

The Sanctification of All

Taking Responsibility for Your Spiritual Life



We are to be transformed, consecrated, made sacred to his creative purpose; and so fulfill the meaning of our life. Evelyn Underhill

Robert A. Gallagher, OA & Michelle E. Heyne, OA

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This is your workbook for a process of:

1. Examining your spiritual life
2. Working to understand the dynamics and issues of your spiritual life more fully
3. Exploring options for improving your spiritual life
4. Deciding on your spiritual practice (your discipline or Rule of Life) for the future

This workbook is for your use in a workshop setting. The workshop leaders will guide you through the steps.

We're going to help one another examine some elements of our current spiritual life. You might think of it as investigating your spirituality so you can make improvements you think will be useful for you. The assumption is that the specific form of your spiritual discipline needs to:

- Work with who you really are. It needs to fit your personality. For example, extraverts and introverts usually are spiritually nurtured and stretched in different ways
- Fit the circumstances of your life.
- Be grounded in our tradition's way of being a Christian.

Interview Process

We're going begin by using a process of interviewing one another as a way to examine our own spiritual life and practice.

You'll be given instructions on how to carry out the interview process—who to interview, how many people to interview, and so on. A standard process might look like this – 1) Form into groups of three. 2) Go around the group by having one person interview another with the third person simply listening. 3) Assume that each interview will last about 40 minutes.

Your task is to listen deeply, with an appreciative ear. Please do not allow yourself to take on a teaching or explaining role in relation to the issues that emerge. If a person is confused by a question or doesn't like the question, move on. While you want to complete the interview in a timely manner, you may also want to enter into the process with follow up questions. Please avoid any judgment on what the person is sharing.

Before beginning the interviews begin with prayer, say together – *Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Interview Questions

Before beginning it may be useful for the group to allow 10 minutes for each person to make some notes in each area. You'll find a worksheet with more room for notes on the following page.

1. What are the major pressures, demands and expectations in your life?
2. How do they impact you?
3. How do you work at maintaining adequate equilibrium in the face of these expectations, demands and pressures?
4. How are you an instrument of God's love in daily life?
5. How do you renew yourself emotionally and physically?
6. How do you renew yourself spiritually?
7. How does your practice of Christian faith help or hinder you in the areas noted below?
 - a. Maintaining equilibrium in the face of the expectations, demands, and pressures
 - b. Emotional/physical renewal
 - c. Spiritual renewal
8. How does your practice of Christian faith relate to the arenas of your daily life?

At the end of the interviews - Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Interview Questions – worksheet for notes

1. What are the major pressures, demands and expectations in your life?

2. How do they impact you?

3. How do you work at maintaining adequate equilibrium in the face of these expectations, demands and pressures?

4. How are you an instrument of God's love in daily life?

5. How do you renew yourself emotionally and physically?

6. How do you renew yourself spiritually?

7. How does your practice of Christian faith help or hinder you in the areas noted below?

a. Maintaining equilibrium in the face of the expectations, demands, and pressures

b. Emotional/physical renewal

c. Spiritual renewal

8. How does your practice of Christian faith relate to the arenas of your daily life?

Improved Understanding

We're going to work to improve our understanding of a part of our spiritual life by doing two things:

1. Going into more depth in what we said in our interviews.
2. Learning a way of thinking about the central process of Christian life in relation to our parish church. We call this the Renewal – Apostolate Cycle.

You'll be given instructions by the workshop leaders. A typical process might be as follows:

1. Make a few notes in response to these questions (5 min)

- a. When you were being interviewed, was there a time that was especially significant for you?

- b. Was there something in the interviewing that you found helpful/encouraging?

- c. Was there something in the interview that you found challenging?

2. Share with your group what you would like to share from your notes. (8 - 10 min each)

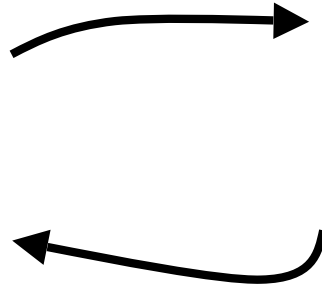
3. Presentation of the Renewal – Apostolate Cycle

The Renewal – Apostolate Cycle

The Renewal - Apostolate Cycle is a way of describing a central dynamic of Christian life. The Cycle focuses our attention on the Christian's movement between being renewed in baptismal identity and purpose and living as instruments of God's love and grace in daily life. The Cycle is interested in both the individual's movement and in the ways in which the parish church supports and facilitates that movement. This is the primary task of any parish church.

RENEWAL

Renewal in baptismal identity and purpose in worship, study and being equipped, for Christian action



APOSTOLATE

Participation in the work of Christ in service, evangelization and stewardship

In areas of:

- Workplace
- Family & Friends
- Civic Life
- Church

A Cycle

The cycle is between a conscious and intentional attention to God, prayer life, our relationships, Christian formation **and** a subconscious reliance upon God as members of the Body of Christ, in the workplace, family, civic life and congregational life.

In that Cycle:

We need:

To accept our dependence on God

To accept responsibility for ordering our spiritual life

To accept our interdependence with others in the Church

Which is helped by:

Openness to spiritual guidance

Establishing a rule of life

Life in Christian community, a parish church

Which the parish helps by:

An emphasis in its life on worship; nothing comes before the Eucharist and Daily Office. Also, more attention to formation and spiritual growth than other programs or ministries.

Offering programs and guidance in creating, experimenting with, and revising a spiritual discipline.

Being a healthy and faithful parish church and by helping people relate to the parish community in ways appropriate to their personality and the parish's capacities.

Copyright Robert A Gallagher, 1985. Also from *Fill All Things: The Spiritual Dynamics of the Parish Church*, Robert A Gallagher, 2008

Renewal – Apostolate Exploration

Assess your spiritual life in relation to the issues and dynamics of the Renewal – Apostolate Cycle

1. A chart

We need:	Which is helped by:	You help yourself by:						
To accept our dependence on God	Openness to spiritual guidance	Maintaining a stable pattern of worship and prayer– Sunday Eucharist and a form of the Daily Office. A capacity to trust and let go of control.	Very Weak				Very Strong	
			1	2	3	4	5	6
To accept responsibility for ordering our spiritual life	Establishing a rule of life	Having a defined spiritual practice grounded in the Anglican tradition.	Very Weak				Very Strong	
			1	2	3	4	5	6
To accept our interdependence with others in the Church	Life in Christian community, a parish church	Engaging opportunities in the parish for social life and the development of friendships.	Very Weak				Very Strong	
			1	2	3	4	5	6

2. How to you get in the way of your own renewal?

Your baptismal renewal

Your emotional/physical renewal

3. How to you live your apostolate in an active way? (note specific patterns of behavior, commitments, etc.). There is no assumption here that you should have a response for each area. You may be more focused on a way of being present in all of life or you may have a more intense calling in one area rather than another

- With family
- With friends
- In the workplace
- In civic life
- In the church

5. What are two things you could do to improve your own Renewal-Apostolate Cycle

Examining & shaping your spiritual life

These worksheets are for your use in assessing and exploring your existing set of spiritual practices (spiritual discipline or rule of life). They offer a way to investigate your current practice and consider changes you may want to make.

The Anglican tradition assumes that an adult is responsible for shaping their own rule-of-life; done out of the state of being that exists by having been baptized into the Body of Christ. So, we develop our rule by accepting adult responsibility which includes drawing on the resources and tradition of the wider church.

A rule of life is the means by which an individual Christian establishes an intentional pattern of Christian spiritual practice or discipline which can over time, be reflected upon, revised, and deepened. Your rule is an expression of the faith and practice of the whole church in your own life; a discipline freely taken on to give order, support, and direction to your life. It is a means of rooting your life in Christ.

As each of us is unique, so each rule will have a somewhat different shape. However, every rule needs to have as its base and starting point the Anglican tradition's threefold rule of prayer (Holy Eucharist, Daily Office, and Personal Devotions) and expression of the Christian life in worship, doctrine and action. This helps us to give ourselves to an integrated pattern of life that is grounded in the larger Christian experience, rather than to make up our own list of "rules" to follow. You also want to take into account things such as: How does this fit with my personality? Does it nurture and stretch me in helpful ways? How does this fit with the current circumstances of my life? Is it manageable?

You might use the worksheet once to note what you already are doing. Then a second time to note what you would like to try doing now. Be specific and realistic. Rules change with time and circumstance.

You are invited to make use of one or more of these worksheets in reflecting on the ways in which you currently are renewed and in identifying ways you may want to explore and experiment with in the time ahead. Make notes in each area. If possible share what you are thinking with your spiritual director or others whose counsel you value.

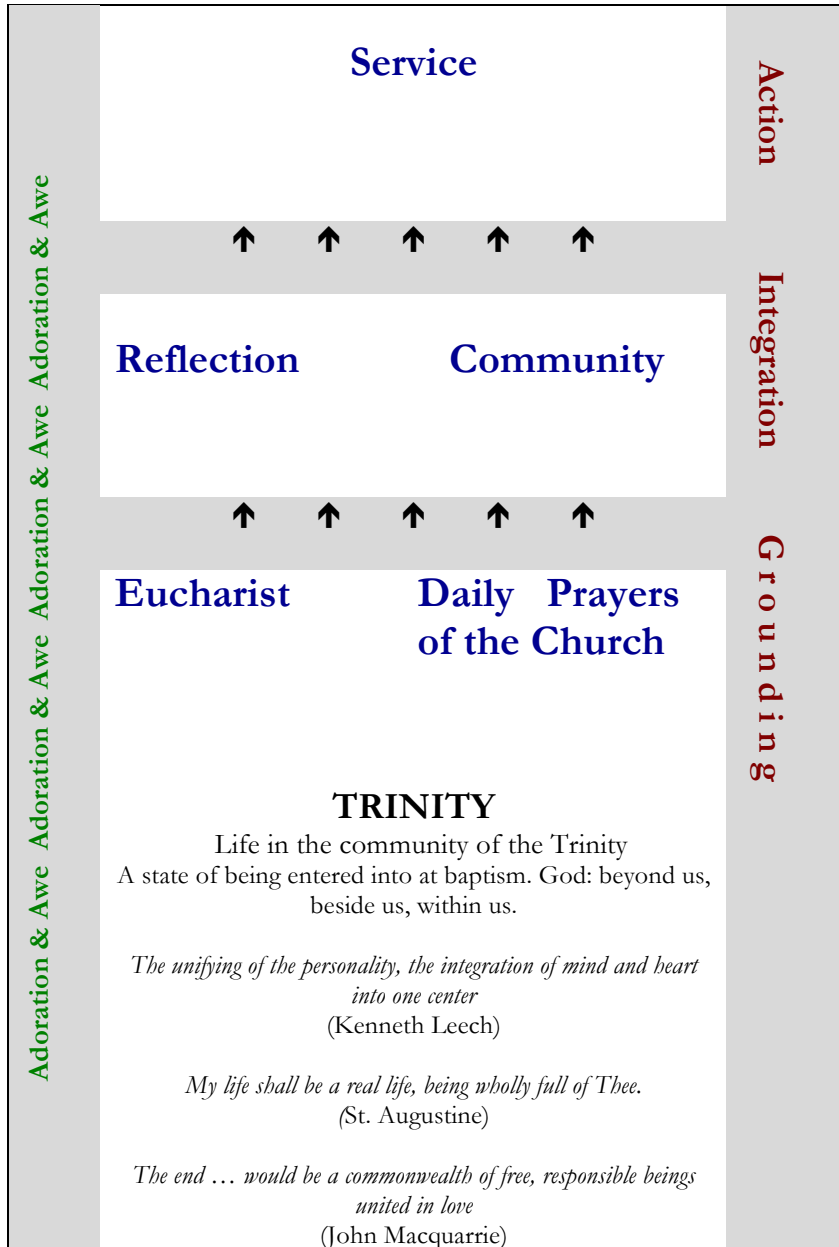
Related Resources & Considerations

Assumptions on the Spiritual Life

1. We all have a spiritual life.
2. It is a significant act of spiritual growth when we accept responsibility for our spiritual life.
3. A healthy spiritual life assumes engagement, rather than escape; an interest in the life of the world instead of spiritual sentimentality or being caught up in illusions.
4. We are seeking a spiritual practice with roots in ancient ways and useful in modern life.
5. We need a spirituality that is both solid and resilient.
6. Our spiritual life serves us best when we understand that it is to evolve over time. What serves us when we are 11 differs from when we are 18 and still again from when we are 35 or 60. A fertile evolution unfolds out of forms of spiritual life that are complex, rich, and paradoxical. They continue to grow as we increase our self-awareness, insight, and in response to changing circumstances.
7. It requires efficiency if it is to serve modern daily life.
8. It requires attention and time if it is to serve modern daily life.
9. Our spiritual life and discipline is to be based on an integrated system, a pattern, rather than series of random practices. We are to live our spiritual life by Rule, not rules.
10. It is possible for the average church member to become competent and proficient in spiritual practices.
11. We must decide to base our spiritual life on persistence, courage, and competence, rather than on feelings—whether we feel like praying or not. A useful and faithful spiritual life requires critical reasoning and intelligences. We need to intentionally turn away from spiritual fads and fast food.
12. The parish church's primary task is the spiritual formation of its people.

Used with permission. *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*, Michelle Heyne, Ascension Press, 2011

In Your Holy Spirit
Spiritual Map



Weekly Practice: Holy Eucharist

Being present for the Holy Eucharist at least once a week.

Daily Practice: The Daily Prayers of the Church

Saying the Daily Office in some form each day.

Reflection

Identifying and maintaining ways of being reflective, and gaining perspective, that works for you. Creating space for stillness and silence.

Parish Community

Participating in the parish community in some manner. This is a community where our differences can be expressed and will be accepted; in which we can fight with those we love without fearing the loss of the relationship.

Serve

To the extent we have given ourselves to awe and adoration, our service in daily life—with friends, family, at work, in civic life, and in all the places and circumstances we find ourselves—our service will flow organically from that awe and adoration.

Much of the above comes from the *In Your Holy Spirit* books of Fr. Robert Gallagher and Michelle Heyne. Ascension Press, 2011; Gallagher's *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, and the various works of Martin Thornton.

Disciplined ways of reflecting [“Listen to your life”]

Grounding/centering yourself so you can reflect. The spiritual practice of “pondering” and seeking God’s presence in the people, circumstances and things of life. Practices that connect daily life to God.

5. Ways that work for me

I don’t have ways
that work for me

1

2

3

4

5

I have ways that are
effective for me

In what ways do I want to experiment with or change this practice?

Participating in the parish community

6. The community I seek is one in which people are free to be themselves; to speak and listen fully and authentically. In which differences are accepted (we can fight with those we love). In which we can make decisions and solve the problems we face.

I don’t want church
to be that way

1

2

3

4

5

It is what I seek;
and more

7. Connection with people

I don’t know
anyone well

1

2

3

4

5

I know a number of
people and have a few
friends in the parish

8. Participation in parish social life

Not at all

1

2

3

4

5

I participate
regularly and
frequently

In what ways do I want to experiment with or change this practice?

The process of spiritual growth

9. Foundations

I have a poor foundation in the spiritual practices of the church

1

2

3

4

5

I have a strong foundation in the spiritual practices of the church

10. Experiment

I don't know how or feel confident enough to experiment with spiritual practices

1

2

3

4

5

I have a sense of how to innovate & experiment with spiritual practices.

In what ways do I want to experiment with or change this?

Service

11. In Daily Life

I don't have a clear understanding of how I serve in my daily life

1

2

3

4

5

I am very clear about serving in daily life

In what ways do I want to experiment with or change this?

From:

In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice, Robert A. Gallagher, published by Ascension Press, 2011 and *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life* Michelle Heyne, published by Ascension Press, 2011

Worksheet #2

Current Practices

Practices to Explore and Experiment With

How I am renewed emotionally & physically		
Participation in the Holy Eucharist		
Participation in the Daily Office		
Personal Devotions		
Study of Scripture, spiritual life, theology, etc.		
Being equipped for Christian action		
Other		

© Robert A. Gallagher, 2001

Worksheet #3 – Christian Life Model

Make notes on your current practice in each area. Note any intention about experimenting or changing at the end of each section.

A. WORSHIP: *Continue ... in the breaking of the bread and the prayers.*

1. Holy Eucharist – Participation on all Sundays and Major Holy Days
2. Daily Office - which Office? When? How? With whom?
3. Personal Devotions – Intercession and/or recollection and/or meditation and/or ...
4. Spiritual Reading
5. Other

In what ways do I want to experiment with or change these practices?

B. DOCTRINE: *Continue in the apostle's teaching and fellowship*

Connecting yourself with what has authority in the Christian Life. Increasing your ability to relate those sources of authority to your decision-making; understanding how to use Scripture – Tradition – Reason as you reflect on your life and as a backdrop in discernment and decision making.

1. Scripture – doing lectio divina and/or study. Consider relating this to use of the Daily Office
2. Christian doctrine, church history, ethics
3. Other

In what ways do I want to experiment with or change these practices?

C. ACTION: *To represent Christ and his church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be*

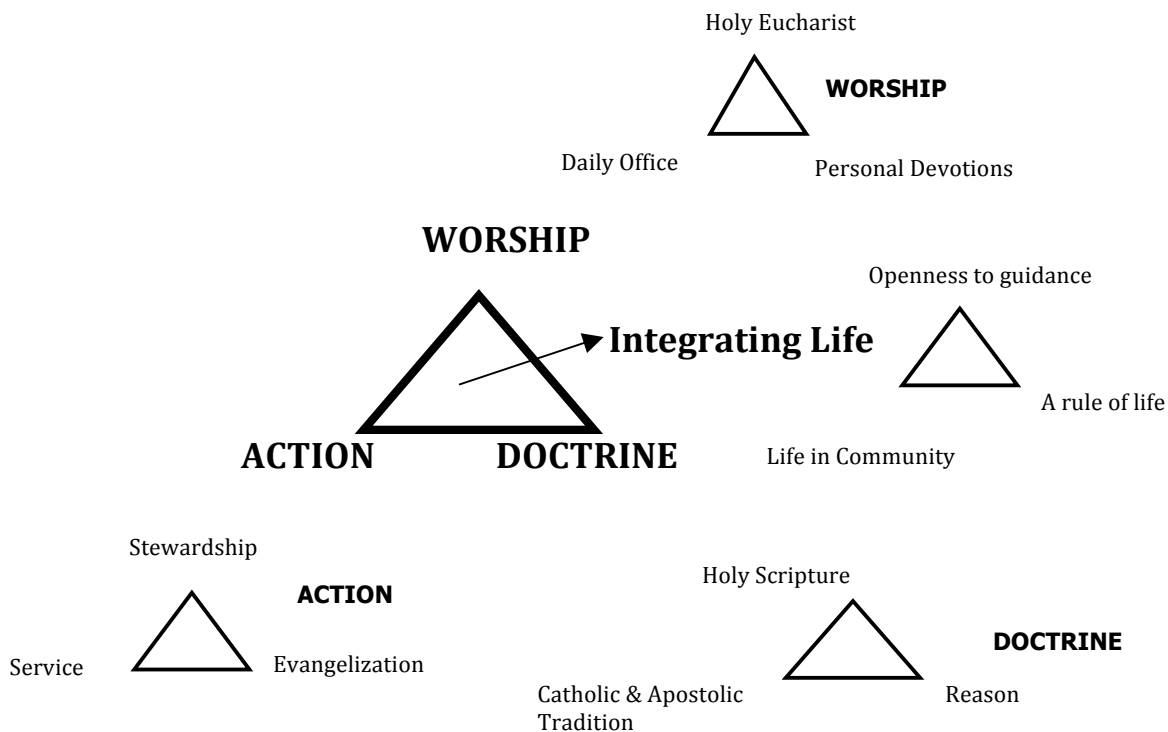
Describe your responsibilities and opportunities for service, evangelization and stewardship in the various areas of your life.

1. Family

2. Friends
3. Work
4. Community – Neighborhood – as a citizen
5. Church
6. Self

In what ways do I want to experiment with or change these practices?

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE MODEL



NOTE: When used as an organizational model for the parish church The “Integrating Life” triangle becomes “oversight” and it’s three elements are spirituality, leadership, and community.

Christian Life Model - Copyright Robert A. Gallagher 1984, 2006. Also see chapter 2 in *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, R. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008

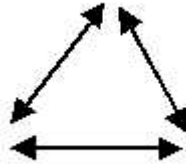
Threefold Rule of Prayer

Continue in the breaking of the bread and the prayers
BCP p.304

HOLY EUCHARIST
The Gifts of God for the people of God, BCP p. 364

DAILY OFFICE

*Day by day we bless you; We praise
your name forever, BCP p. 98*



PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

*That in all the cares and occupations of our life we may
not forget you, but may remember, BCP p.100*

Our worship tradition as Episcopalians is based on a three-part structure. Michael Ramsey, the one-hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury, referred to it as the “Benedictine triangle.” Martin Thornton called it the “Catholic Threefold Rule of Prayer.” I have found myself referring to it as the “Prayer Book Way of Prayer.” The three elements, Eucharist, Daily Office, and Personal Devotions, comprise the fundamentals of a disciplined Christian spirituality in the Anglican tradition.

The use of this pattern can help individuals and parishes move away from the attempt to base our prayer life on a self-made, unintegrated list of “rules” toward an integrated Rule grounded in *The Book of Common Prayer*. It is as a parish, as a local expression of the Body of Christ, that we may fully participate in and offer this threefold pattern. As individuals we will at times participate in this pattern, carrying others in prayer. At other times we will be carried.

The active relationship among *Eucharist/Daily Office/Personal Devotions* can be seen in how the Office is deepened and enriched by a person’s personal devotions, how all three influence one another, and how the Office and personal devotions are focused and completed in the Eucharist. It’s common for parish leaders to think about improving something by focusing on the thing itself. So, if we want to improve the parish’s celebration of the Eucharist we might train those assisting at the altar to carry themselves with more grace and dignity, to hold their hands folded in front of the belly, and so on. Also, we might train the congregation for its participation. Both are worth doing and are likely to result in improvement. What we often miss is how dramatically our Eucharistic celebration is improved when a critical mass or even a core of those gathered has said the Office, in some form, that week and engaged in a way of personal devotions that nurtures and possibly stretches them.

What we bring to the Eucharist has a great impact on what happens in the Eucharist. This is a systems view of what happens in the Eucharist and of the process of liturgical renewal. Thornton notes the same reality, “Eucharist – Office – private prayer forms one whole balanced organic life,” and “private prayer is absolutely dependent on the Office and the Eucharist.”

Evelyn Underhill wrote of the role of Office and Eucharist:

The peculiarity of the Anglican tradition is the equal emphasis which it gives to the Divine Office and the Eucharist; that is to say, to Biblical and to Sacramental worship. Where this balance is disturbed, its special character is lost. ...It is, I believe, by the balanced and instructed development of these two great instruments of Christian worship—carrying them forward without deflection

from their supernatural orientation, yet keeping them flexible to the changing spiritual needs and spiritual insights of the world—that the Anglican Communion will best fulfill its liturgical office within the Body of Christ. Here support and stimulus is given to the Godward life of the individual, while the solemn objectivity of true Catholic worship is preserved. (*Worship* by Evelyn Underhill, 1936, pp.335-336)

Underhill refers to the pattern we see in *The Book of Common Prayer*. About two-thirds of the book is taken up with the Eucharist, the Office, and materials to support those acts of worship (lectionaries, the Psalms). *The Book of Common Prayer* isn't a book of personal devotions, but its spirituality does assume that the Christian will find ways of personal devotion that are appropriate to their own personality and growth in love. The "equal emphasis" that she writes of isn't the distortion that many Anglicans fell into of making use of the Office as an alternative to the Eucharist on Sundays. She's affirming a balance that is more to be seen in a parish that celebrates the Holy Eucharist each Sunday as its primary expression of worship and offers Morning, Noonday or Evening Prayer on all, or most, of the other days of the week.

Above from *Fill all Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008.

More on the Threefold Rule of Prayer

“The prayer and life of each member is wholly dependent on the health of the total organism” “Eucharist – Office – private prayer forms one whole balanced organic life” and “private prayer is absolutely dependent on the Office and the Eucharist” Martin Thornton

	Eucharist	Daily Office: The Daily Prayers of the Church John MacQuarrie – “built chiefly out of the psalms, the scriptures and the prayers of the Church”	Personal Devotions Thornton sees three forms -increasing our knowledge, love & communion with God (mental prayer) -saying our prayers – petition, intercession, etc. (colloquy) -momentary acts of prayer throughout the day; practicing the presence of God (recollection)
Martin Thornton <i>Christian Proficiency</i>	“Living heart of the Body of Christ” ”Centered on our Lord Jesus Christ”	“Its continual beat or pulse” “objectively ‘give’ to God Almighty”	“circulation of the blood which gives life and strength to its several members” “inspired by the Holy Spirit” “that prayer done physically alone, according to ones unique gifts, personality and temperament”
John MacQuarrie	“The Eucharist sums up in itself Christian worship ..It seems to include everything. It combines Word and Sacrament; its appeal is to spirit and to sense ...; it is communion with God and communion with man Gathers up in itself the meaning of the church; its whole action implies and sets forth our mutual interdependence in the Body of Christ; it unites us with the Church of the past ...; an anticipation of the heavenly banquet.” In <i>Paths in Spirituality</i>	“...a way by which we keep ourselves in constant awareness of the divine order; an order of love and justice which embraces and underlies all order “The cantus firmus is the recurring rhythmic pattern which serves as the basis for the music, giving it a unity and consistency. ...it is the recurring cycle of prayer and communing with God which gives, as it were, the dominant ‘set’ to life. But over that cantus firmus all kinds of distinct melodies may be heard interweaving in a complex texture” “...the offices keep us in touch with the whole church. They do not impede the individual’s spiritual growth, but both nourish it and supply a standard by which it is to be judged” “..we need immersion too in Christian truth if we are rightly to interpret life and culture” In <i>Paths in Spirituality</i>	“..the modes and times of prayer, and the balance of prayer and action, are matters which each has to work out for himself.The aim of all is the vision of God and communion with God – or rather, we should say an ever-deepening vision and communion, for we have seen that the Christian pilgrimage does not come to an end but always keeps its dynamic character. We would agree with St. Gregory of Nyssa: “The perfect life is the one whose progress into perfection is not limited by any boundary.’ And he gave a very good reason for this teaching: God is inexhaustible, and there can be no end to our participation and exploration in him.” <i>Principles of Christian Theology</i>

Evelyn Underhill	<p>“For the fully Christian life is a Eucharistic life: that is, a natural life conformed to the pattern of Jesus, given in its wholeness to God, laid on His altar as a sacrifice of love, and consecrated, transformed by His inpouring life, to be used to give life and food to other souls.”</p> <p><i>The Mystery of Sacrifice: A Meditation on the Liturgy</i></p>	<p>“The real significance of the Divine Office is that in its recitation the individual or group enters the ancient cycle of prayer, by which day by day and hour by hour the church in the name of all creation adores and implores the eternal God” Evelyn Underhill In <i>Paths in Spirituality</i>, MacQuarrie</p>	<p>“The touch of God upon the soul, which is the preventive cause of all worship, is received by us as we are: creatures of sense and spirit, at various stages of enlightenment and growth. Our response to it is and must be conditioned by our here and now human situation; and by our particular education, capacities and temperament. We use what we have, and realize what we can; and since no two souls process an identical equipment, this is the general reason for the various kinds and degrees of prayer ...” <i>Worship</i></p>
Kenneth Leech	<p>“We share the Eucharist in order to be able to share the world. God feed us so we can help to recreate the world. It is the vision of a recreated, transformed world which lies behind – and beyond – the sometime elaborate ritual which has come to surround the celebration of the Eucharist .. candles, incense, brightly colored vestments, bells ...” <i>True Prayer</i></p>	<p>“The value of the Office is its objectivity. It is a means by which we pray with the whole church, uniting our prayer with that of millions of other Christians living and dead. This is true whether one is alone or in a group, for the Office is essentially a corporate act. It is objective too in that it does not depend on our feelings, but gives our prayer life a regularity and a disciplined framework.” <i>True Prayer</i></p>	<p>“...prayer must involve the unifying of the personality, the integration of mind and heart into one center.... Without self discovery there can be no further progress. ‘In order to find God whom we can only find in and through the depths of our own soul, we must first find ourselves.’ Without self-knowledge our love remains superficial.” <i>Soul</i></p>

Shaping Your Spiritual Discipline

A Renewal Pathway

Our pathway is in response to, and in cooperation with, God's love and presence. God loves us and would bring us into the very life of God.

Spiritual discipline is directed toward full and real human growth. The end is a human being fully alive. It's not about becoming "religious"; it's about becoming human. God isn't particularly interested in us becoming a religious person, but in us becoming a whole person. The way to that life, to our own selves, is by participation in God's life—which is to say by prayer and in community with others.

Another way of stating the objective is that we seek to live in Christ and for Christ to live in us. It's what has been called holy worldliness and habitual recollection. We seek maturity in Christ, to live as mature Christians in daily life.

Maturity is marked by an increased consistency of personality in which the person is brought into harmony with self, others and God. There are three aspects of this harmony I'd highlight - 1) Remembering who we are in Christ. We are baptized members of the Body of Christ; we are instruments of God's love, 2) Emotional stability and intelligence, and 3) Being the unique, odd person we are.

Maturity in Christ is not a state of being that once arrived at just continues on; but a state of being requiring the humility of living within the Body of Christ with a dependence on life in community. The Renewal - Apostolate Cycle continues at all stages of Christian maturity.

This maturity is the result of living within the Body of Christ; living in its rhythms, being fed by its sacraments and the organic life of the Body. Christian maturity is the product of persistence in living a disciplined response to God's love. Two patterns of thought that have confused many people in their journey are a negative stance toward creation and an excessive spiritualizing of the journey. The one leads to a faith that is largely about rules and judgment, the other to a faith that is disconnected from real life.

The pathway into maturity will be shaped as we take into account:

- The tradition of the church - what we as the People of God have learned about the process of sanctification
- Differences in personality - while all may need certain common foods to nurture us, we will also be fed by taking into account our own particular needs
- The culture and age we live in - Some ages or cultures carry us more than others; some require more self-consciousness, responsibility and discipline.

A Pattern

I believe that we live in an age in which the Christian life is not automatically reinforced by our culture. Some Christians have found that freeing, others see it as a loss.

It does place the responsibility for personal development on the individual. Episcopal spirituality would seem especially appropriate for such a time. Our emphasis on adult and responsible faith is a good match for the times.

A useful pattern of spiritual discipline might look something like this.

1. **Eucharist and Daily Office**

This is the source of our frequent and regular participation in the rhythms of the Body of Christ – Eucharist once per week. Daily Office with psalm, reading and the prayers on 3 or 4 days of the week; some more limited participation in the Office on the other days.

2. **Disciplined ways of reflecting**

We need ways of reflecting that allow us: a) to see our experience in relationship to who we are as baptized members of the Body; b) to learn what advances and what hinders our development; c) to draw learnings from our reflection on experience; and d) to act on those learnings with the behaviors of new life.

Three specific disciplines that may help are:

- Prayer that brings the stuff of our life into conscious relationship with Jesus Christ, in a manner that allows us to be reflective about our life, e.g., meditation, *lectio divina*
- Spiritual guidance from other Christians. That can be accomplished in a variety of ways – a formal spiritual director relationship, working with another person in a peer spiritual friendship; it might be one-on-one or in a group; it could be a meeting of one hour or yearly retreat at a monastic house.
- Prayer that develops our capacity for stillness and silence. If we are to become more reflective about our experience we need to increase our ability to listen to God, others, and ourselves.

3. **Other disciplines useful for you**

It may be that nothing else is needed beyond the core pattern of Eucharist, Office and disciplined, reflective prayer.

There are all sorts of devotions that might enhance and supplement the core.

Experiment

Experimentation is the way to find the pattern that best serves you at this time in your life, in your current state of maturity. The process can be described as – experiment, reflect on, and learn. A resource for increasing our ability to learn from experience is experiential training with groups such as Leadership Training Institute and National Training Labs.

For some of us it is a new idea that we are responsible for our own spiritual life; especially with the thought that we actually may need to change our behavior and values as part of that responsibility. On the journey into maturity we will find ourselves needing different things at different times --- at one point spiritual guidance that is more a form of direction and coaching, at another time guidance that is more suggestion and encouragement; there may be times of affective forms of prayer and times that are more meditative; and there are likely to be times of acceptance more than challenge and others of confrontation more than support.

Copyright Robert A. Gallagher, 2004, 2007 Also see -- *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008

Rule of Life

The purpose of the Rule of Life is to strengthen our abiding in Christ by bringing rhythm, discipline, and order to our discipleship. The Rule helps us offer the whole of ourselves to God each day, and keeps us open to God's love and will for us.

David Vryhof, Society of St. John the Evangelist

The idea of having a Rule of Life appears in a number of Christian traditions—evangelical groups, Roman Catholics, Lutherans and others. The Episcopal Church may have made most use of it in relation to its understanding of how laity and clergy share a common life in Christ.

A Rule of Life is the means by which individuals establish an intentional *pattern* of spiritual discipline. The idea is that a Rule of Life will be robust enough to sustain your spiritual life over time, but flexible enough to be reflected on, revised, and deepened. You should feel some stretch, but not excessive burden. You should be able to follow the Rule in the ordinary circumstances of your life.

We might focus our “Rule” in one of two basic ways.

1. A Rule of Life. This might be shaped around something like the Renewal - Apostolate Cycle. This cycle is a way of explaining how we move from attention to Renewal in our baptismal life and purpose (e.g., through worship, study, holy reading) to Apostolate in work, family & friends, civic life and church (participation in the work of Christ through the people and circumstances of our daily lives). Or we might base a Rule on taking into account all the various aspects of our life, e.g., relationship with God, self, others, and creation. In a Rule of Life we are seeking a balance and rhythm in life that grounds our life in the life of Holy Trinity.

2. A Rule of Prayer. In this case we focus our attention on our discipline and rhythm around the central elements of prayer life, e.g., Eucharist, Daily Office, and Personal Devotions. A Rule of Prayer may, of course, be part of a broader Rule of Life.

Some people find it useful to write out their Rule, while others want to base their Rule on an association with a religious community

Martin Thornton on the Meaning of “Rule” This is based on his *Christian Proficiency*, 1959

Rule is the literal translation of the Latin word *regula*—rule, pattern, model, example—from which we derive “regular” as both noun and adjective. Both words are technical terms of ascetical theology...their meaning is not quite the same as that of common use. Rule, like pattern, model, or system, is an essentially *singular* word, in some ways directly opposite to a list of “rules,” and

a “regular” Christian is one who “lives to rule.” ...a regular soldier in the regular arm—not so much one who keeps a lot of rules or who is strictly disciplined, but an efficient full-time professional. If we may stretch the analogy a little, a regular layman is one who embraces the Christian life as opposed to the keen “draftee” who goes to Church fairly often and tries to say his prayers now and again. It implies status more than quality, efficiency more than keenness or brilliance; volunteers and conscripts *might* prove to be braver and more zealous than regular soldiers but they are unlikely to be more generally proficient. So it must be admitted that rule is not absolutely essential to creative and progressive Christian life. There is a minority, I think a very small one, of those temperamentally unsuited to embrace rule—but in general to be a regular and to be a proficient comes to much the same thing.”

Rule is “embraced” not “promised.” It would be Pharisaical, legalistic and quite unChristian solemnly to promise to “keep” a rule; ... A Christian regular is one who chooses to undertake his common obligations and duties, and to develop his personal spirituality, by acknowledging, accepting or “embracing” some total scheme, system, pattern or “rule” of prayer.

Breach of rule is not sin. ...a breach of rule—technically a “fault”—is strictly amoral; thus the *cause* of a fault might be sinful, negative, or virtuous. If a man misses Church when his rule prescribes it, by plain downright laziness, then he has committed both a fault and a sin, but his sin is not “rule-breaking”—there is no such thing—but sloth.

Rule is, and must always remain variable. The idea persists that once you have embraced rule you must “stick it out” at all costs for ever! Rule may be *relaxed*, as for example during holidays or in sickness, or it may be *modified*, if say, work or charitable duties become temporarily overwhelming...Rule is also variable—necessarily so—according to our progress through life, and as we advance, or as our circumstances change, it will probably need revision every two or three years.

Rule should be, or should soon become, unobtrusive. It should “fit,” and the soul should “grow into it,” so that by habitual use prayer fully becomes a solidly established part of life and personality—and this is the real meaning of the word regular: a Christian who has no need to worry over much about duty, or about what he ought to do next, because an orderly integrated prayer-life has become part of himself.

A good personal Rule should demand creative discipline without burden. ...Quite simply rule should be neither too difficult nor too easy; but here temperament should be considered...In general, therefore, I think rule should be such that it is invariably kept without strain but *occasionally* makes a definite demand on the will. It should normally be kept with no fault occasionally, a few faults frequently, and if it goes all to pieces very rarely there is little to worry about.

From *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*, Michelle Heyne, Ascension Press, 2011

“We are aware that one impediment to a disciplined spiritual life is the soul-deadening tendency some of us have to focus obsessively on the rules and on what we “should” do, as well as our abiding suspicion that the only really valid expressions of the holy involve a lot of boredom, suffering, and priggishness. What a shock we don’t jump right in!

A rule-based approach to the spiritual life may tend to perpetuate a sense of false duality, rather than supporting us in engaging the complex polarities to be managed. Many points of conflict around significant life issues will remain sources of tension and are not amendable to a particular “solution” or to otherwise being resolved. The classic example of a polarity is breathing: we take oxygen in when we inhale, and we release carbon dioxide when we exhale. Both are necessary functions and each relies on the other.

Getting stuck in one end of the cycle (e.g., breathing out without then breathing in) means death. No one would ever talk about “needing to resolve the problem of whether to breathe in or out,” but we may be perfectly comfortable talking about whether we connect to the tradition *or* we innovate, whether we engage stability *or* change, and whether we join the church *or* hold onto our personal spiritual values.

Just as it is possible to become too rigid and dogmatic about what we’re “supposed to do,” it is possible to over-react to perceived pressure from the rules or the “shoulds,” rejecting out of hand the wisdom of tradition, the authority of community, or the system of spiritual discipline.

Excessive concern about losing our identity may prevent us from consciously committing to anything bigger than ourselves, yet we will, in innumerable ways, spend our whole lives working out the complexities of belonging, of identity, of connection. Who am I? What will this cost me? What is my duty to others? Will they want what I have to offer? What can I expect from them? How much will they accept from me?

The process of spiritual maturation involves openness to exactly those complexities and acceptance that “resolution,” if it ever comes, is part of our eternal, not our temporal, inheritance.”