)	"N/A as such, although we have an hour's recreation each evening when we converse but at least weekly we will have music, card-games, plays (we put them on, sometimes written by ourselves), puppet theatre, singing -- in our leisure time (Sundays, monthly 'hermit' day and 8 days' retreat) we are free to walk, read, play music (piano, guitar, oboe, organ), listen to music/plays on tape, garden, sew, etc."			
6)	Walking	2		
	Parties (creative)			6
	Gardening	5		
7)	Reading			
	Crafts			
	Music			
8)	" / "			
9)	Drama			twice/year
10)	"walking!"			

Number of cars in household:

- 1) 1
- 2) none
- 3) 3
- 4) none
- 5) 2
- 6) none
- 7) 2
- 8) 0
- 9) 1
- 10) none

What kind(s) of car(s)?

- 1) (didn't answer this)
- 2) n/a
- 3) Volvo, Talbot, Volkswagen
- 4) left blank
- 5) Fiesta, Mondeo
- 6) left blank
- 7) Metro/Toyota Corolla
- 8) n/a
- 9) Honda Civic
- 10) n/a

Amount mileage driven in a given year:

- 1) (didn't answer this)
- 2) n/a
- 3) "no idea sorry"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "no idea! (Trips out only for doctor, dentist, etc -- we are enclosed -- those who can drive themselves; a handyman shops for us)"
- 6) left blank
- 7) left blank
- 8) n/a
- 9) "newly acquired this year"
- 10) n/a

What are your income-generating streams of work?

- 1) "habit and vestment making, cards"
- 2) "selling of hosts, sales of work, gifts from guests, printing photocopying"
- 3) "printing, writing, retreat-house, arts and crafts"
- 4) "vestment making, retreat house"
- 5) "retailing greetings/prayer cards (cards by far our largest 'trade' work); ikon-making (from prints); embroidery work; retailing books by mail-order; some crafts (e.g. Pressed flower work, sale of photographs mounted as cards)"
- 6) "altar bread manufacture and distribution, art work, soft toys"
- 7) "Guests, vestments, art work"
- 8) left blank
- 9) "altar breads, printing"
- 10) "hospitality, art work, farming"

How many persons are involved (i.e. Economically active)?

- 1) all
- 2) 11
- 3) 25
- 4) 2
- 5) "ALL! (Except 2 very elderly, but even one of these helps, e.g., folding the cards we sell)"
- 6) 11
- 7) 16
- 8) left blank
- 9) 11
- 10) all

How many persons are retired?

- 1) none
- 2) 1
- 3) none
- 4) left blank
- 5) "we don't retire!"
- 6) none
- 7) 1
- 8) 1
- 9) 1
- 10) none

How many persons are registered to vote?

- 1) all, except one
- 2) all
- 3) about 30
- 4) all 15
- 5) "ALL except the one U.S. Citizen"
- 6) 10
- 7) "11 for English elections, 16 for European"
- 8) 4
- 9) 12
- 10) 10

Highest qualification level attained of members of community--

PhD degree or equivalent	x
masters degree or equivalent	1,1("but it's an Oxford MA so really is BA!", "x", "x", 2, x, x
bachelors degree or equivalent:	1, "x", 12, 1, x
higher education below degree level	4,1, 3, x, 10
GCE 'A' level or equivalent	6, 1, x
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent	
GCSE grades D-G/commercial qualifications/apprentices	
foreign or other qualifications	1

Community 1: master's degree: 1; bachelors: 1; higher ed: 4

Community 2: master's degree: 1 ("But it's an Oxford MA so really is BA!"); higher ed: 1; GCE 'A' level: 6; foreign or other: 1

Community 3: master's degree: x; bachelors: x

Community 4: master's degree: x --"optometrist, doctor, nurses, occupational therapist"

Community 5: PhD or equiv: 2; master's degree: 4; bachelors: 10; "none of these categories-- the interviewee has bracketed off the area between 'higher ed below degree level down to foreign or other qualif -- apply to older sisters, but the great majority would have finished secondary school"

Community 6: bachelors: 3; higher ed: 3; GCSE grades A-C or equiv: 3

Community 7: master's degree: 2; bachelors: 12; higher ed: 3

Community 8: bachelors: 1; GCE 'A' level or equiv: 1

Community 9: PhD or equiv: x; master's degree: x; bachelors: x; higher ed: x; GCE 'A' level: x

Community 10: master's degree: x; higher ed: 10

Tenure of property--

own with mortgage. own outright. rent (council). rent (housing assoc). rent privately

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|--|--|---|
| 1) | x | | | |
| 2) | "The diocese owns our property we pay the Council Tax and repairs and upkeep and a theoretical £1/per annum rent" | | | |
| 3) | x | | | |
| 4) | x | | | |
| 5) | x | | | |
| 6) | | | | x |
| 7) | x | | | |
| 8) | left blank | | | |
| 9) | x | | | |
| 10) | x | | | |

Type of accommodation --

detached house or bungalow. semi-detached house or bungalow. terraced

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--|--|
| 1) | x | | |
| 2) | x | | |
| 3) | "purpose-built monastery" | | |
| 4) | x ("house") | | |
| 5) | "detached house" | | |
| 6) | "large house" | | |
| 7) | x | | |
| 8) | x | | |
| 9) | "detached house" | | |
| 10) | x | | |

Which of the following goods/services do you own (please tick)?

	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(2)</u>	<u>(3)</u>	<u>(4)</u>	<u>(5)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(7)</u>	<u>(8)</u>	<u>(9)</u>	<u>(10)</u>
CD player	x		x		x		x	x	x	x
microwave	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
vcr	x	x	x				x	x	x	x
home computer	x	x	x		x		x		x	x
colour tv	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x
wash machine	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
tumble dryer	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	
deep freezer	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
dishwasher	x								x	
telephone	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
answer mach	x	x	x		x		x		x	
fax	x		x		x		x		x	
e-mail/inter	x		x				"not yet, but soon!"			

Have you ever been burgled? (Explain)

- 1) no
- 2) yes, 2 strimmers stolen from outside shed
- 3) yes
- 4) no
- 5) "NO, but an altarcloth in our chapel was recently set on fire by an intruder with mental problems"
- 6) "1914 and small amount 1996"
- 7) no
- 8) left blank
- 9) "twice -- minor thefts"
- 10) "yes"

PERSONAL VALUES

community (1):

of supreme importance -- equity, a world at peace, social justice,
loyalty, protecting the environment, helpful,
responsibility, meaning in life

not important -- an exciting life, wealth, a varied life, influential

opposed to values -- social power

community (2):

highest -- a world at peace and social justice -- "I can't say which of these I would rate most highly as I them of equal importance"
of supreme importance -- a world at peace, social justice, honest, meaning in life
very important -- sense of belonging, politeness, family security, protecting the environment, curiosity, respecting the earth, freedom
3-rated values -- an exciting life, self-discipline, unity with nature, a world of beauty, loyalty, influential, honouring of parents, helpful
important -- equity, a varied life, obedient, enjoying life, thriftiness, responsibility
1-rated values -- clean, social recognition
not important -- social order, wealth, authority, a comfortable life
opposed to my values -- social power
lowest -- wealth

community (3):

of supreme importance -- sense of belonging, a world at peace, family security, unity with nature, a world of beauty, social justice, loyalty, protecting the environment, honouring of parents and elders, honest, clean, thriftiness, respecting the earth, freedom, meaning in life, other: "community"
very important -- equity, politeness, obedient, helpful, enjoying life, responsibility
3-rated values -- self-discipline, influential
important -- authority
1-rated values -- social order, a varied life, curiosity
not important -- an exciting life, wealth, a comfortable life
opposed to values = social power, social recognition

community (4):

of supreme importance -- social order, family security, social justice, honest, helpful, meaning in life
very important -- politeness, unity with nature, loyalty

community (5):

highest -- helpful
of supreme importance -- equity, a world at peace, social justice, honest, helpful, meaning in life
very important -- politeness, self-discipline, a world of beauty, loyalty, protecting the environment, honouring of parents and elders, obedient, thriftiness, respecting the earth, responsibility, freedom
3-rated values -- sense of belonging, family security, unity with nature, clean
important -- wealth ("in the positive sense of what is needed for 'human' living"), authority, curiosity
1-rated values -- social order, a varied life, enjoying life, a comfortable life
not important -- social recognition
opposed to values -- social power, an exciting life ("but we value culture, mental alertness and personal development very highly")
lowest -- social power

**** note -- next to 'influential' the interviewee wrote: "only on the spiritual plane (=5), not in any tangible sense (=1)!" ; also, at the top of this section the interviewee wrote: "I have tried to answer what I think would best represent the majority of the community, but we are all so different!"**

community (6):

of supreme importance -- a world at peace, self-discipline, social justice, loyalty, protecting the environment, honouring of parents and elders, honest, obedient, helpful, thriftiness, respecting the earth, responsibility, freedom, meaning in life, other: love and serving God

very important -- equity, politeness, family security, a world of beauty, clean

3-rated values -- social order, unity with nature, influential

important -- none

1-rated values -- none

not important -- an exciting life, a varied life, authority, curiosity, a comfortable life, social recognition

opposed to values -- social power, wealth

community (7):

left blank

community (8):

of supreme importance -- social order, politeness, a world at peace, self discipline, loyalty, honouring of parents and elders, honest, obedient, meaning in life

very important -- equity, sense of belonging, social justice, protecting the environment, clean, respecting the earth, responsibility

3-rated values -- family security, authority, a world of beauty, helpful, thriftiness, freedom

important -- influential

1-rated values -- unity with nature

not important -- wealth, enjoying life, curiosity, social recognition

opposed to my values -- social power, an exciting life, a varied life, a comfortable life

community (9):

highest -- responsibility

of supreme importance -- politeness, a world at peace, self discipline, family security, loyalty, honouring of parents and elders, honest, obedient, helpful, clean, thriftiness, respecting the earth, other: religion

very important -- equity, sense of belonging, social order, unity with nature, social justice, protecting the environment, freedom, meaning in life

3-rated values -- a world of beauty, influential

important -- an exciting life, a varied life, authority, curiosity

1-rated values -- social power, enjoying life, a comfortable life, social recognition
lowest (rated a one) -- wealth

community (10):

"As a contemplative community we support/recognise many values connected with relationships (trust/love/honesty...) and care for creation, but this type of 'evaluation' runs counter to our contemplative thrust"

SUSTAINABILITY

1. The Rule of St. Benedict is equally relevant to nuns as well as monks.

- 1) SA
- 2) DK
- 3) SA
- 4) SA
- 5) A --"i assume so, but our tradition is Carmelite not Benedictine and we don't know B's Rule very deeply"
- 6) SA
- 7) A --"But with some reservations -- mostly in emphasis rather than essence."
- 8) SA -- "in the 18th century it was re-written in the feminine with nothing omitted."
- 9) A [note: refering to "the Rule of the Carmelites..."]
- 10) SA

2. The Rule of St. Benedict is equally relevant today as it was 100, 500, or 1000 years ago.

- 1) SA
- 2) U
- 3) SA
- 4) SA
- 5) left blank
- 6) SA
- 7) DK -- "I would say differently relevant if that makes any sense!"
- 8) SA -- "Certain externals have to be changed, but the spiritual lessons behind them have not changed."
- 9) SA
- 10) SA

3. Our community is entirely under the jurisdiction of the Vatican. What Rome decides, we follow.

- 1) "Do we?!"
- 2) U
- 3) D -- "we retain rights of conscience and right to work for change"
- 4) A
- 5) SD
- 6) "partly"
- 7) left blank
- 8) A -- "Under the jurisdiction of the Local Bishop."
- 9) SA -- "Provided this includes Father General and our Bishop, who also follow Rome"
- 10) DK

4. Our community is equivalent to any other household: we still have to pay our bills, work, vote, deal with illness and death as the next household.

- 1) "not really"
- 2) SD
- 3) SA
- 4) SA
- 5) SA
- 6) SA
- 7) SD -- "All that is true, but I wouldn't say we are equivalent to any household. There is a difference between 'community' and 'family'."
- 8) SA -- "A nuisance, of course, but it keeps us in touch with the world!"
- 9) SA
- 10) SA

5. Our community's long-term health and vitality is assured.

- 1) "Is anybody's?"
- 2) U
- 3) DK -- "we trust in the Lord!"
- 4) DK
- 5) A -- "At present this seems to be the case but it is impossible to know what the future will bring, especially in terms of new candidates (upon which every religious community's future depends ultimately)"
- 6) DK "not assured"
- 7) DK -- "How can we know?!"
- 8) SD -- "At our ages neither health nor vitality can be assured!"
- 9) A
- 10) DK

Please respond to the following questions in the space provided, or on the back of the page.

1. If you were to adapt the Rule of St. Benedict, what changes would you make, if any?

- 1) "Our constitutions do so already."
- 2) "We aren't Benedictines!!!! We follow the Rule of St. Clare -- perhaps you should scrap this questionnaire"
- 3) "remove corporal punishment"
- 4) "I don't know the full rule"
- 5) "SEE ABOVE -- we follow the Carmelite 'Rule of St. Albert'"
- 6) "Don't know"
- 7) left blank
- 8) "I would alter nothing of the teaching and spirit of the Rule. I would, perhaps, eliminate such customs that do not belong to this days age, and, if possible replace with more modern usages -- though this is best done in a 'customary.'"
- 9) "leave out lay sisters"
- 10) "none"

2. What factors or indicators might you use to assess the long-term health and vitality of your community? Please be specific.

- 1) "Cheerfulness and interest"
- 2) "1- continuing entry of people wishing to join us; 2- ability to continue not just to live our life but to reassess and improve and update it in all important areas - especially of prayer, spiritual life and relationships with each other and outside the community; 3-to be able to accept and cooperate with all the demands of modern life"
- 3) "average age, numbers, atmosphere in community"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "1- new vocations; 2- fidelity to our charism, but interpreted for the present age, not just mindless adherence to old 'customs' -- but Carmel has certain basic principles and practices (e.g., 2 hours solitary prayer, silence, solitude, warm community relations) which are all 'sine quo non' of Charism; 3- community unity -- but not conformity!"
- 6) "/"
- 7) left blank
- 8) "see above"
- 9) "Health -- even our 96 year old enjoys good health; vitality -- three in formation"
- 10) "Not on target for Contemplative Community"

3. What would improve the quality of your life?

- 1) (didn't answer this)
- 2) "perhaps a few more sisters younger in age!"
- 3) "more time for study and lectio divina"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "all of us growing in charity, as I hope we are"
- 6) "/"
- 7) left blank
- 8) "To live in a healthier environment."
- 9) "more sisters"
- 10) "more prayer"

4. Are there any specific environmental factors -- for example, noise, water quality, toxic waste -- which impact upon your community negatively? Please explain.

- 1) no
- 2) "Not really. We do have noise from the village but only rarely is that a nuisance - it can help us to remember the needs of people and helps us to pray for them if it is midnight and we are praying while they are roostering"
- 3) "low flying aircraft sometimes at very high speeds"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "Noise to an extent -- e.g., Snetterton race track is only approx 1 1/4 miles from us and audible in summertime; loud stereos from the neighbouring village on occasion; jets overhead (we are surrounded in Norfolk and Suffolk by American and British air bases)"
- 6) "No."
- 7) left blank
- 8) "Noise can become intrusive. We live near a factory and where there is heavy traffic. Also the smell from the factory (washing fleece) can be very pungent. We call the convent: 'The House at Pooh Corner!'"
- 9) "not really"
- 10) "no-"

5. What are the most positive aspects of the environment (physical, social, natural) in which you live? Please be soecific.

- 1) "natural area for wildlife to feed"
- 2) "We live in a most beautiful area of the country, because our garden is steeply sloped behind the monastery we have wonderful views. We have very good relationships with local people -- we are very blessed."
- 3) "strong sense of community and vocation, we have a lot of space per person"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "Our very extensive and beautiful grounds, including access to a mere although it is not strictly speaking our property (we have permission to walk round it whenever we like by a longstanding agreement with the owners); we probably have more space in land than any other UK Carmel; also our rural situation, which aids our eremetical life enormously (we are essentially hermits, although in community)"
- 6) "Beauty of scenery"
- 7) left blank
- 8) "We are quite close to Buckfast Abbey."
- 9) "Plenty of light and air; we are situated on a mountain side"
- 10) "Silence, Natural beauty"

The following four questions refer to the following definition:

"Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It also means long-term health and vitality -- cultural, economic, environmental, and social."

1. According to this definition of sustainability, how sustainable is your community?

Please explain in detail.

- 1) "depends on each individual member and new entrants"
- 2) "Our community is ageing at the moment only one sister needs to be cared for, and that not continually. We are able to live our life well, but if several became ill chronically or were to become really physically dependent we would not be able to continue as we are. Economically we have never been able to meet our needs except through the providence of God and so continue from year to year."
- 3) "We do not have a very rosy financial base at present -- so in that sense we are probably not at all that sustainable in our present monastery which is large and quite expensive to run."
- 4) left blank
- 5) "Very much so -- we are aware of the importance of the 4 factors listed (cultural, economic, environment, and social) and we strive as a community to maintain the high level on each count with which we are presently blessed"
- 6) "Live by Divine Providence"
- 7) left blank

- 8) "See 5 above."
- 9) "We do not foresee a problem, unless vocations cease to come"
- 10) "We agree that it is important but we don't see this as relevant [to] (sic) our life -- we believe we are part of the world -- and have responsibility for the whole of creation -"

2. In what ways could your community better fit the definition of sustainability? Please explain.

- 1) "?"
- 2) "if our age range was less skewed it would help!"
- 3) "we could more more use of our land area for growing things -- but need more labour first"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "This is not a 'static' thing but needs constant vigilance and care, and we can always be doing more to achieve it -- e.g., not wasting material goods (tho' we do strive to live frugally; some younger sisters appreciate a 'simple' lifestyle and are less understanding of the importance in our life of a relatively high level of culture (mainly reading in our case) for human maturity. We try to educate them gradually to a greater effort here. But on balance, all do foster this quite well, very well by 'TV-addict' modern standards!"
- 6) "/"
- 7) left blank
- 8) left blank
- 9) "If we had a larger community"
- 10) "--"

3. In what ways is your community most meeting the definition of sustainability? Please explain.

- 1) "?"
- 2) "We have fulfilled lives in a community where we don't lack the social and economic necessities and where our prayer life is at centre, without problems from ill health."
- 3) "we use relatively few resources"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "Probably by the number of new candidates with which we are still blessed. Also by care as regards our financial security, and care of our physical assets (woodland, houses, etc, are carefully kept up with the help of professional advice which more than pays for itself)"
- 6) "Living simply so that others may simply live."
- 7) left blank
- 8) left blank
- 9) "We have had a steady flow of vocations over the past 15 years"
- 10) "--"

4. Given the following range, where would you put a value for your community: (Please circle.)

totally
totally
sustainable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
unsustainable

Please explain your answer.

- 1) " ? "
- 2) "I don't understand the word value as you use it here. We live as we do and continue to do so by God's gift. Nothing is ever totally sustainable in this world."
- 3) 6 -- "given current numbers we are edging towards unsustainability as more and more people are needed just to keep the place ticking over. We are also eating into our 'spiritual capital' as there is less time than in the past for study, 'Lectio' etc."
- 4) left blank
- 5) 1 -- "with the qualification re: new vocations noted above (no. 5 at top of page 6)"
- 6) 1 -- "God is all powerful"
- 7) left blank
- 8) left blank
- 9) 6 -- "I think we have a balanced community with regard to age and health. No one can be certain of the future. Financially secure at present."
- 10) " - - "

Please answer the following three questions as fully as possible.

If you have a word of wisdom to pass on about how to live a good and healthy life, what would it be?

- 1) (didn't answer this)
- 2) "if you can accept yourself as the greatest gift you have or will have ever received -- with all your natural proclivities -- and accept others in their uniqueness, you will have peace at your centre, joy and gratitude of heart and be able to accept too the difficulties, failures and disappointments which come to us all."
- 3) "Never let the sun set on your anger"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "Living by the Gospel, which teaches Love of others, and Love (and respect and care) of self -- including one's bodily, emotional, and psychological nature, and seeking fulfillment primarily through putting others first in a life of cheerful service and fidelity even when this involves painful and seemingly self-'negating' decisions."
- 6) "Simple life. Regular life. Deep spiritual life."
- 7) left blank
- 8) "Regularity and generosity in prayer, work, reading, meals, sleep."

- 9) "Use your common sense."
- 10) "--peaceful living with God and all people
-- seeking reconciliation"

What is the purpose of our lives?

- 1) "See catechism!"
- 2) "To become, to grow ever more completely into what God desires of us, to grow in love and understanding of God, of ourselves, of the world and to accept that it is never a finished process."
- 3) "To grow in the image and likeness of the Triune God"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "To come to eternal communion in Love with God, every human being and every creature"
- 6) "To love and serve God and all mankind."
- 7) left blank
- 8) "To return by the labour of obedience to Him (our loving Father) from whom we have departed through the sloth of disobedience (Prologue to the Rule)"
- 9) "To live for God, praying for the world. We live in enclosure and take solemn vows."
- 10) "to seek God"

What are our needs ?

- 1) "relationships as given in first 2 commandments"
- 2) "to love and be loved"
- 3) "food, drink, light, warmth, shelter, community, purpose, and hope in God"
- 4) left blank
- 5) "as above: physical, emotional, relational, psychological, cultural, intellectual and spiritual (which includes the rest!)"
- 6) "The love of God. Food and sleep."
- 7) left blank
- 8) "An ever stronger Faith in one vocation and , at the same time, a solidarity with all men. We must never feel elitist. On the practical side, - Every community should have a member trained in Canon Law. - I say this from experience."
- 9) "A larger community."
- 10) "to receive sufficiently in terms of physiological and spiritual and material health in order to serve God and our brothers and sisters"

Finally, who filled out this questionnaire?

Assigned individual consortium volunteer other

- 1) x
- 2) "x- I assigned me, the Abbess"
- 3) x
- 4) left blank
- 5) *crossed out 'assigned' and left individual, then: "prioress (nobody else would have had the time!)"*
- 6) x
- 7) left blank
- 8) x
- 9) Superior
- 10) 2

Additional comments:

community 2: "I think perhaps I should explain that as Poor Clares our rule demands that we should not (as a community) have a way of living which would free us from dependence on God's providence. That doesn't mean that we don't work but that we are not meant to so husband our resources or develop investments as to free us from monetary concerns. Perhaps not well expressed, we find that if we need something the need is met -- and if not we don't need it! St. Clare even specified that if the monastery should have a garden larger than needed to provide food for the sisters it should be left uncultivated. If we are given a legacy larger than we could spend on current needs -- eg house repairs or improvements -- we give it away. In any case, we always tithe any donation of any size beyond the smallest.

Obviously the questions re the rule of Benedict were not relevant to us -- though we do have a copy of that rule in the library!"

Community 5: "I wish you luck with your dissertation and hope my answers are legible! (Sr. Paula Monahan (prioress))"

Community 9: [In response to my comment in a letter to them: I am surprised to hear that you receive a lot of questionnaires; do you know why you are receiving so many? Is this a new thrend for you, to be the subject of research?] "We do not know why we receive so many -- from the business world and from students -- It is certainly a new trend. I did the questionnaire myself-- everyone else is busy. I am too -- but hope this is adequate. It did take about an hour."

VIEWPOINT REF: 01

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 12:30pm

DIRECTION OF VIEW: NNW

WEATHER: cloudy, overcast

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: from the boundary looking towards the Abbey main building

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: deciduous leaf cover noticeably less in winter

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: residential (c), agricultural (c)

Landscape Elements: mown grass (i), garden (e), ornamental (i), pasture (c), deciduous wood (c), mixed wood (c), tree clumps (c), hedges (e), walls (c), fences (c), banks (c), stream (e), residential buildings (c), farm buildings (e), ruins (i), trunk road (e)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: small

Enclosure: open

Variety: varied

Harmony: harmonious

Movement: calm

Texture: managed

Colour: muted

Rarity: ordinary

Security: comfortable

Stimulus: interesting

Pleasure: pleasant

COMMENTS: nettles indicate fertile ground; shelter belt evident

VIEWPOINT REF: 02

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 12:50pm

DIRECTION OF VIEW: N

WEATHER: cloudy, windy

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: from the back boundary, in the middle part, looking directly at property and house

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: leaf cover and colour

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: residential (c)

Landscape Elements: mown grass (c), garden (e), ornamental (e), mixed wood (c), walls (c), banks (e), stream (i), residential buildings (c), rough grass (c)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: intimate

Enclosure: enclosed

Variety: varied

Harmony: balanced

Movement: calm

Texture: managed

Colour: colourful

Rarity: ordinary

Security: comfortable

Stimulus: interesting

Pleasure: very pleasant

COMMENTS: walking west on property line and wall: ribinia (pseudo acacia), horse chestnut, and dawn redwood -- indicative of a past ornamental garden (around 50 or so years ago); could have been a box hedge along boundary, now overgrown; has an arboretum feel about it; lots of conspicuous rabbits; field maples and oaks -- colour in autumn.

VIEWPOINT REF: 03

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 1:10pm

DIRECTION OF VIEW: N

WEATHER: cloudy, windy

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: almost at corner of boundary, inside gate

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: tree cover, bird song

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: residential (c), agricultural (c), recreational (i), refuse tip (e)

Landscape Elements: garden (e), ornamental (c), mixed wood (e), isolated trees (c), hedgerow trees (i), hedges (i), fences (c), residential buildings (i), farm buildings (c), track (c), caravan (e), rough grass (c), orchard (c)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: intimate

Enclosure: tight

Variety: varied

Harmony: discordant

Movement: calm

Texture: rough

Colour: muted

Rarity: unusual

Security: unsettling

Stimulus: interesting

Pleasure: unpleasant

COMMENTS: buttercups, indicating damp, water-retentive soil; high clay and silty soil (very little sand); general state of unkemptness and neglect = trees, outbuilding, rubbish tip for burning at overflowing

VIEWPOINT REF: 04

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 1:25pm

DIRECTION OF VIEW: S

WEATHER: cloudy, windy

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: from corner where monks' gate meets nuns' garden gate

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: flower blooms

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: agricultural (c)

Landscape Elements: garden (c), ornamental (c), mixed wood (c), isolated trees (c), hedgerow trees (e), hedges (e), walls (c), fences (e), farm buildings (e), track (c), orchard (c), rough grass (c)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: intimate

Enclosure: tight

Variety: varied

Harmony: harmonious

Movement: calm

Texture: managed

Colour: colourful

Rarity: ordinary

Security: comfortable

Stimulus: invigorating

Pleasure: pleasant

COMMENTS: lots of colourful flowers -- lupine, poppies; gooseberries

VIEWPOINT REF: 05

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 1:30pm

DIRECTION OF VIEW: NNE

WEATHER: cloudy, drizzly

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: from corner by gate, looking left into Easter Garden and right into nuns' meadow

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: none

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: residential (c), recreational (c)

Landscape Elements: garden (c), ornamental (c), mixed wood (c), tree clumps (c), isolated trees (c), walls (c), pond (c), residential buildings (c), track (c)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: intimate

Enclosure: tight

Variety: complex

Harmony: harmonious

Movement: busy -- work in progress

Texture: managed

Colour: colourful

Rarity: unusual

Security: comfortable

Stimulus: interesting

Pleasure: very pleasant

COMMENTS: sycamore and ash growing on top of archway should be removed (will destroy brickwork); arch is old -- historic?; lots of ornamentals: dogwood, plum purpurea? (beautiful purple colour) and burburis darwinii which are popular Victorian plants, tree peony, "poor man's box", companula (wild flowers) -- indicative of Cotswolds and limey soil; building in progress of new wall and gate for Easter Garden -- sign: "While work is in progress, the plants, pond-life, and objects have been moved to safety."; nice mix of grasses and lords and ladies; evidence of broad grasses taking over meadow



site 1



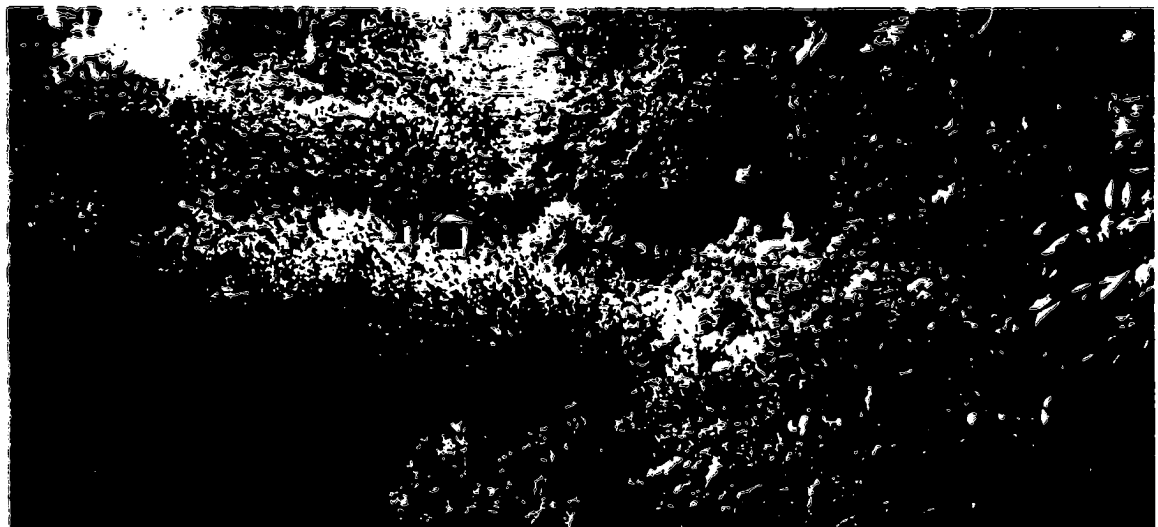
site 2



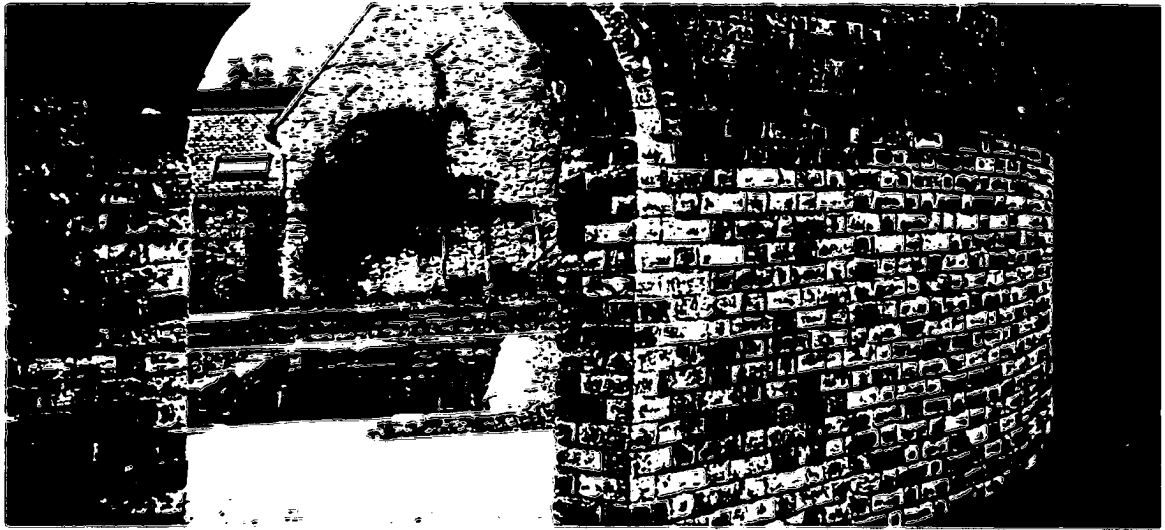
site 3



site 3



site 4



site 5



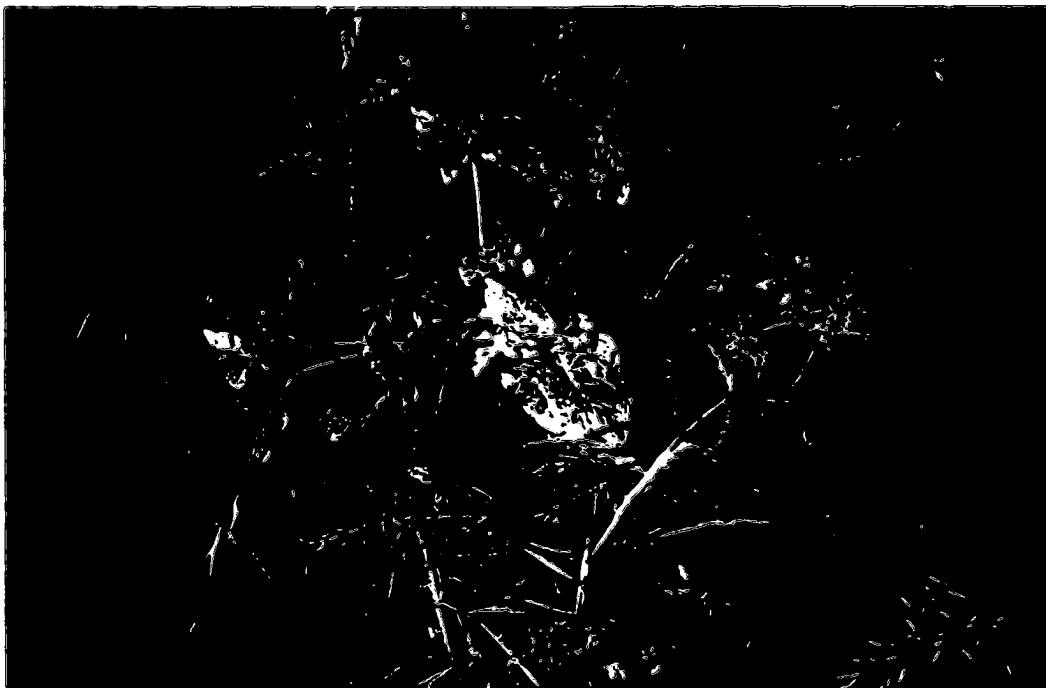
site 5



site 5



site 5



site 6



site 6



site 6



site 6

VIEWPOINT REF: 06

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 3pm

DIRECTION OF VIEW: S

WEATHER: rainy

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: back to the Abbey (left), Easter Garden (far right), and on the track

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: none

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: residential (c), recreational (c)

Landscape Elements: mown grass (c), garden (c), ornamental (c), mixed wood (c), tree clumps (c), residential buildings (c), track (c), rough grass (c)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: small

Enclosure: enclosed

Variety: varied

Harmony: harmonious

Movement: calm

Texture: managed

Colour: colourful

Rarity: ordinary

Security: comfortable

Stimulus: interesting

Pleasure: very pleasant

COMMENTS: knotweed patch on right

VIEWPOINT REF: 07

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 3:10pm

DIRECTION OF VIEW: SSW

WEATHER: raining!

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: at corner of property, within trees, road at our backs and shelter belt to immediate left

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: none

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: agricultural (c), compost piles (c)

Landscape Elements: mown grass (c), garden (c), ornamental (c), mixed wood (c), shelter belt (c), tree clumps (c), isolated trees (c), walls (c), fences (c), farm buildings (i), orchard (c), rough grass (c)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: intimate

Enclosure: tight

Variety: varied

Harmony: discordant

Movement: busy

Texture: rough

Colour: muted

Rarity: ordinary

Security: unsettling

Stimulus: interesting

Pleasure: unpleasant

COMMENTS: compost piles smell; road noise high, making area discordant and unpleasant though view is "nice to good"; nettles and overgrowth conspicuous

VIEWPOINT REF: 08

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 3:17pm

DIRECTION OF VIEW: E

WEATHER: raining hard!

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: back to hawthorn hedge looking toward goats' house (ahead) and vegetable garden to right

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: no garden colours in winter

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: agricultural (c)

Landscape Elements: mown grass (c), garden (c), ornamental (c), parkland (e), pasture (e), mixed wood (c), shelter belt (e), tree clumps (c), isolated trees (c), fences (c), farm buildings (c), goats (c)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: large

Enclosure: open

Variety: varied

Harmony: balanced

Movement: calm

Texture: managed

Colour: colourful

Rarity: ordinary

Security: safe

Stimulus: interesting

Pleasure: very pleasant

COMMENTS: oaks -- can't stand lime, love valley bottom, confirms clay/silt soil; you can hear but can't see road noise; soil fertility evident; high water table believable -- willow tree clumps and buttercups evident; Middle England at its best!

VIEWPOINT REF: 09

SURVEYOR: Cathy Clipson and Will Reed

DATE: June 13, 1998

TIME: 6:30pm*

DIRECTION OF VIEW: S

WEATHER: raining

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY: within woodland, swing and horse chestnut to left and pond to right

SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL DIFFERENCES: peak foliage now

OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Landform: flat (c)

Land Use: agricultural (c)

Landscape Elements: garden (c), ornamental (c), mixed wood (c), tree clumps (c), walls (i), pond (c), tire swing (c), track (e), rough grass (c)

SUBJECTIVE CHECKLIST:

Scale: intimate

Enclosure: tight

Variety: complex

Harmony: harmonious

Movement: calm

Texture: managed

Colour: colourful

Rarity: ordinary

Security: comfortable

Stimulus: interesting

Pleasure: very pleasant

COMMENTS: *we abandoned it for the day so writing this later by memory; the pond has great life -- hostas, no slugs!, lily pads; horse chestnut -- really inviting and majestic

PARISH OF TURVEY
North Bedfordshire
KEY STATISTICS

<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Population</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Total (No)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1063</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">% in private households</td> <td style="text-align: right;">88.8</td> </tr> </table>	Population		Total (No)	1063	% in private households	88.8	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Households</td> <td style="text-align: right;">481</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Dwellings</td> <td style="text-align: right;">424</td> </tr> </table>	Households	481	Dwellings	424	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Area</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1642 ha</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Population Density</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6.7</td> </tr> </table>	Area	1642 ha	Population Density	6.7
Population																
Total (No)	1063															
% in private households	88.8															
Households	481															
Dwellings	424															
Area	1642 ha															
Population Density	6.7															

Age and Sex base: usual residents					
	No.	Parish %	District %	County %	EA/W %
Persons 0-15	222	21.4	20.7	22.1	20.1
15-64	676	62.4	64.9	65.4	62.8
65+	175	16.2	14.4	12.5	17.1
75+	63	5.8	6.3	5.3	7.1
Males	510	47.1	43.1	49.5	48.5
Females	573	52.9	52.9	50.4	51.5

Ethnic Origin base: usual residents					
	No.	Parish %	District %	County %	EA/W %
Non-white	15	1.4	10.1	9.9	6.9
Non UK born	59	5.4	11.3	10.9	7.5

Limiting Long-term illness bases: residents in private households and communal establishments					
	No.	Parish %	District %	County %	EA/W %
Persons with limiting long term illness in private households					
aged 0-15	6	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.5
aged 15-64	42	4.0	4.5	4.5	5.7
aged 65+	49	4.6	5.1	4.5	6.1
aged 75+	30	2.8	2.8	2.5	3.2
In other establishments	7	0.7	7.4	6.2	6.2

Household Size base: households with residents				
	Parish No.	District No.	County No.	EA/W No.
Average number of persons in household	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.5

Housing Tenure base: households with residents					
	No.	Parish %	District %	County %	EA/W %
Households					
owner occupier	273	68.4	72.9	74.0	67.8
rented from Local Authority/Housing Assoc.	73	18.3	17.3	17.5	23.0
Privately rented	63	13.3	9.8	8.6	9.3

Household Composition base: households with residents					
	No.	Parish %	District %	County %	EA/W %
Households with couple and child(ren) aged 0-15	93	22.5	21.0	22.9	19.8
Households with lone parent and child(ren) aged 0-15	11	2.8	3.7	3.6	4.1
One person/households	62	15.7	13.3	11.9	13.0
Other wholly person/households	44	11.1	6.2	6.2	6.9

Amenities/Car Availability base: households with residents					
	No.	Parish %	District %	County %	EA/W %
Households lacking exclusive use of a basic amenity (bath or shower WC)	1	0.3	1.3	1.0	1.3
Households without central heating	49	12.4	10.9	11.2	13.5
Households with more than one person/room	7	1.8	2.1	2.4	2.1
Households without a car	72	19.0	25.5	24.8	22.4

SOURCE: 1991 census



Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane, Bedford, MK41 9SH.
Tel 01234 364213. Fax 01234 328530

01 July 1998

Cathy Clipson
1 Beacon Cottages
Buckland in the Moor
Devon
TQ13 7HL

Dear Cathy,

Please find enclosed information on Turvey Abbey.

We do not have any boundary information for the Abbey, but we do have details of the main species found on site from Phase I surveys carried in the late 1980's (see below).

There are no records of badgers in the area.

Turvey House SP 938530 = semi natural mixed woodland

Acer pseudoplatanus	Geranium robertianum
Quercus robur	Urtica dioica
Taxus baccata	Mercurialis perennis
Sambucus nigra	Glechoma hederacea
Ulmus sp.	Pinus sylvestris
Buxus sempervivens	Prunus avium

SP 941 527

Fraxinus excelsior	Crataegus monogyna
Aesculus hippocastanum	Rubus fruticosus
Glechoma hederacea	Geranium robertianum
Tilia sp.	



Turvey Abbey SP 946 522

Betula sp.

Taxodium distichum

Sorbus aucuparia

Chamaecyparis sp.

Cupressus sp.

Ilex aquifolium

Rosa sp.

Cedrus atlantica

SP 946 526 = semi improved neutral grassland

Poa pratensis

Cynosurus cristatus

Holcus lanatus

Ranunculus repens

Trifolium repens

Hordeum secalinum

Juncus inflexus

Juncus articulatus

SP 948 520 = Pond

Sparganium erectum

Lemna minor

Potamogeton sp.

We hope this is of some assistance. Please do not hesitate to get in contact if you need more help.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Edwards
Administrator

Soil Survey and Land Research Centre

Cranfield
UNIVERSITY

Soil Survey & Land
Research Centre
Cranfield University

Silsoe
Bedford MK43 4DT
United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0) 1525 663000

Fax +44 (0) 1525 663253

Telex 626038 SILCAM G

Ms Cathy Clipson
1 Beacon Cottages
Buckland in the Moor
Ashburton
Devon
TQ13 7HL

18 June, 1998

Dear Cathy,

Thank you for your recent letter asking about soil types at Turvey Abbey. I enclose an extract from a hand drawn field map at 1:25,000 scale of the area surrounding Turvey. The Abbey and the surrounding land sit well above the flood plain. There are a number of soil units identified on the map. They are described as follows:

Soil Map Unit	Name and dominant soil series	Parent material	Description
411b	HANSLOPE	Chalky till	Slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils. Some slowly permeable non-calcareous clayey soils. Slight risk of water erosion.
511b	MORETON	Jurassic clay and limestone	Well drained calcareous clayey and fine loamy soils over limestone, in places shallow and brashy. Some deeper slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils.
671s	EFFORD 1	River terrace gravel	Well drained fine loamy soils often over gravel associated with similar permeable soils variably affected by groundwater.
614a	THAMES	River alluvium	Stoniness mainly calcareous clayey soils affected by groundwater. Flat land. Risk of flooding.

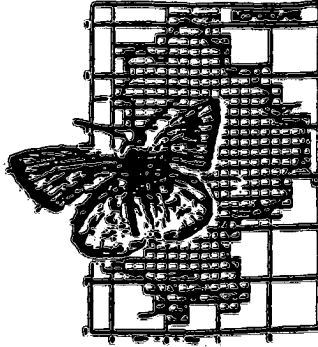
These units also appear on the National Soil map sheet 6 for South East England.

I hope that this information is of use to you in your project.

Yours sincerely,



R.I. Bradley

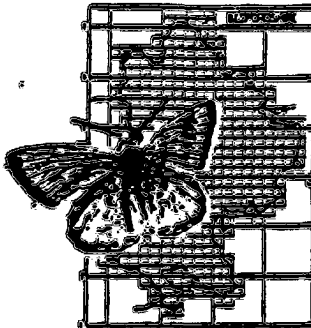


The Bedfordshire Natural History Society BUTTERFLY RECORDS

Date(s)	Grid reference	Tetrad.
Locality <i>Tury Abbey 1990 - 1998</i>		Recorder's name <i>24 species in Abbey Grounds.</i>

No.	No.	No.
Small Skipper /	Green Hairstreak	White Admiral
Essex Skipper /	*Brown Hairstreak*	Red Admiral /
Large Skipper /	Purple Hairstreak	Painted Lady /
Dingy Skipper /	White Letter Hairstreak /	Small Tortoiseshell /
Grizzled Skipper /	*Black Hairstreak*	Peacock /
		Comma /
Wood White	Small Copper /	*Dark Green Fritillary*
Brimstone /	Small Blue	
Large White /	Brown Argus	Speckled Wood /
Small White /	Common Blue /	Wall Brown /
Green-veined White /	Chalk Hill Blue	Marbled White /
Orange Tip /	Holly Blue /	Catekeeper /
		Meadow Brown /
<i>Clauded Yellow</i> /	Duke of Burgundy	Small Heath /
		Ringlet /

Please contact Charles Baker on 01582-872716 if you find any of the species marked with a *.
OTHER SPECIES:



The Bedfordshire Natural History Society BUTTERFLY RECORDS

Date(s)	Grid reference	Tetrad.
Locality <i>Within Ten miles of Tury Abbey 1990 - 1998</i>		Recorder's name <i>30 species.</i>

No.	No.	No.
Small Skipper /	Green Hairstreak	White Admiral
Essex Skipper /	*Brown Hairstreak*	Red Admiral /
Large Skipper /	Purple Hairstreak	Painted Lady /
Dingy Skipper /	White Letter Hairstreak /	Small Tortoiseshell /
Grizzled Skipper /	*Black Hairstreak*	Peacock /
		Comma /
Wood White	Small Copper /	*Dark Green Fritillary*
Brimstone /	Small Blue	
Large White /	Brown Argus	Speckled Wood /
Small White /	Common Blue /	Wall Brown /
Green-veined White /	Chalk Hill Blue	Marbled White /
Orange Tip /	Holly Blue /	Catekeeper /
		Meadow Brown /
<i>Clauded Yellow</i> /	Duke of Burgundy	Small Heath /
		Ringlet /

Please contact Charles Baker on 01582-872716 if you find any of the species marked with a *.
OTHER SPECIES:

BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY CHECKLIST					
NO.	SPECIES	CAT. SITES	NO.	SPECIES	CAT. SITES
1	RED-THROATED DIVER	DE	81	GOOT	A
2	BLACK-THROATED DIVER	DE	82	BYTEREATER	D
3	GREAT NORTHERN DIVER	DE	83	BLACKWINGED STILT	F
4	LITTLE GREBE	AC	84	AVOCET	DE
5	GREAT CRISTED GREBE	AC	85	STONE CURLEW	DE
6	RED-NECKED GREBE	DE	86	HOLLANDS BRAVINGOLE	F
7	AVOCHEN GREBE	DE	87	LITTLE RINGED PLOVER	DE
8	BLACK-NECKED GREBE	DE	88	RINGED PLOVER	DE
9	FULMAR	DE	89	KENTISH PLOVER	DE
10	MARX SHEARWATER	DE	90	DOTTEREL	DE
11	STORM PETREL	DE	91	AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER	F
12	LEACH'S PETREL	DE	92	GOLDEN PLOVER	F
13	GANNET	CE	93	GREY PLOVER	DE
14	GOSSAMER	AC	94	LAPWING	DE
15	SWAN	DE	95	KNOB	DE
16	SWAN	DE	96	SAVINGLINE	DE
17	NIGHT HERON	F	97	LITTLE STINT	DE
18	LITTLE HERON	DE	98	TEMMINCK'S STINT	DE
19	GREY HERON	AC	99	BAIRD'S SANDPIPER	F
20	PURPLE HERON	DE	100	PECTORAL SANDPIPER	DE
21	WHITE STORK	DE	101	SHARPLETTED SANDPIPER	F
22	MUTE SWAN	AC	102	CURLY SANDPIPER	DE
23	BEWICK'S SWAN	DE	103	PURPLE SANDPIPER	DE
24	WHISPER SWAN	DE	104	BUNLIN	D
25	REYNOLDS GOOSE	DE	105	HUFF	D
26	PINK-FOOTED GOOSE	DE	106	JACK SNipe	D
27	WHITE-FOOTED GOOSE	DE	107	SNipe	AC
28	GREYLAG GOOSE	AC	108	GREAT SNipe	F
29	SCOTLAND GOOSE	AC	109	WOODCOCK	DE
30	BARNACLE GOOSE	DE	110	BLACK-TAILED GODWIT	DE
31	DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE	DE	111	BAR-TAILED GODWIT	DE
32	EGYPTIAN GOOSE	CE	112	WINTERBIRD	DE
33	SWAN	DE	113	CURLY	DE
34	WANDERER	DE	114	SPOTTED REDSHANK	DE
35	MIGON	DE	115	REDSHANK	DE
36	REDFOUL	AC	116	GREENSHANK	D
37	TEAL	AC	117	GREEN SANDPIPER	D
38	MILVING	AC	118	WOOD SANDPIPER	DE
39	PINTAIL	DE	119	COMMON SANDPIPER	D
40	ARGENT	DE	120	TURNSHANK	DE
41	BLU-WINGED TEAL	F	121	WILSON'S PHALAROPE	F
42	SCOTLAND	AC	122	RED-NECKED PHALAROPE	DE
43	RED-CRESTED PHEASANT	DE	123	GREY PHALAROPE	DE
44	PHEASANT	DE	124	ARCTIC SKUA	DE
45	RING-NECKED DUCK	F	125	BONAPARTE SKUA	DE
46	FERRUGINOUS DUCK	CE	126	GREAT SKUA	DE
47	WINTER DUCK	AC	127	MEDITERRANEAN GULL	DE
48	SCOTLAND	DE	128	LITTLE GULL	DE
49	RUFF	DE	129	SABINE'S GULL	DE
50	PINK-BELLIED DUCK	DE	130	BLACK-HEADED GULL	DE
51	COMMON SCOTLAND	DE	131	RING-BILLED GULL	DE
52	VELVET SCOTLAND	DE	132	COMMON GULL	DE
53	SCOTLAND	DE	133	LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL	DE
54	SWAN	DE	134	YELLOW-LEGGED GULL	DE
55	RED-BREASTED MERGANSER	DE	135	HERRING GULL	AC
56	SCOTLAND	D	136	ISLAND GULL	DE
57	RUFF	DE	137	GLAUCOUS GULL	DE
58	MONEY BUNTING	DE	138	GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL	DE
59	BLACK KITE	F	139	KITWAKE	DE
60	RED KITE	DE	140	CASPIAN TERN	F
61	WHITE-TAILED EAGLE	F	141	SANDWICH TERN	DE
62	WASHER HARRIER	DE	142	COMMON TERN	AC
63	HEN HARRIER	DE	143	ARCTIC TERN	DE
64	NOCTURNAL HARRIER	DE	144	LITTLE TERN	DE
65	REDSHANK	DE	145	BLACK TERN	D
66	SPRINGHAWK	AC	146	WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN	F
67	BUNTING	DE	147	GUILLEMOT	DE
68	ROUGH-LEGGED BUNTING	DE	148	HARPORELL	DE
69	OSPREY	DE	149	LITTLE AUK	DE
70	KESTREL	AC	150	PUFFIN	DE
71	HERON	DE	151	FISHAL PIGEON	A
72	HOBBY	DE	152	STOCK DOVE	A
73	PERCHING	DE	153	WOOD PIGEON	A
74	RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE	DE	154	GOLDEN DOVE	A
75	GRAY PARTRIDGE	AC	155	TURTLE DOVE	DE
76	GUN	DE	156	RING-NECKED PARAKEET	DE
77	PHEASANT	A	157	DUCK DO	DE
78	GREEN PHEASANT	DE	158	YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO	F
79	GRAY HERON'S PHEASANT	DE	159	BARN OWL	DE
80	WATER RAIL	DE	160	LITTLE OWL	DE
81	SCOTTISH PRINCE	DE	161	TOWNY OWL	DE
82	SCOTTISH PRINCE	DE	162	LONG-EARED OWL	DE
83	SCOTTISH PRINCE	A	163	SHORT-EARED OWL	DE

BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY CHECKLIST

NO.	SPECIES	CAT. SITES	NO.	SPECIES	CAT. SITES
147	NIGHTJAR	CO	253	GREENFINCH	A
148	SWIFT	DE	254	GOLDFINCH	A
149	KINGFISHER	CO	255	GIRKIN	CO
150	BEE-EATER	DE	256	LINNET	A
151	ROLLER	F	257	WINE	DE
152	HOOPOE	DE	258	REDFOUL	A
153	WAYBICK	DE	259	ASCHE REDPOLL	F
154	GREEN WOODPECKER	F	260	CROSSBILL	CO
155	GREY SPOTTED WOODPECKER	F	261	BULLFINCH	A
156	LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER	CO	262	HAWFINCH	CO
157	WOOD LARK	DE	263	LAPLAND BUNTING	DE
158	SNY LARK	A	264	SNOW BUNTING	DE
159	SHORE LARK	DE	265	YELLOWHAMMER	A
160	SAND MARTIN	ABC	266	GIRL BUNTING	DE
161	SWALLOW	A	267	BESS BUNTING	A
162	HOUSE MARTIN	A	268	ROBN BUNTING	DE
163	TREE PIPIT	CO	SPECIES RECORDED IN BEDFORDSHIRE FROM 1936 ONLY		
164	Meadow Pipit	DE	269	AMERICAN BITTERN	F
165	WATER PIPIT	DE	270	LITTLE BITTERN	F
166	COCK PIPIT	DE	271	SPONGBILL	DE
167	YELLOW WAGTAIL	DE	272	LITTLE GULL	F
168	GREY WAGTAIL	CO	273	GREAT BUSTARD	F
169	PIED WAGTAIL	A	274	PALLAS'S SANDGROUSE	F
170	WAXWING	DE	275	DIPPER	DE
171	WREN	A	276	WATER WAGTAIL	DE
172	QUINNOCK	A	277	RED-BELLIED FLYCATCHER	DE
173	ROBIN	A	278	LESSER GREY SHRIKE	F
174	NIGHTINGALE	CO	279	TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL	F
175	BULLFINCH	DE	PENDING SPECIES - UNDER CONSIDERATION BY BRITISH BIRDS RARITIES COMMITTEE OR COUNTY RARITIES COMMITTEE		
176	BLACK REDSTART	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
177	REDSTART	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
178	WREN TIT	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
179	SPOTTED WINGED DOVE	DE	(SCOTLAND)		
180	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
181	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
182	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
183	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
184	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
185	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
186	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
187	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
188	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
189	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
190	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
191	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
192	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
193	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
194	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
195	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
196	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
197	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
198	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
199	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
200	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
201	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
202	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
203	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
204	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
205	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
206	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
207	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
208	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
209	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
210	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
211	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
212	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
213	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
214	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
215	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
216	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
217	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
218	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
219	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
220	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
221	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
222	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
223	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
224	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
225	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
226	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
227	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
228	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
229	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
230	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
231	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
232	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
233	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
234	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
235	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
236	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
237	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
238	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
239	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
240	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
241	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
242	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
243	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
244	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
245	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
246	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
247	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
248	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
249	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		
250	WAGTAIL	CO	(SCOTLAND)		

2 July 1996

Convent of the Poor Clares
Woodchester
Stroud
Glos. GL5 5HS

Dear Sisters,

I am writing to you today to inquire as to whether I might stay within the monastery if I were to come on retreat. Though I am not a nun, I lived for 2 1/2 years with the Religious of Jesus and Mary (RJMs) in two of their convents in New Hampshire, USA. During that time, I began a PhD looking at women's monastic lives -- an enterprise in which I am still engaged and will continue to be so throughout next year. (I am an American, having arrived in England last August to pursue library research at Schumacher College in Devon and Oxford's Bodleian Library.) At this juncture, I am interested in staying with you out of personal reasons -- the need for a retreat and time to relax. However, to be up front with you, there may come a time in the future in which I would ask to come as a researcher. It is, of course, difficult for me to completely take off the hat of student and researcher, and so I would naturally be observing as to whether I felt your community would be a possible site for my study.

However, I do not intend to take notes, interview, etc. if I were to make a visit at this time. If you have a library, I would be grateful if I might browse through it. My reason for asking to stay in the monastic enclosure is, frankly, because it is usually where I feel most at home. I have spent many years discerning whether I have a vocation to religious life and have determined it is not what God is calling me for. However, that does not mean that I don't deeply desire, at different times, to live in a monastic environment. When I have stayed in the guest houses of monastic communities I have felt somehow out of place. Perhaps you understand what I am trying to say.

As a final note of inquiry, do you have directed retreats at any time? I would be grateful for a brochure (or what have you) listing them if you do.

With all good wishes,

Mary Catherine Harmon



LIFE & PEACE

Reg. Charity No. 246754

Priory of Our Lady of Peace
Turvey Abbey, Turvey
BEDFORD MK43 8DE

Tel: 01234 881432
Fax: 01234 881538

6 July, 1996

Dear Mary Catherine

RETREAT INFORMATION: 1996—1997

Thank you for your enquiry about the retreat facilities of Turvey Abbey. I enclose a copy of the 1996 retreat programme and a leaflet about the monastic retreats mentioned in the programme.

The cost of a *weekend* retreat or course is £65 inclusive and a place may be booked by sending a non-refundable deposit of £15.00. The balance of £50.00 is payable on arrival or in advance, whichever you prefer. The cost of a *day* retreat or course is £8.50 inclusive. Please bring your own packed lunch; we provide hot drinks. A place may be booked by sending a non-refundable deposit of £3.50. The balance of £5.00 is payable on arrival. [PLEASE SEND S.A.E. IF YOU DESIRE AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF BOOKING FEES.] Anyone wishing to come for a private visit or retreat on one of the weekends when we have an organised retreat is asked to pay the full price of the weekend retreat.

Private individual visits are arranged by consultation with the Guestmistress (Sr. Esther) and there is no need to pay a deposit or booking fee. Your donation (£25.00 per day) will help to cover our costs. Individually guided retreats may be booked by arrangement with the Retreat Secretary.

We also welcome private groups wanting to make a group-retreat. A room is put at the disposal of each group, and we provide mid-morning coffee, drinks with packed lunch (or a served lunch for limited numbers) and tea. Retreat guidance by a member of the community is available if desired. For details of group retreat facilities please contact the Retreat Secretary.

The longer retreats, such as *The Monastic Experience: "Seeking God"* have their own charge and arrangements. Information about these and about *Mothers' Days* is available on request. The same is true of some of the retreats led by people from outside the Turvey Communities.

All guests are welcome to join in our monastic worship, use the library of the Abbey and enjoy the gardens - weather permitting. Accommodation is in two guest houses in or near the Abbey, mainly in single rooms. In cases of 'popular' weekends/retreats, guests may be asked to share. If you do **NOT** wish to share a room, please make this clear when you book. We ask guests **NOT TO SMOKE IN THE GUEST-HOUSES**. Please bring an alarm clock; and in the winter months a torch will be useful to you.

We are happy for guests to share our gardens, and libraries, but we also ask you to remember that the gardens, the house, the chapels and the corridor outside the main chapel are places of silence, and we ask you to respect the monastic silence and help us to observe it while you are here.

The Guestmistress will be pleased to arrange for you to have some explanation sessions for the Divine Office if you are new to it, yet would like to join in the singing.

We provide a wholesome, balanced diet and share with our guests whatever we have. We also try to take into account ordinary dietary requirements. (Please indicate when booking if you are a vegetarian.) If you have a 'difficult' diet (e.g. Vegan, or special medical diet) we would appreciate it if you could bring your own specialised food and/or drink with you.

We do not wish anyone to be excluded from our retreat programme for financial reasons and we are happy to make arrangements with students, and those on income support. This is done by arrangement with the Retreat Secretary for weekends, day retreats and individually guided retreats; and with the Guestmistress for private visits.

(WE WELCOME DONATIONS FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE ABLE AND WILLING TO OFFER MORE THAN THE MINIMUM CHARGE. THIS ENABLES US TO GIVE BURSARIES TO PEOPLE WANTING TO COME FOR A RETREAT WEEKEND BUT UNABLE BECAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT TO PAY THE DONATION, AND AT THE SAME TIME TO COVER OUR EXPENSES. PLEASE LET US KNOW EITHER IN WRITING BEFOREHAND, OR WHEN YOU COME, IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP IN THIS WAY. THANK YOU!)

Apart from the various kinds of visits or retreats explained above, if you live near enough you are welcome to drop in at any time just for a few quiet hours, or a day, to pray privately, join in our worship, walk in the gardens, read or just take time out for a while from your busy life. Just let the Guestmistress know when you arrive; bring your own lunch (we provide hot drinks) and make whatever contribution you like.

[We ask that people refrain from wearing shoes with sharp, high heels which damage the wooden floors in the Chapel, Libraries and Brand House. Thank you!]

The Eucharist is usually celebrated at 11.50 a.m. on Monday to Thursday; 7.10 a.m. with Lauds on Friday, and 10.15 a.m. on Sundays. The Blessed Sacrament chapel is always open for private worship. The Office of Vespers is at 6.00 p.m. on weekdays (5.30 p.m. if there is to be a Vigil Office that evening) and at 4.00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Times of services are subject to alteration according to community needs. All are welcome to come and pray with us.

With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely in Christ



Sr. Lucy M Brydon, OSB
RETREAT SECRETARY



VITA ET PAX

"MONASTIC EXPERIENCE" RETREATS—1996

In one sense all the organised weekends at Turvey Abbey are "monastic experience" retreats, because all take place within the context of the monastic life and worship of the Turvey Benedictine communities. But some are more specifically "monastic" in approach. We began a few years ago to offer these specifically "monastic experience" retreats as a result of requests from guests and people interested in learning about the monastic life. In 1996 they will focus on the following aspects of the Benedictine way:

- (a) *Christian Meditation* (weekend)
- (b) *Seeking God: the Benedictine Way* (10 days)
- (c) *Praying with Hildegard of Bingen* (weekend)

These retreats give participants a chance to experience something of the Benedictine way of monastic life and to join in the lives of the Turvey Benedictine communities. The weekends consist of a balanced rhythm of successive periods of prayer, work, study, recreation and silence. Participants are asked to bring with them clothes and footwear suitable for outdoor work (or indoor work if the person is not strong enough to work out of doors), and to be ready to help to build up community in the group over the weekend by helping in every way and by participating in the periods of recreation, silence, work etc.

The "Study" part of the retreat consists of talks from members of the community; and here the title of the retreat shows the difference.

- The CHRISTIAN MEDITATION weekend has some input on the riches of the Christian monastic traditions of prayer and meditation—*lectio divina*, Jesus Prayer, silent meditation etc.—with the main emphasis on the sharing of silent, contemplative meditation.
- HILDEGARD OF BINGEN was a Benedictine nun, from whom modern people can gain much insight and inspiration. She was a famous, and prophetic, figure in her own time. The weekend involves exploring her ideas, music and poetry within a setting she would have known: the Benedictine monastic life of a double monastery with attendance at the sung monastic Offices.
- SEEKING GOD: THE BENEDICTINE WAY is a longer and more general introduction to the whole experience of Benedictine monastic life, with talks on the Rule of St Benedict, and the Benedictine approach to prayer, work, the Liturgy, hospitality and so on. It is designed for lay people wanting to live the Benedictine way in their own lives and it offers an experience of what it is like to live for 10 days, in community, "as a monk or nun". Preference is given to single people aged 18-40 because of the nature of the retreat.

The dates of the monastic experience retreats in 1996 are:—

<p><i>Christian Meditation—March 15-17</i> <i>Seeking God: the Benedictine Way—August 6-16</i> <i>Praying with Hildegard of Bingen—September 13-15</i></p>
--

For further information and booking please contact:

Retreat Secretary
Priory of Our Lady of Peace
Turvey Abbey, Turvey
BEDFORD MK43 8DE
Tel. 01234—881432
Fax. 01234—881538

Reg. Charity No. 246754