

# An introduction to the seven sacred spaces



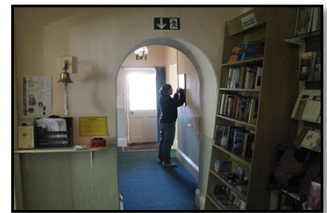
**Cell** is where a person meets privately with God and their inner self, so it takes *courage*. It happens in seclusion, through prayer, reading and sheer silence. This is the only private place out of the seven; all the others are shared. It reminds us that life in Christ is lived both alone and together.

**Chapel** is the venue for public, corporate, shaped worship. This kind of worship is intentional, structured, measured, educative. It includes prayer with, and for, others. Its rhythms and regularity create a familiarity to be passed through, not get stuck with. The virtue needed might be *patience*.



**Chapter** is so named for a chapter of the Bible or Rule being read. Here communities make decisions together. Leaders and members communicate, discuss, debate and disagree, and are accountable to the other. The virtue needed is *humility* – to listen not condemn.

**Cloister** connects. It links up the other places and people walk up and down it. They use this space to change gear, say from eating to worship. The traffic makes it the place of surprising encounters. We may meet the person we try to avoid, needing virtues of *temperance* and *charity*, but also bump into a beloved friend, which will be a joy.



**Garden** is historically the place of work. It balances the other two classic aspects of monastic 'work', which are prayer and study. God has made us creatures who work; without it we become dull. Good work satisfies. Garden also provides food for the table. It provides exercise and a balance for too much mental work. Its classic virtue could be *diligence*.

**Refectory** is the eating place. It beats at the heart of community. Those we regularly eat with we become one with. It benefits the community for it feeds them, then the community benefits society through hospitality, extending the community. The delights of food and drink require *temperance*, but eating together also needs the virtue of glad serving.



**Scriptorium** is about learning to pass on knowledge, more than acquiring it for its own sake. Scribes wrote by hand to enable others to worship, learn and pray by themselves – from the only books that existed. The style of learning matters too. Slow, thoughtful, spiritual learning is about *humble* transformation of the heart not information for the head.