

The Threefold Rule of Prayer – Compassionate and Responsible Thinking

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.” It is the Prayer Book Pattern. The three elements, Eucharist, Daily Office, and Reflection/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.

Holy Eucharist

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

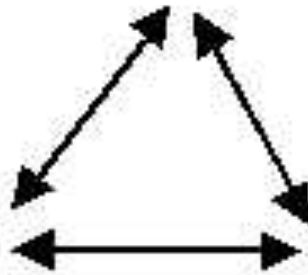
For the fully Christian life is a Eucharistic life: that is, a natural life conformed to the pattern of Jesus, given in its wholeness to God, laid on His altar as a sacrifice of love, and consecrated, transformed by His inpouring life, to be used to give life and food to other souls.

-The Mystery of Sacrifice: A Meditation on the Liturgy; Evelyn Underhill

Daily Office

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

...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 ...it is the recurring cycle of prayer and communing with God which gives, as it were, the dominant ‘set’ to life...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 - Paths in Spirituality, John Macquarrie



Reflection/Personal Devotions

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

...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. - Soul Friend; Kenneth Leech

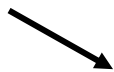
Forms of Reflection –
personal devotion

Reflection: Times of consideration; occasions of pondering, musing, and contemplation. Seeking a sense of perspective and direction.

Self-examination & confession: Routine times when we can in silence engage in a systematic reflection on our sin and God’s mercy.

Spiritual reading: The Scriptures or writers on the spiritual life. Slow, reflective reading, possibly a form of Lectio Divina.

Other: Centering prayer, meditation, recollection, intercession, petition, stations of the cross, going on retreat, etc. whether done on our own or with others



Compassionate and responsible reflection: Our reflection may flow into our intercessions. John Macquarrie wrote, “Prayer is a thinking that takes us out of ourselves ...enables us to see things in perspective, to attain the vision of them in their unity and interrelatedness.” ..Regarding compassionate thinking – “In prayer we go out from ourselves, we stand alongside the other, we try to share his feelings and aspirations. .. must lead to the increase in sympathy and the upbuilding of community.” And regarding responsible thinking – “Responsibility to the neighbor ...take into account the needs and claims of the neighbor ..Prayer is our responsible thinking in the presence of God” .. He quotes Bernard Haring, “Only prayer can sensitize us to the apostolic possibilities of the present situation.” (in *Paths in Spirituality*)