

DCH precepts

A common rule for a community is not an oppressive constraint that would reduce our freedom but, on the contrary, is an essential help and support that calls us to transform ourselves and to become more similar to our true nature. For us this is that we were all created in the image of God, and to learn to live into this image is our vocation. Authentic freedom is our faithfulness to this deep vocation to what we are meant to be. If we can share common precepts, we become supports for each other in our search for truthfulness. The dimension of community gives shape to something that is more than the sum of the parts. This cannot happen without a common commitment, whatever the form of this commitment is.

Yves proposes here 7 precepts or keywords as guides for transformation that could become the basis for our practice at DCH. Ursula would (will) write something else. Write your own and we can compare, discuss, exchange, be enriched by our differences. This is a work in process which will evolve and adapt in the next months. What is important is that it helps each of us and that we take daily little steps towards fulfilling the precepts we find essential (even if they seem practically unreachable):

1) Contemplation

Contemplation is a time of silence when we remain aware of the presence of God and let him do; we give up control on what is. Silence is the experience of emptiness, the void of representations where God is free to be who he is. Silence is a necessary condition to make it possible to let go. The practice of contemplation transforms slowly our life. This must be a regular daily practice.

2) Awareness

Awareness helps us to see clearly what is happening around us; it tells us about the attitude of others, about who they are and how they feel; and, before all, we need to be aware of how we behave, what we feel and why we are feeling and behaving as we are: to be aware of our state of anger, of joy, of frustration, etc. Maybe anger, joy and frustration won't go away but we will at least be aware how they influence our behaviour. Awareness is an antidote against the projection of our expectations, moods and emotions onto the surroundings. It makes us free to see who we truly are, as if we were an external observer of ourselves. Awareness is also a stand, a testimony because it means discerning our true calling, independently of how it challenges our privileges and status quo.

3) Simplicity

Simplicity is the capacity to live with very little. It is only the first step towards the wish of poverty as St Francis or St Clare practised it. Self-limitation teaches us how to be free from unnecessary needs. Small is beautiful! In fact we need very little: air, water, food, love, etc. Life can truly flow when it does not depend on power, technology or consumption. Where these three components are reduced to a minimum, we can be more aware of life and live more creatively. Simplicity leads naturally towards gratitude and hence welcoming others and accepting reality as it is.

4) Hospitality

Hospitality is the art of welcoming others into our own space. It abolishes the distinction between “this is mine” and “this is yours”. Hospitality welcomes the others as they are. It calls us to give up our tendency to judge them, because their true nature remains always unknown to us. True hospitality should not choose whom we welcome. Out of these “chance” encounters, the opportunity is there to develop into non-preferential love, or “agape”.

5) Generosity

Generosity comes from the awareness that everything is given to us freely: life, air, water, food, knowledge, love. It teaches us how to not retain what we get but to let it flow, to pass it on further. The more we love something, the more we should share it. Life is a flow, like the water in the river. When we stop it, we dam the flow and it becomes dead. Private property in its excesses deprives others. Generosity makes us free from the domination of ownership. It is the learning of surrender and humility

6) Obedience to nature

Nature has its own laws that we have to adapt to. It is not in our power to decide what we can do and what we cannot do to be in harmony with nature. We have to integrate all of our activities into the natural cycles of nature. These cycles are givens which we have to obey. Nature is our main teacher because it is an expression (one among many) of the nature of what ultimate Reality is. It is why it is essential not to destroy it. It is our nourishing mother and profound revelation if we allow it to be.

7) Non violence

Our society is based, more than we like to see, on violence: fear, competition, exploitation, destruction, etc. We too often believe that we have to defend ourselves over against “the other” who is perceived as a threat to us. It is why violence generates more violence. The only way to escape this vicious circle is to choose to be “on the side of the victim”. Only when we choose to be “defenceless”, can we act non-violently.