



# The Academy

## for spiritual formation®

### -CORE VALUES-

**SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**—We make primary in our life together the regular practice of prayer, worship, silence, Eucharist, scripture, and other spiritual practices that sustain our lives in God, increase our attentiveness to God’s presence and action in the world, and lead to ongoing spiritual growth and transformation. Commitment to spiritual practice is rooted in the conviction that formation is caught more than it is taught. Therefore, the ways we experience our faith are at least as important in shaping how we live our day-to-day lives as are the ways we learn to think about our faith.

**INTEGRITY/WHOLEHEARTEDNESS/AUTHENTICITY**—To live with integrity is to live a whole, authentic life, a life undivided by binaries of personal and professional, home and work, inner and outer, head and heart, body and soul. Rather, the spiritual life in Christ is one in which the waters are muddied and the questions are asked, not in an attempt to sanitize and answer, but in an attempt to live as honestly and wholeheartedly as we can, releasing our need for certainty and perfectionism. We seek to live self-aware lives that embrace mystery and welcome honest reflection about who we are and who we long to be.

**FREEDOM & INVITATION**—Spiritual formation happens best when it is invitational and voluntary. It does not require or demand; rather, it invites and welcomes: “Come, live this life and it will change you.” However, living the spiritual life only works if the person living it chooses it for themselves. Spiritual formation, then, must also be open and free, a place where people are free to ask questions of their faith, of God, of the Church, of embodiment, and of themselves in a nonjudgmental, safe environment in which the questions are welcomed, held, and understood as companions to spiritual growth. With this gift of openness and freedom comes the choice to commit one’s life to something greater and the trust needed to accept what comes.

**LOVE AND COMPASSION (The Beloved-ness of All)**—Love is the grounding of all we do, offer, and are. Love is where we begin and end. Compassion is the relational embodiment of this grounding, foundational Love. Therefore, we believe that all creatures have intrinsic value simply because they exist, that all of creation is infused with God’s presence and therefore worthy of our respect, kindness, attention, and care. The beloved-ness of all, then, proclaims the worthiness of all and leads us to extend beyond ourselves for the sake of another’s

wellbeing. This kind of love and compassion always calls us to engage our own inner work so that we can extend the same love and compassion to ourselves as we do others.

**DIVERSITY**—We value diversity in thought, perspective, and embodiment, trusting that we are stronger when a multiplicity of voices, traditions, and experiences are present. Ecumenism is an expression of diversity and one that calls us to honor the many denominations and traditions from which we come. We make space and extend welcome to all people, particularly to those society has relegated to the margins because of race, gender and gender identity, sexual identity and orientation, class, or ability. We trust the wisdom, resilience, creativity, hope, and healing that diversity offers, and we acknowledge that to honor diversity is to honor the world God created and is creating.

**INCLUSIVITY & RADICAL HOSPITALITY**—We value inclusivity and radical hospitality because it encourages us to extend welcome to all and to encounter otherness, allowing it to transform our personhood, our community, our world; because it invites us to be open to ideas, language, thoughts, and people that are different from us; because it extends us beyond polite platitudes toward honest, authentic relationships with ourselves and others; because it beckons us to pay attention to the ways we speak, organize, and worship so that all persons and creation are included in our life together; because it expands our conceptions of racial identity, class identity, gender identity, sexual identity and orientation, and all other identities, opening us to receive the Christ in all; and because it asks us to make space for everything while remaining committed to love and compassion as the foundation and guiding force of our lives.

**COMMUNITY**—While the spiritual journey is deeply personal, it always happens in relationship with others—the community of the saints, the wisdom tradition that grounds us in God, and the people and creation that make up our spiritual/faith community here on earth. We value the power of covenantal relationships to companion us on our journey in Christ, to hold us accountable to something bigger than ourselves, and to remind us of our beloved-ness. Community keeps us from becoming an island unto ourselves and calls us into deeper responsibility to the whole of creation.

**HUMILITY/JOY/PLAYFULNESS**—Humility invites us to have a clear understanding of who we are and whose we are, to ground ourselves in the love of God, and to operate from a place of radical acceptance of our limitations and lack of control. Humility allows us to be fully present and to offer ourselves to God and others from a place of true belonging. In shared leadership, we acknowledge that we are better together, taking it to the team again and again and again. Freed, then, from the illusions of a grandiose, perfect self, we can live into the abiding joy of life, finding moments of levity everywhere. In these moments of levity, we engage a playfulness that mirrors God's delight in us. We acknowledge that while all of life is a journey into the fullness of love, it need not always be a heavy burden to bear. Rather, it can be full of grace and trust that we are never in this work of transformation and love alone.

**CREATIVITY & THE LIFELONG JOURNEY**—The spiritual life is a lifelong journey; therefore, we confess that to engage the spiritual life is to acknowledge that we never fully arrive, that there

is no one place we are trying to get. Rather, we embrace the complexity and ambiguity of life and the emerging understanding that it's not just about what has been as much as it is readying ourselves for what might be. Hence, to be human is to be creative and creating in partnership with God. Therefore, we value the imaginative expression and the hopeful possibility and the expansive mystery that is the spiritual life, moving forward with a deeper awareness of living our faith in an uncertain future and tenuous world.

**TRANSFORMATION**—Ultimately, we engage this work of spiritual formation not to achieve any particular outcomes or results but with the belief and hope that when we abide in the presence of the Holy Spirit, transformation of lives takes place. We recognize that we cannot make such transformation happen, but we can create space that invites it. Making intentional space for Sabbath, rest, vulnerability, and renewal brings about the healing of the whole self, which then leads us to seek justice, mercy, and love in all aspects of our lives. Therefore, when we make space for our own transformation, we contribute to the healing and transformation of the world.

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