

LET THE SPIRIT BREATHE . . .



"COME NOW, LET'S MAKE A COVENANT, YOU AND I, AND LET IT SERVE AS A WITNESS BETWEEN US . . ." GENESIS 31:44

God of my calling, you encourage me to keep growing. You continue to believe in me. Equip me with your assurance, assist me in my changing. Amen

This month . . . Reflections on

✧ Rule of Life ✧

"Perhaps somewhere in the subterranean chambers of your life you have heard the call to deeper, fuller living. You have become weary of frothy experiences and shallow teaching. Every now and then you have caught glimpses, hints of something more than you have known. Inwardly you long to launch out into the deep." Richard Foster

Rule of Life. Monastic groups often followed a Rule of Life, a simple structure that allowed them to live a balanced life, with God as the focal point. When we think of the word 'rule' it usually conjures up thoughts of dreary regulations. However, its second definition denotes 'a straight edge' for drawing and measuring lines. It is in this latter definition we find our direction and understanding of this spiritual discipline. A Rule of Life is a tool for facilitating spiritual development and transformation, a guideline offering a unique way to open ourselves to the presence of Christ and to provide partnership with the Holy Spirit as we move throughout our day. Developing a Rule of Life is a way to live each day intentionally with God. THE GOAL is to set some spiritual priorities, encompassing our own desires and daily life rhythms, nurturing disciplines that make space for God. Having a Rule of Life helps us integrate our day, expanding our relationship with God and neighbor. A Rule of Life is a work in progress and it is as unique as you.

Moving Towards a Rule of Life

"...Listen carefully, my child, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is advice from a father who loves you; welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice." St. Benedict

We begin a Rule of Life by listening, asking questions, paying attention to the present shape of our life.

We Reflect: What areas of my life can benefit from a Rule of Life? (prayer, study, renewal, reflection, work, hospitality, diet, etc.) What is most important to me? Where do I want to change? What part of me seeks balance, renewal? Where or when do I feel closest to God? Where do natural rhythms or transitions in my life occur that might create moments for reshaping my life? (daily, weekly, monthly) and what discipline or activities would suit these transitions? (prayer, study, retreats, workshops, quiet reflection)

After reflection, select topic(s) that will comprise your Rule of Life. For example you might choose 'prayer'. Now write your intentions for this direction; "I will set aside time for prayer each day and include prayerful listening during this time." Continue by listing several topics or disciplines, writing intentions for each. A Rule of Life can be simple, a short list of what you intend to integrate into your daily life, or it may be detailed, listing multiple intentions for each area of focus. Wisdom may prompt us to start with only a few measurements to begin with. After making your Rule for Life, begin your daily practice. Remember, this is a work in progress . . . you can add, delete, or adjust as necessary.

**Evangelist Edith Gallaher, guest minister for our Spiritual Growth Retreat June 10-12, will spend time in Saturday afternoon session guiding participants in "Developing and Writing a Rule for Life. Come join us for the retreat.*



IN THE GARDEN . . .

The flower symbolism associated with the 'zinnia' is constancy and remembrance, qualities beneficial for a 'rule for life'.

A Rule in the Rhythm of Life

In reality, it becomes challenging to set aside time needed to create authentic, balanced and centered living. I struggle with this, as do most of us. I recalled, however, an encounter with a woman that gave emphasis to the necessity of being attentive to this aspect of life . . .

She was sitting on a bench under a big leafy tree as I walked by. We greeted each other and in our greeting came an invitation for deep, rich conversation. I sat with her while she shared her story: Her husband was deceased; she had five children, two boys and three girls. One son died with liver complications, her second son died from Huntington's disease, a genetic disease. One of her three daughters was experiencing the symptoms of Huntington's and the reality was that soon this woman would lose a third child. Astounded by her story I asked, "How do you cope?" She simply and quietly said, "I take one day at a time. Life is a gift."

She asked what brought me to the Restored Shaker Village in Kentucky from Utah. I explained to her that I came yearly at Easter. It was time of spiritual renewal for me. She shared that she, too, did a pilgrimage yearly but chose different places each year. She said, "These pilgrimages are necessary for me. My children, though, think I'm too old to be doing them any longer." I was surprised, as she didn't appear to be 'that' old. I asked her 'how old' old might be. She said, "I'm eighty."

We continued to share for a length of time. In our sharing I came to understand that it was her pilgrimages, her time of spiritual renewal, set aside in the rhythms of her life that allowed her, in the midst of great loss and sorrow, to continue to live joyfully, affirming, "Life is a gift. I take one day at a time."

This gentle woman of eighty years allowed her rhythms of life to become avenues for the rhythms of God's grace. As I pondered our conversation later, I realized had been granted a rare gift of being mentored by a very wise and wonderful woman.

Reflection moment . . .

"Where in my life do I allow for moments of spiritual renewal that will help carry me through the dark moments of my life?"



How Long?

A young but earnest student approached his teacher, and asked the Master: "If I work very hard and diligent, how long will it take for me to get where I want to be?"

The Master thought about this, and then replied, "Ten years."

The student then said, "But what if I work very, very hard and really apply myself to learn fast. How long then?"

Replied the Master, "Well, twenty years."

"But, if I really, really work at it. How long then?" asked the student.

"Thirty years," replied the Master.

"But, I do not understand," said the disappointed student. "At each time that I say I will work harder, you say it will take me longer. Why do you say that?"

Replied the Master, "You are watching the time. Keep one eye on the goal and the other on the path."

Scripture focus:

"Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us." Genesis 31:44

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship." Romans 12:1

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." Ephesians 4:1

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." II Corinthians 4:6

In perspective . . .

"If nothing else, writing a rule of life can be a way of learning more about what lifts our ordinary lives out of rote action, humorless drudgery or pointless accumulation. A rule can direct us to where the music is playing in the lives we're already living" – Tim Carrington, Chairman of the Board of The Friends of St. Benedict