

## CHAPTER IX FORMING A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Though the word "discipline" sometimes has unpleasant connotations from childhood experiences of discipline, it merely indicates a way of learning and comes from the same root word as "disciple" in Latin. One who practices a discipline is a disciple. If our religion were a philosophy or theology we could get by merely with an intellectual discipline. However, it has to do with relationship with God, so discipline becomes our practice of that relationship. It also has to do with our life-style and the nature of our persons, so discipline has to do how we live and what we are.

A concern for this in Christianity is as old as the early church. Jesus and his disciples practiced the daily prayer and recited the Shema ( Deut. 6:4-9) characteristic of Jewish piety. Jesus also taught his disciples a special prayer (Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4) and we know that this came to be prayed daily in the first century church. One of the oldest expressions of the discipline of a Christian community can be found in the Gospel of Matthew which will be discussed below.

All through history, Christian groups have formulated disciplines to guide their expression of faith and life. Today, with a less authoritarian approach to religion and with recognition of psychological individuality and individual needs, one hears of *foundational elements* in a discipline (what is necessary for the spiritual life of all Christians), elements belonging to *special traditions* (such as the orders within the Roman Church and the denominations within the Protestant Church), and elements which are *necessary for the life and needs of the individual*. Since the individual is constantly growing and changing and since life-needs change, a discipline may not always remain the same. One needs also to determine priorities and "contextual limits": what is essential to be practiced and how can one practice it within the limits of one's time and life context. *Context* is significant not only for determining priorities and limits, but the contexts in which we live and minister pose their particular issues for the formation of the Christian.

The relationship of one's discipline to "righteousness" and "guilt" needs to be clarified. Often we turn discipline into a way of proving ourselves and establishing righteousness through accomplishment or, if we fail, the discipline soon becomes a constant source of frustration and guilt. Some avoid developing a discipline for these reasons. It seems to me that one should be clear from the beginning that one can't be righteous through one's discipline nor should it be a heavy burden whose impossibility leads only to frustration and ultimately to desertion of the discipline. Righteousness is God's gift. We seek to grow to be what we are in God, a gift we shall never fully realize in this life. Thus no discipline can eliminate the constant need for grace. Discipline should only be understood as providing a way of helping one's life to move in the right direction, towards the realization of God's gifts. One should expect to fail, for a discipline helps one towards becoming what in actuality one is not yet. Failure or success are not the issues. In fact one should recognize that the vehicle for growth is our humanity which will always remain human. The issue is, what can one do to facilitate Christian formation and to remain open to God's grace and forming power. Seeking to become responsible in our growth is the gift we give back to God, and our formation as Christians is so that God's gifts and life may become enfolded in us and God's purposes expressed through us. It should be a joyful experience, with a sense of humor about our limitations, for God's gifts tell us not to take our lives with deadly seriousness. Christian community is a necessary context to the disciplined practice of one's faith and life.

## Spiritual Discipline in the New Testament

To argue the place of communal and individual spiritual discipline in church life from the New Testament is not an easy task. The worship and devotional practices of the early church are not often explicitly discussed and we need to rely on brief references, undeveloped admonitions, or quotations from liturgical materials often made for other purposes. The worship materials in Revelation, the Lukan Infancy Narrative, the organization of the Gospel of John around religious festivals, and the various forms of the Eucharistic words of Jesus and the Lord's Prayer, support the role of liturgical practice in the formation of the New Testament. Form criticism views the worship of the early Christian communities as one of the contexts within which the Gospel tradition assumed its form.

The Gospel of Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount gives us perhaps the best insight into the discipline of a Christian community, but it needs to be dated in the last quarter of the first century. As modern scholarship indicates, this Christian community was semi-monastic and seems to have lived a life similar to that of the Jerusalem Church and the Qumran Community of the Essenes.<sup>439</sup> In contrast to the Pauline churches which were synagogal in structure, and whose members spent much of their time outside their religious community, these people seem to have spent much of their life within their community, lived by its principles and were disciplined by it when in error (18:15-20).

For the Matthaean Community Christian life is a call to discipleship, to obedience of Jesus' commandments (28:16-20). It is a call to a righteousness greater than the Scribes and Pharisees (5:17-20), governing not only outward action but inward attitude and feelings (5:21-30); a call to perfection as our heavenly Father is perfect (5:48). Jesus' commands do not do away with the Old Testament Law, but fulfill it and righteousness should be greater than that of scribes and Pharisees (5:17-20), whose practice of the Law is criticised, but not their teachings (23:2-3). Jesus' teachings, as his baptism (3:15), were to fulfill all righteousness. He is the true Scribe, the true teacher about the Law and his Father, whose yoke his disciples are to accept (11:25-30). They are to build their lives on his words (7:24-27), teaching others all that he has commanded (28:20). Jesus is the new Moses, bringing a new law on a mountain, as did Moses. God gave all authority to Jesus (28:18) and Jesus gave special authority to Peter (16:17-20).<sup>440</sup>

The particular form which the author of Matthew gives to the sayings and message of Jesus is, of course, at times transcended by the tradition about Jesus which he preserves. Yet it is important to recognize the particular imprint the author and his community have left upon the Jesus tradition and the way this favorite Gospel of the Church has influenced Christianity through the ages.

It is helpful to review this three chapter discipline, Matthew 5-7, for although one might disagree with particulars, its comprehensive nature should be noticed as a contribution to reflecting upon what is needed in a contemporary discipline. It begins with the Beatitudes which are spiritualized in Matthew.<sup>441</sup> They contain the foundational definition of the character which God blesses. They fulfill a role equivalent to the ten commandments, though there are nine and two are about persecution. Several of the Beatitudes reflect Old Testament passages, but their message seems clear: God blesses those who depend upon God (are

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<sup>439</sup>. Some gave up private property (19:16-30) and some were celibate (19:10-12). It is only in Matthew that poverty and celibacy are placed side by side. In fact, it is only here in the Gospels that there is a saying of Jesus about celibacy, a saying that Paul is not aware of in his discussion of celibacy in I Cor. 7.

<sup>440</sup>. This passage on Jesus giving a special authority to Peter exists only in the Gospel of Matthew. It probably means that Peter and his successors had a special authority, but only for this religious community.

<sup>441</sup>. In Luke 6:20-26 they deal with the suffering, poor and impoverished and are opposed to "woes" upon the oppressors.

poor in spirit, meekly depend on God, hunger for God's righteousness) and conduct themselves according to God's nature (as merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers).

The life style of the community is central to its discipline. It must function as salt and light within the world and maintain a righteousness greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees. This righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees because it is concerned for inner righteousness: do not be angry or lust; you are to be your truth so that oaths are not necessary and a simple yes or no suffices. It develops an ethic for behavior towards the abuser: do not resist one who is evil and love your enemies.

The first half of chapter six deals with the practice of piety, or righteousness (which is the literal meaning of the Greek word often translated here as piety), in terms of the three cardinal areas of Jewish piety: alms giving, prayer, and fasting. The key to the practice of these three is to do them as unto "your Father who is in heaven," and not merely before persons "in order to be seen by them." Thus life is to be lived in responsibility to God. Give alms only in secret, before God. Do not pray for public recognition, but "to your Father who is in secret," and "know that your Father knows what you need before you ask." Following the Lord's prayer, which is liturgically developed as a prayer regularly prayed within the community, there is reminder that God will forgive those who forgive. Regarding fasting, do not look dismal when doing it so that others may know, for fasting is something between you and God.

The second half of chapter six deals with singularity of commitment and perspective: lay up treasure in heaven, not on earth; your eye should be sound, as the lamp of the body; you can't serve two masters; seek first the kingdom and you will have other things and will not need to be anxious.

Chapter seven deals with various subjects somewhat in the same way that the household codes in the New Testament epistles end with a section that might best be called *varia*. "Judge not that you be not judged." "Do not give dogs what is holy...." "Ask, seek, knock, for your Father knows how to give good things." "Enter by the narrow gate...." "Beware of false prophets...." Not everyone who says, "Lord," will enter the Kingdom, but the one who "does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Chapter seven ends with the concluding parable of the houses built on rock and sand, an admonition to *hear* and *do* Jesus' words which the Matthaean community views as commandments (28:20).

### **Spiritual Discipline Within Judaism**

The Judaism of Jesus' day had inherited and developed a rich liturgical and devotional heritage. Besides the worship in the Temple and Synagogue, certain practices had become customary in the daily life of the devout Jew. The *Shema* was recited in the morning and evening and was the basic creed of Judaism in Jesus' time. This consisted of Deut. 6:4-9, to which was added Deut. 11:13-21 and the solemn self-declaration of God in Num. 15:41. The words "when you lie down and when you rise" appear in both of the portions of the *Shema* derived from Deuteronomy and probably influenced the times of its recitation. *Shema* means "hear" and is derived from Deut. 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." This practice was obligatory upon every male Jew from 12 years of age on up, but not upon women, children and slaves who did not have their time at their disposal. Rabbi Eliezer b. Hyrcanus (about 90 CE) said: "Who is an *am haaretz* (common person, i.e. unreligious)? He who does not recite the Shema in the morning and in the evening."<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>442</sup>. Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus, Studies in Biblical Theology* #6, second series, Naperville: Allenson, 1967, p. 69.

Besides reciting the *Shema* twice a day, the devout Jew prayed three times a day. The morning and evening hours of prayer coincided with the recitation of the *Shema*. The afternoon prayer at 3:00 PM was announced in Jerusalem by trumpets from the Temple and coincided with the daily afternoon sacrifice.<sup>443</sup> This hour of prayer, practiced even by Jews in the Diaspora, united all Jews outside of Jerusalem with the crowds that worshipped in the Temple at this hour. The material in the closing Hymn of the Manual of Discipline indicates that the Essenes did not observe this afternoon hour of prayer, perhaps partially in opposition to what they considered to be the impure sacrifices and priesthood in Jerusalem. The other periods of prayer were of special significance to the Essenes for their view of the Jerusalem priesthood as inauthentic had led them to substitute prayer for sacrifice until they could take over the Temple in the future.<sup>444</sup>

The prayers of those influenced by Pharisaic Judaism were primarily the *Tephilla*, i.e., "The Prayer", the Grand Benediction. This prayer, consisting of a string of Benedictions, came to be called "The Eighteen Benedictions". Portions of it probably were derived from the Temple ritual where groups of Pharisees represented Israel at the sacrifices. A nineteenth Benediction was added around the end of the first century "against heretics", mentioning by name the "Nazarenes", probably a reference to early Christianity. Moore indicates that it was used with some flexibility, sometimes the content of the middle 12 Benedictions being prayed, instead of said verbatim, and sometimes substitutions being made for them.<sup>445</sup> Personal prayers could also be inserted along with the Benedictions.

### **Prayer in the New Testament**

There are passages in the New Testament epistles which advocate prayer. The author of Ephesians, a letter perhaps sent to many churches, in the famous "armor of God" section, urges:

Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me ...<sup>446</sup>

In Colossians, at the end of the household code, Paul requests:

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving; and pray for us also ...<sup>447</sup>

Each New Testament letter, except Galatians, opens with prayer in the form of a Thanksgiving or a Benediction.<sup>448</sup> Though this is a stylistic feature of ancient letters, study of these passages indicate the way the prayers both take up the concerns of the letter and reflect the devotional life of the early church.

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443. Ibid., p. 69.

444. See discussion of the substitution of prayers and communal meals for sacrifice in Yigael Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*, New York: Oxford U. Press, 1962, pp. 198-201. See Lucetta Mowry, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early Church*, Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1962, for a discussion of the "Acts of Devotion" of the Qumran sect. Actually each sect of Judaism seems to have had its own discipline.

445. George Foote Moore, *Judaism In the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1946, Vol. 1, pp. 291-296.

446. Ephesians 6:14. Ephesians is often regarded as an encyclical, circulated amongst Pauline churches. The words "in Ephesus" are missing from several important ancient manuscripts.

447. Colossians 4:2-3.

448. The Benediction was a form of Jewish prayer, the form in which the daily prayers of Judaism were cast.

I Corinthians 14 gives insight into the worship life of the Corinthian community, including prayer "with the Spirit" and prayer "with the mind." The author of Revelation sees his communities as "priests to God"<sup>449</sup> whose worship and prayer joins that of the heavenly community.<sup>450</sup> In John 17 Jesus prays for his disciples in words that are really more those of the resurrected Christ, and the Johannine self-consciousness of Jesus is a metaphor of prayer.<sup>451</sup>

## Jesus and Prayer

There are about twenty New Testament references to Jesus praying in addition to other passages which contain teaching on prayer. In Jesus' prayers are included prayers of thanksgiving, intercession, table blessings, and those agonized through in the crisis moments of his life. A significant pattern in Jesus' praying is withdrawal for retreat and prayer in crisis and in relationship to significant actions: his baptism (Luke 3:21), the temptation experience (Luke 4:1-13 and parallels), after the press of many needing healing (Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16), before selection of the twelve (Luke 6:12), after the feeding of the 5,000 (Matt. 14:23), before asking his disciples who he is (Luke 9:19), before the transfiguration experience (Luke 9:28-29), in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:31-40 and parallels), Jesus' lament from the cross quoting Ps. 22:1 (Mk. 15:34, Matt. 27:46) and his surrender of his spirit to God in Lk. 23:46. These passages indicate the way prayer both informs and resources Jesus' actions, and that prayer and action are not antithetical.

It is hardly conceivable that Jesus would have neglected the twice daily recital of the *Shema*. He was certainly never accused of doing so, though he was accused of many other things. Two New Testament passages suggest his awareness of its centrality. One is Luke 10:25-28. A scribe asks Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus replies, "What is written in the Law? How do you read?" Joachim Jeremias suggests that the Greek for "read" should rather be translated "recite" on the basis of what may have been the original Aramaic.<sup>452</sup> The scribe replies with Deut. 6:5, a portion of the *Shema*, and Jesus approves. The second is Mark 12:28-34 where a scribe asks Jesus about the greatest commandment and he replies not only with Deut. 6:5, to love the Lord, but also includes the words of Deut. 6:4 which begin the *Shema*. The Temptation Story is also suggestive, where the Old Testament quotations Jesus uses with Satan are taken primarily from Deut. 6 and 8. The material from Deut. 6:13,16 is close both in proximity and content to the *Shema*, and casts the Temptation Story as a portrayal of Satan's appeal to Jesus for allegiance while Jesus appeals to material surrounding the *Shema* to express his allegiance to God.

There is no indication that Jesus rejected the disciplined prayer life of Judaism. There is evidence, however, that he approached it with a freedom uncharacteristic of the Pharisees and Essenes. The anxieties of Post-Exilic Judaism, born of the tragedies of national experience and the failure of the promises of God to be realized, created a deep seriousness regarding sin, purity, liturgical correctness, and complete obedience to the Torah. Jesus expresses a confidence of relationship with God which allowed him to treat the Torah with greater freedom than many Jewish contemporaries would have dared. In Luke 5:33 the Pharisees and their scribes say: "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink."

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449. Rev. 1:6.

450. Rev. 5:8-10

451. In John Jesus is conscious that he has come from his Father and is going back again. The use of the word "Father" in application to God multiplies on the lips of Jesus in John while it has limited use in the Synoptics. Thus Jesus' self-consciousness manifests the awareness of relationship with God which constitutes the essence of prayer and is really the application of his teaching about prayer in the Synoptics.

452. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

This charge is brought in the context of Jesus' feasting with tax collectors and could indicate that he missed an appointed hour of prayer because of the meal. It is the only accusation brought against Jesus regarding prayer, though there are other passages indicating that Jesus differed from his contemporaries in the observance of fasts. The comparable Markan passage (Mark 2:15-22) does not contain the comment about prayer, but only fasting. Perhaps the Lukan passage could be understood after the analogy of Jesus' treatment of the Sabbath. For Jesus the Sabbath was not a time to rigidly obey the detailed interpretations of Sabbath law, but the day above all days to do the work of God and indicate that God was still active (the point Jesus makes in the John 5 healing).<sup>453</sup> Jesus also indicated a humanitarian priority for the Sabbath when he commented that "The Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27)

The freedom of Jesus in regard to Jewish prayer is also illustrated by the prayer he gave his disciples not beginning with traditional liturgical formulas (using "Father" rather than "Our Father in heaven") and addressing God in the vernacular Aramaic ("*Abba*")<sup>454</sup> rather than Hebrew which was the language of the *Shema* and the *Tephilla*. The prayer in Judaism most similar to Jesus' prayer is the Aramaic *Kaddish* said at the conclusion of the Aramaic sermon in the Palestinian synagogue:

Exalted and hallowed be his great name  
in the world which he created according to his will.  
May he let his kingdom rule  
in your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime  
of the whole house of Israel, speedily and soon.  
And to this, say: amen.<sup>455</sup>

Jesus was not enslaved by the spiritual discipline of his time, but used it as the framework for practicing his relationship with God and clarifying the obligations this laid upon him.

The central passages dealing with Jesus' teaching on prayer are the collection of sayings in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:5-15, discussed above, and Luke 10:38 - 11:42, which includes the Lukan form of the Lord's Prayer.

Luke 10:38-42 is the story of Mary and Martha. Martha invited him to their home and busily set about the necessary hospitality. Mary her sister, in full view within what was probably a single room home, sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his teaching. Martha, frustrated that all the burdens had fallen upon her complained to Jesus, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" Jesus' reply is,

Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.

One must be careful in seeing this as a criticism of activity and responsibility for just prior to this story is the Parable of the Good Samaritan which describes Martha-like activity. Luke must have intended a balance in the arrangement of the materials from 10:25 through 11:13. Martha-like work had already been legitimized. Luke presents a Jesus on whom God's Spirit came to preach the good news to the poor, proclaim release to the

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<sup>453</sup>. John 5:17.

<sup>454</sup>. *Abba*, without a pronominal suffix, was the familiar form of address. This word appears in the New Testament in Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6, and its equivalent in Greek appears in the Lukan form of the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:2 and in I Peter 1:17.

<sup>455</sup>. Note the similarity of the *Kaddish* to the first two petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty the oppressed.<sup>456</sup> The importance of Mary's "contemplative" action would be developed in chapter 11. Thus we must be both Martha and Mary, as Teresa of Avila recognized in her *Interior Castle*.

The necessary nature of Mary's action is that relationship with what Jesus has to bring is needed for life and action, as for Jesus the relationship with the Father and the Spirit are foundational for his action. In Luke the Spirit is the source of Jesus' actions and prayer is his resource. Mary gives attention to Jesus' teachings, so Mary's action must be understood in more than a Christocentric way, as is made clear in chapter 11 where prayer is directed to the Father.

In chapter 11 Jesus' disciples, after watching him pray, ask him to teach them a prayer which characterizes their life and faith as John the Baptist taught his disciples. The followers of the Baptist had particular prayers that characterized them, as did the Pharisees and Essenes.

The term "Father", used by Jesus of God, is a central aspect of his teaching. Without the pronominal suffix (our, my, your) added to the word in Aramaic and Hebrew, it was a familiar form of address. Paul, our earliest witness to the life and teaching of Jesus, follows Jesus' use of the term "Father", citing it in the original Aramaic "*Abba*" (Gal. 4:6, Rom. 8:15). Though feminist theology may raise objections to the use of this male term, it is so strongly rooted in Jesus' teaching that for historical reasons I have difficulty giving it up. Others have difficulty with it because of their history with their own fathers. So it was with Martin Luther. To use "Parent" or "Creator" as a non-sexist substitute loses the feeling of intimate relationship which was part of Jesus' teaching about God as "Father". Moreover, Jesus transformed and softened the word "Father" in application to God in a feminine direction, describing the heavenly Father in terms close to "mothering".

A more extended treatment of the Lord's prayer will be given below. Here attention should be called to the two parables which follow it as a key to understanding what Jesus meant by "Father". The parables essentially fall into a category that one might call "how much more," even though this term appears only in the second. "How much more" parables draw an analogy between a human action, which may be limited and even selfish, and God's action. If humans know how to do such and such, then how much more will your heavenly Father, etc.. The first parable has to do with bothering a friend at midnight so that he will get up and give what is needed. The second has to do with human fathers knowing how to give good gifts, so - - how much more will your heavenly Father give. It is interesting that in the Matthaean parallel (7:11) God gives *good things* if you ask, seek, knock. In Luke it is different: "how much more will the heavenly Father give *the Holy Spirit* to those who ask him!"

The gift of the Spirit, in the language of Jewish theology contemporary to Jesus, is the gift of God's self. Thus God is addressed as Father because God gives Godself.

Now we know something about the one thing needful expressed in the action of Mary. It is because God gives Godself that all action must begin in the "action" of contemplation, of relating to the God who gives Godself. Luke is clear in Acts that the Jerusalem Church needed to wait for this gift before engaging in its mission.

Paul in Galatians 3-4 seems to reflect knowledge of this tradition which was later embodied in Luke. The fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham is the gift of God's Spirit (3:14). The receiving of this gift becomes possible in Christ, the single seed of Abraham, in whom the promise is fulfilled (3:16). The Spirit of the resurrected Christ then helps us to say "Abba, Father" in order that our being God's children be expressed and

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<sup>456</sup>. In the Nazareth synagogue Jesus used these statements from Isaiah to interpret his mission.

realized (4:6). Here the Spirit of the Son does what he is said to have done historically, in the Lukan passage, by teaching his disciples to pray.

### **Prayer - Simply**

In its simplest terms, prayer is the practice of relationship with God which is God's gift; it is taking time to be with God, reaffirming relationship, identifying with God's concerns, reminding ourselves of what God means to us, forming values and priorities, finding resources for life and action. Any relationship, both in its development and maintenance, takes time and if not given this it becomes stale, unreal, and no longer resources us. Even though God as our Father never gives up on us (the Parable of the Prodigal in Luke 15), yet we need to come home to our Father or, in terms of the story of Mary and Martha, recognize what is needful among life's pressures and demands.

Prayer is often judged by its *effectiveness*, i.e. what it can make to happen. This presumes that God is the only powerful factor in history and that God can make happen whatever God wishes. It sometimes assumes that God and life can be manipulated by pulling the right strings. It seems apparent that life is much more complex than this. If there were a simple one to one relationship between what God wishes and what occurs, then, I would assume, our world would be quite different. If it were possible to manipulate God and life according to often legitimate needs, I would presume that by now we would have found the ways to do this. There are various results to prayer, and some amazing things happen where we cannot but say, "God did this." But we all know that *all* life is not like that. We need to preserve an understanding of the complexity of life which was part of the world-understanding of New Testament times and best explains what we actually experience.

Basic to the New Testament message is the call to humans to make themselves *available* to God. It is in humanity, where the world comes to consciousness and response-ability, that God can bring to pass what God wishes. Thus in Lukan theology Mary, Jesus, and the early Church are presented as paradigms of those who seek to be response-able and available to God, so that God's Spirit can use them. In Lukan theology God's Spirit in persons is seen as the presence of the Kingdom. A primary purpose of prayer is then to make ourselves available to God. While ancients often thought that prayer was answered and became effective through natural and historical processes, it would seem that we must take seriously the human process as the vehicle for God's response to prayer and action.

There are times when one will sense directions and answers from God. When this happens, one will often know it. It is like an intuitive knowledge which we know but are not always clear as to how we know. There are also times when neither the directions of God nor God's responses to our needs and questions will be clear. This is just the way life is. It is part of the difficulty of communication with God, for we are strongly affected by what it is to be human and what it is to live within concrete historical contexts. One must keep in memory those times when the relationship was clear, and the responses of God seemed certain, to live through the many times when this is not the case. And it is always important to have some sense of a discernment process by which to evaluate what one thinks God is doing in one's life.

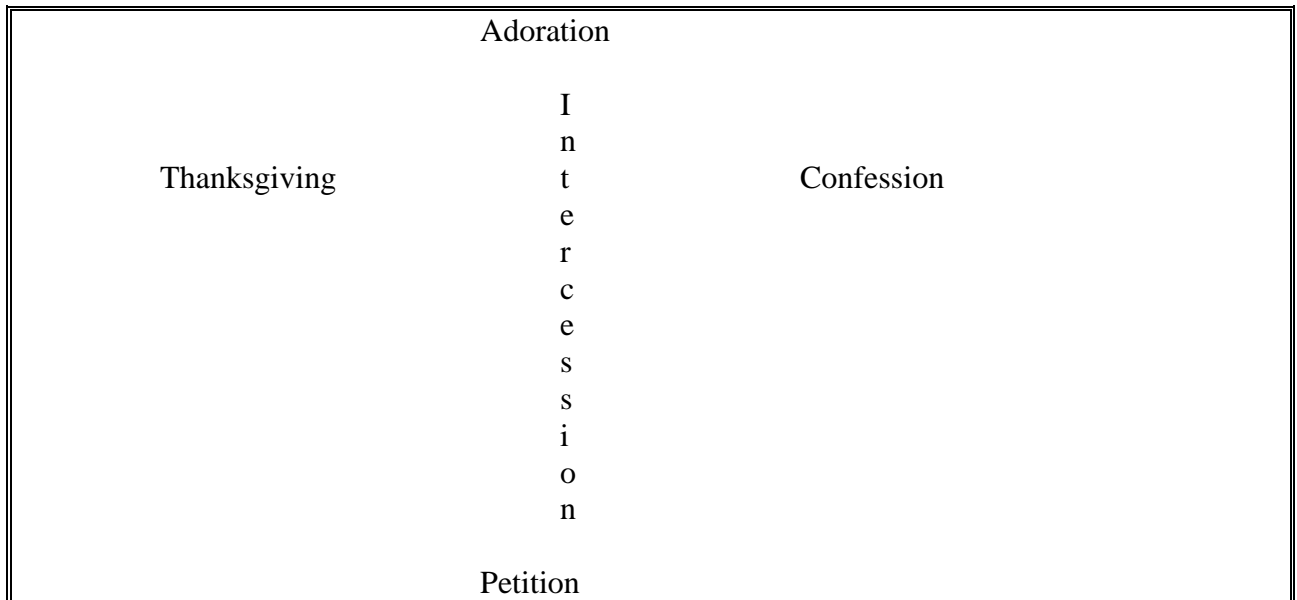
Though the above may sound rather intellectual and complex, this embodies my experience. For me it has been extremely important to see prayer as primarily and simply the practice of relationship with the God who has offered relationship. The reality of this relationship also offers an opportunity to work at my sensitivity and response-ability to God so that my life may become open to God's use. All techniques and varieties of devotional life and prayer are secondary to this. When I persist in prayer for those who have need, I do so not so much from the perspective that I may manipulate results (though that hope is always in the back of my mind), but rather because I need to live out my concerns (and anguish) with God and



make my life available for anything God may wish to do. When I interceed on behalf of others, I join God and Christ who are already deeply concerned and place at their disposal whatever difference may be effected by my availability for their purposes. It is not so much how I in my wisdom may inform God what to do or how I may change things, but in response to God's presence and relationship I can do no other than join their caring. All of the ramifications and dimensions of prayer grow from relationship, from "prayer - simply."

### Traditional Elements of Discipline

Over the centuries Christians have developed many prayers, some of which have borne the usage of the centuries and others which have served only to meet the needs of the moment. Certain types of prayer have been seen to be essential to a "well-rounded" prayer life. These types can be easily remembered in the form of the cross so that one may "pray the cross". It is not that these all should enter into every occasion of prayer, but each should have some place in one's praying.



Adoration = loving and worshiping God  
 Thanksgiving = appreciation  
 Confession = asking and receiving forgiveness  
 Intercession = praying for others  
 Petition = praying for ourselves

There is also what traditionally has been known as the three evangelical counsels, understood as evangelical because they are in the Gospels as part of Christ's directions to his disciples: obedience, poverty, and chastity. Though we often associate these with monasticism, they really apply to the whole church and when reinterpreted in contemporary perspective provide significant guidance to Christians. The call to obedience clarifies our priorities and makes clear our responsibility within life's complexities to Christ as our Lord. Poverty is an attitude towards life and possessions. It helps us to understand life as gift, to keep us from being possessed by things, to make us responsible as stewards, and to remind us as to where we should invest our treasures. Chastity has to do with responsible sexuality and respect for the sanctity of others, but also a deep respect for ourselves and awareness of what our actions make of us.

Within the Reformation traditions the teaching and application of the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer have been important to the formation of the Christian life.

### **Possible Elements of a Discipline**

#### A Recovenanting Prayer:

Since we are continually changing and life is continuously changing, old commitments do not always affect and shape the present situation. A recovenanting prayer might include: renewal of our relationship with God, with Jesus as our Lord, and with important members of our family:

"O God, you who have given me this day with its responsibilities and opportunities, help me to be open to what this day holds and joyfully seek to serve you. Draw me close to my Lord, Friend and Teacher, Jesus, and help me to follow in his way. I renew my relationship with you and the family and friends that are part of my life."

#### Accepting Acceptance:

At the heart of the Gospel is the proclamation that God accepts us as we are so that we can be helped to become what we are called to be. For many people accepting God's acceptance of them is not an easy thing, for they have not learned to accept themselves. Bring before God all of your person including feelings, attitudes, limitations and failures -- and also your successes and accomplishments. Share with God any anxieties about the way you are. Accept God's acceptance of you and accept that God will go with you into the coming day. Accept that you are God's son or daughter and that your dignity and value is recognized.

#### Devotional Reading:

You will want to develop some plan for reading Scripture and other devotional/spiritual literature so that you can draw on the resources of the rich spiritual experience that is embodied within. Regarding Scripture, it would be good to develop some plan for reading daily a portion of the books that would be most likely to feed your spiritual life, such as the Gospels, the New Testament letters, the book of Acts, some of the Old Testament Psalms. There is a rich variety of devotional literature available in your religious book store. Devotional reading is different than ordinary reading in that one reads relatively small portions and lives with them for some time until they begin to speak to one's life and needs. It also is not an analytical or critical approach where one wrests the meaning from the text, but one where the God and life experience of the writer are allowed to impact one's life at the point of one's hungers and needs. It is a willingness to hear what God would say to us rather than to see how much we can understand. Several things to keep in mind are:

- 1) *Simply be with the text, living with it attentively, allowing all you know about the text to become peripheral though not unimportant.*
- 2) *Wait patiently for God and the text to communicate with you. Don't force answers to come. Be gently content if nothing special seems to come to you out of the text.*
- 3) *Keep some record of what is given you in living with the text.*

Susan Muto's *A Practical Guide to Spiritual Reading*<sup>457</sup> provides a helpful discussion of the method of devotional reading, an annotated bibliography of devotional literature, and a guide to reading devotional

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<sup>457</sup>. Susan Annette Muto, *A Practical Guide to Spiritual Reading*, Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1976.

literature and Scripture focused on certain themes. For more information see the chapter on the Spiritual Reading of Scripture.

#### Intercessory Prayer:

Intercessory prayer is spending some time participating in God's and Christ's concern for their world and the people in it. It is not that we always know what to ask or what is needed, nor do we need to inform God about this. God already knows about the person or situation better than we. We merely look at the person or situation with God, we join God in God's caring and offer ourselves for God's using. It can be as simple as saying:

"O God, Lord Jesus Christ, I give myself to you to be used in your caring for (or about)....."

#### At The Close of the Day:

While much of the above might be done early in the morning, it is helpful to have at least a brief prayer at the close of the day:

"Father, I thank you for leading me through the day with love, judgement, and forgiveness. I now place my loved ones, my circumstances and myself in your hands and accept the night as the gift of your peace. Amen."

#### The Lord's Prayer:

We have the Lord's Prayer in two different forms: the longer form in Matt. 6 (which is probably the form in which the Prayer came to be prayed in the early church, three times daily by the end of the first century), and the simpler and shorter form in Luke 11. Whereas in Matthew the Prayer is in a collection of sayings on prayer, in Luke it is given a particular historical context. Jesus' disciples ask him: "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." Thus it is a prayer that Jesus taught his disciples so that they would know how to pray and would pray what was important to them, as John the Baptist's disciples had their prayer. Christians then may use it not only as a prayer to be prayed, but as a model for other prayer.

The Prayer was originally taught by Jesus and his disciples in the Aramaic language, which was the language they spoke. We have the opening address of the Prayer in Aramaic in two of Paul's letters: Gal. 4:6 and Rom. 8:15.... "*Abba*," Father. The differences between the two forms of the Lord's Prayer are essentially due to different translations out of the original Aramaic and to "formal" and "poetic" additions to the Matthaean form (the two lines added to Matthew are "thoughts which rhyme" with the previous lines). "Our Father who art in heaven" in Matthew is a polite way of addressing God, whereas "Father" (in Luke the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic *Abba*) is a *familiar* way of addressing God (rather than polite) which makes clear that prayer starts with an assumed relationship with a God who loves us.<sup>458</sup> The doxology "For thine is the glory, etc." at the end of the Prayer was not originally in either version of the Prayer, but was an addition to the Matthaean text by about the end of the first century.

Some modern scholars contest the uniqueness of Jesus' prayer by indicating that all of its petitions can be paralleled in the life and faith of Judaism. This is true, but one must then ask what these petitions meant to Jesus and his disciples and how this meaning differed from the thought of his contemporaries. For example, Jesus

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<sup>458</sup>. The Parable of the Prodigal is really about a father who loved his two children without determining his love by their behavior. This is the heart of the Gospel, as discussed in the chapter on "The Spiritual Journey."

means something very particular when he calls God "Father" and his prayer for the Kingdom is not a prayer that God restore the Davidic kingdom in the sense in which it was often understood in the Judaism of Jesus' day.

	<b>Matthew 6:9-13</b>	<b>Luke 11:2-4</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Basis of prayer	Our Father who art in heaven,	Father,	Prayer starts in the recognition that God is our heavenly parent and one who loves us.
God	Hallowed be thy name.  Thy kingdom come Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.	Hallowed be thy name.  Thy kingdom come.	We give respect to and live what God stands for.  We ask God's rule and presence come in the world, through us.
Our Needs	Give us this day our daily bread.  And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>459</sup>  And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil (the evil One).	Give us each day our daily bread.  And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.  And lead us not into temptation.	We ask for daily needs, each day enough for the next.  <i>We ask and promise</i> forgiveness which enables life to be new.  Temptation means "trial," "testing." Here we ask deliverance from the evil and destructive in life which would try our faith, make us lose hope.

#### Paraphrasing the Lord's Prayer:

Since the Lord's Prayer contains Jesus' teaching about what is important in prayer, it may be applied to or paraphrased in most any situation. The original phrases need not be repeated, as below. The ideas contained in the phrases may be applied directly to the situation. First focus your attention on the problem or need at hand. Then apply the Prayer. If the need were a quarrel between yourself and another, the meaning of the Prayer might be expressed as follows:

Our Father who art in heaven,  
- Father, I acknowledge that you are "our" Father, for you love us both.

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<sup>459</sup>. "Debts" was translated "trespasses" for some time in the tradition of English translation, though there is a different word for "trespass" in Greek. which does not appear in either Matthew's or Luke's version.

Hallowed be thy name.

- Help both of us to respect what you stand for, value what you value. Draw us both together by our common devotion to you.

Thy Kingdom come,

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

- Rule over us, be present with us. Let us be more concerned about what you want rather than our own wants, hurt feelings, and anger.

Give us this day our daily bread;

- Supply, in your mysterious way, our daily needs so that our living is not perverted by anxiety. Provide also the daily bread of friendship.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; ( Old translation: And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;)

- Forgive me as I am willing to forgive, so that our relationship can start afresh, freed from the mistakes of the past. Help me to be aware of your forgiveness so that the sense of personal value you give me can help me to be a good friend.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

- Keep us both from being tempted, tried, and failing you. Don't let us give in to the evil in the world.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

- We pray because we know that all things belong to you.  
We express our faith in you and praise you. Amen.

Praying With the Imagination:

Understanding and living by images precedes doing so with words in both human evolution and individual development. As we grow older our vivid youthful imaginations are surrendered for dealing with life by words and intellect. And yet our subconscious knows better. Each night when we dream images play before our mind's eye like a movie or TV screen, and psychologists tell us that if we are prevented from dreaming we would become sick. Our identification with characters or experiences in a play or movie also indicates that our imagination is very much alive. God and Christ can use our imagination to speak to us. The best way to experience this is by taking a story or parable from the life of Jesus, relaxing to get rid of distractions, and then letting it come alive before our mind's eye. We can do this by familiarizing ourselves with the story or parable, visualizing the scene, smelling the smells and hearing the sounds which belong to the scene, and then letting the story play out within our minds. We can either merely observe what is happening, or we can become a part of it by identifying with one of the characters. If we become one of the characters in the story, perhaps Jesus will say something of significance to us.

Related to this is getting to know Jesus so well from the stories of his life that he can come alive for us within our imagination, carrying on conversations with us about our situations, providing us guidance for our lives. The imagination gives Jesus a tool to work with by which he may come to us. See the chapters on "Spiritual Reading of Scripture" and "Meditation and Contemplation" for further information.

### Praying In Silence:

We often think that our prayer depends upon words, but it is more like the relationship with a good friend, even though this is God. We don't always have to talk; we can just be quiet with God, enjoy knowing that God is there, listen if God has something to say to us. Sometimes we get a much better sense of God's presence if we stop all our talking and asking which may only make us aware of ourselves. Moreover, when we are silent we become aware that God does love us just as we are, without our doing anything. This is so different from most of our daily activity, that it is a very relaxing and healing experience. Every person needs at least a small space within each day when he/she can stop, relax and be one's self with the One who cares. Certain techniques can be used to gain silence:

- 1) Get into a comfortable position (sitting or reclining)
- 2) Imagine your body relaxing and all its unnecessary activities slowing down. Allow your mind to become quiet so that your attention is not focused on anything. Thoughts may flow in and out of your consciousness, but allow them to do this. Don't concentrate on stopping them because this only increases your involvement with them.
- 3) Use a count-down procedure, counting from 1-10. This might be done with your breathing, counting one with each inhalation and exhalation. Suggest to yourself that you will be deeply relaxed by the time you reach "10". This will gradually become a habit and will allow you to relax quicker.
- 4) Remain in silence for a while, enjoying it, sensing God's presence with you.
- 5) You may wish to use a count-up method to come out of your time of silence, from 5-1, as part of establishing a habit pattern by which to do this, suggesting to yourself that you will come out of your time of silence fully awake, alert, feeling relaxed and refreshed.

See the chapter on "Meditation and Contemplation" for more information.

### Flash Prayers:

Since prayer at its simplest is "living with and from God," all of life can become prayer. This is not complicated, but simply reminding ourselves at various times that God is with us, interested in what we are doing, and that we need to live out of what God supplies: Spirit, grace, love, guidance. This can be done by simply saying at certain moments during the day, "Father." This will remind us of what God is to us and we are to God.

### Discipline of Action:

Jesus' rhythm of retreat/prayer and action indicate the importance of both and each to the other in Christian spirituality. Not only does prayer resource action and the experience of action inform prayer, but Christianity is about how to live a life with God. Thus the discipline which shapes our style of life and specific actions needs to be formed by the practice and experience of action. What actions should be included in one's discipline depend upon what God is calling each of us to do and what types of actions provide the context for learning and formation.

### Discipline of Community:

The need for community in Christian spirituality has been much debated. Some have felt that to constantly have to deal with others is limiting. However, it is difficult to avoid the importance of community if one presupposes that Christianity is primarily about relationship and the creation of community -- with God and with persons.

Community also provides support, opportunity for discernment by others, -- and the preaching, tradition, study, rites and sacraments which keep one in contact with the resources of faith.

Fasting:

Historically fasting has often been linked to penitence, expression of regret for sin, and sacrificial denial. Modern approaches are more positive and emphasize learning control of response to natural drives (hunger), identification with the poor and hungry, and appreciation for food and creation through intentional and meditative use of food rather than compulsive eating. Some have argued that fasting provides a time for the body to purge itself and is healthful. Special physical conditions may prohibit fasting (such as diabetes) and fasting of more than one day should not be done without consulting a physician.

Drawing Mandala:

Jung felt that the psyche thought primarily in images. By this he meant not only the visual memories of the psyche, but the deep archetypal psyche which found its expression in images, though it was not within the psyche in image form. Such images within dream, "active imagination" (intentional use of the imagination), and excited by feelings or projection of the psyche upon the world, are symbols of our intuitive life and of contents of the psyche not yet understood. Jung described his pursuit of his inner images during his "journey within" in the years following 1914, as follows:

The years when I was pursuing my inner images were the most important in my life - in them everything essential was decided. It all began then; the later details are only supplements and clarifications of the material that burst forth from the unconscious, and at first swamped me. It was the *prima materia* for a lifetime's work.<sup>460</sup>

In 1918-19 Jung sketched a circular drawing in his notebook every morning. This "mandala," from a Sanskrit word meaning "circle", appearing often in religious and mythological imagery, Jung understood as a symbol of the archetype of the "self," a symbol of wholeness. The images which he spontaneously drew within the mandala provided him with a gradual understanding of his inner dynamics. From one perspective, it provided him with a safe and confined place within which to give expression to his inner life. In another sense, the center of the circle symbolically gave him a focus for his psychic expression. As he said,

During those years, between 1918 and 1920, I began to understand that the goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self. Uniform development exists, at most, only at the beginning, later everything points toward the center. This insight gave me stability, and gradually my inner peace returned. I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate. ....

It has taken me virtually forty-five years to distill within the vessel of my scientific work the things I experienced and wrote down at that time. .... I hit upon this stream of lava, and the heat of its fires reshaped my life.<sup>461</sup>

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460. Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffe, translated from the German by Richard and Clara Winston, Rev. ed., NY: Vintage Books, Random House, 1965 p. 199.

461. *Ibid.*, pp. 196 - 199.

To explore the use of mandalas, draw seven circles with a compass or a pencil and string, using one each day as an area within which to give free and uninhibited expression to whatever comes to mind, whatever you are led to image. Use crayons rather than a pencil so that you can image in colors. Do not try to create any continuity from one day's images to the next, unless it comes naturally. Use this as an opportunity to "circumambulate the self." Remember that Jung saw the "self" as a psychic structure for wholeness, the spiritual dimension of the human being, often expressed in religious images, such as that of Christ. When each drawing is taken as far as you feel led, then reflect on the drawing and jot notes on the back of the paper about what it seems to mean to you spiritually and how it describes the "structure" of your inner life. Perhaps no meaning will be clear. Then every several days glance at the drawings that have been produced and reflect on any meaning in the progression of symbols and images.

It should be remembered that not everyone images easily. If images do not come easily, be patient or recognize that this may not be for you. For some persons words function as well as or better than images. If words appear in your mind, you may wish to include them within the circle wherever it seems right.

#### Spiritual Friend/Director:

A Director is someone who can guide and assist your spiritual journey because of his/her knowledge, training and experience. Such professional direction is now becoming more readily available. To find such a person contact a spirituality or retreat center in your area and explore who might be available. An organization now exists called Spiritual Directors International which could make recommendations about resources in your area.<sup>462</sup>

A Spiritual Friend is someone who joins another in sharing their journeys, each helping to hold the other responsible for continuing on the journey. The Friend brings to the shared journey whatever gifts, learnings and experiences s/he has. This Friendship provides a microcosm of Christian community and the insights of an other.

#### **Journaling**

Journaling is a process of writing and reflecting upon one's life so that its dynamics become more transparent and one may then participate in its formation and direction more intentionally. There are three basic presuppositions which underlie journaling as a spiritual discipline. First, our understanding of life is that an important part of its dynamics is God's participation. Therefore we seek not only to understand our process but God's, whose presence we invite and whose purpose we seek to discern.. Second, life is not static, but involves a process of becoming and realization. Life is not merely *what is*, but *what may be* from its inherent potentials, its contextual influences, and its transcendent urgings. Third, we interact with life, giving meaning to events and incorporating both the events and meaning into our memories. The meaning making does not, however, stop with interactions with external events, but continues as an internal process in which we relive, re-experience, and reflect on past events and integrate this with other contents of our psyche. The resources for our reflection upon external events and internal processing are certainly more than what is consciously available to us. We often find a wisdom from our unconscious producing insights, answers, and solutions that surprise us, to which we do not have conscious access. The production of a poem or a piece of art may emerge by a process in which we participated but over which we had little conscious control. Thus the discerning and making of meaning needs to draw upon our deep resources, though we may not understand how to describe and account for this.

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<sup>462</sup>. Spiritual Directors International, 2300 Adeline Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010.



The similarity of journaling and spiritual process to artistic creativity is made clear by Ira Progoff:

Through all our procedures we keep the perspective of being artists who are working at the artwork of meaning in our lives. We take into account that this is an artwork in which we have been personally engaged from time to time over the years, sometimes with deliberate activity, sometimes with spontaneous experiences. Now we are reentering the flow of the process as a whole so that we can position ourselves within its continuity in the perspective of our life history; from that base, using our methods of evoking a deep quality of consciousness, we shall seek to move organically into further experiences. Each time we work at it, we seek to take the process one step further.<sup>463</sup>

These presuppositions indicate that life is not simple and that its meaning and direction are often more mysterious than transparent. To recognize this means that in journaling we must give ourselves permission to allow a process to take place in ways which we neither control nor anticipate and will undoubtedly bring about change. We will only see what can happen after it has happened, and even then we may not understand it all. Thus we are called upon for "existential trust", trust in the process of human existence, with all of its uncertainties and dangers, for we trust that God is in the mystery.

Moreover, we must avoid simplistic moralizing and idealizing concerning both our life history and the inner contents of the psyche. We need to accept it as it is and ourselves as we are so that we can allow our personal process to occur and discover the mysterious light and darkness of both ourselves and life. We need to be responsible in our actions, but gentle with our past and non-judgemental about our inner life.

### Biblical Perspective

The biblical material is supportive of an approach to life in which journaling is significant, for life is a process which needs to be narrated as story, but not merely as personal history. It is a personal story suspended within a cosmic story: between the origins of life and life's fulfillment in the end-time, but also decidedly affected by the moments of salvation and disclosure throughout history (e.g. the Exodus and the Christ event). Meaningful in itself, it draws some of its major dynamics out of the archetypal images of beginning, salvation, and end.

A significant parallel can be drawn between the archetypes which find expression in psychic images, as described in the depth psychology of Jung and Progoff, and the images of creation and fall (beginning), salvation (exodus and Christ event) and end time (eschatology). These provide part of the dynamics out of which the psyche lives. They are transcendent and transpersonal (beyond the history of the person). In the book of Revelation there is a "rebirth of images," a flowering of the images in the collective psyche of Judaism and the early church which speaks of the inner movement of life towards its destiny and draws upon beginning, salvation, and end.<sup>464</sup> Progoff's approach to journaling makes a great deal of the power of archetypal images to which his meditative approach seeks to give access.

Life as story can readily be seen in the story-telling which is so central to the biblical materials: the story of the Exodus; the Patriarchal stories; the story of Christ told in four Gospels, reflected in Paul, and arising out of the oral story-telling of the pre-Gospel church. For Luke the full significance of the story of Christ cannot be told without the effect of this story in the story of the early Church and the spread of the Gospel (Acts). Paul in

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463. Ira Progoff, *The Practice of Process Meditation: The Intensive Journal Way to Spiritual Experience*, New York: Dialogue House Library, 1980., p. 82.

464. Revelation may be viewed as originally a Jewish Apocalypse to which Christian additions were made and which then came to be used within the Christian community.

Galatians tells the story of his religious experience, his discussions with the Jerusalem church for the purpose of discernment, and the impact of this experience upon his life. In II Cor. 11-12 there is a summary narration of both his sufferings and the revelations given him. Out of prophecy, visions, dreams, tongues, and the wisdom of the community God impacts persons to produce their future story.

### Flow Journaling

A central part of a journal is what might be called a diary or daily log of events and experiences. Here, certainly, important events and experiences should be recorded, especially those which seem in some way to be charged with significance. However, to merely record and analyse them does not allow the unanticipated meanings to develop, and particularly those meanings which come from our own process of reflection and unconscious resources. In Ira Progoff's journaling method this often happens by a process which he calls "Re-openings," using a meditative technique. I would like to suggest a process called "flow journaling", for which I am indebted to Christina Baldwin.<sup>465</sup>

This would mean that after noting events and experiences of significance in your daily log, you would add to that your flow journaling. This method takes some chosen point of departure and then moves from this by free association, jotting down phrases or sentences which come to mind as one moves in the associative process. One may do this apart from the events of the day, starting merely with some object in the room. However, it is helpful to do this with your journal entries. I would suggest looking over the journal entries for the day or period recorded and then spending five minutes in free association, moving from some item entered in your journal which seems of significance, writing down all the thoughts which come to mind. You may wish to write merely in words or phrases, or in more extended sentences. I would suggest phrases. If you use just words they will function as symbols whose content you may later forget. Sentences often take too long and you may get lost in trying to express yourself in complete thoughts and sentences.

When you have written for five minutes, stop. You may want to set a timer or your watch. You now want to try to gather something from what you have done. There are several approaches which you can utilize as time is available. With limited time you will perhaps want to use only the first two or three. You can also explore these as to what works best for you.

1. Circle the words or phrases which seem to have special meaning and list them.
2. Complete the statement: "I am really thinking about....."
3. List ten questions regarding what you were thinking about in your flow journaling. Let them come to mind rather than seeking to formulate them.
4. Unsent letter: Write someone a letter or let someone write to you a letter which you will not send.
5. Write a letter from your life to you.
6. Write a dialogue with a part of yourself or something that emerges in the flow writing.
7. Write a story in the third person, starting with "Once upon a time," and let it develop and write itself. Do not be concerned about objective reality. By writing in the third person it will only be indirectly about you and will not likely be blocked the way a story in the first person might.
8. Draw a mandala allowing the flow of your journaling to be expressed in images. You should do

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<sup>465</sup>. Flow journaling is a technique she used in a workshop I attended. I am modifying this in various ways. The reader may wish to examine: Christina Baldwin, *Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest*, NY: Bantam Books, 1991.

at least the number 1 above before drawing the mandala to get in touch with the possible meanings and direction of your writing.

Occasionally you will wish to review past entries and, with reference to the date of the entries so that they could be located again, write observations and impressions as to how their meanings participate in your present. You may also wish to do some flow writing in response to these past entries.

You may also wish to see how certain meanings developed from the flow journaling of the present day will relate to the journaling and meanings of some point in the future. You can jot these meanings on "post-its", the slips of paper with a sticky strip on the back, and place them some pages ahead in your journal so that you will re-encounter them on another day.

You should have somewhere in your journal a place to record "Patterns and Truths", the significant insights you gain about your life, its meaning and patterns, and God's role in it. As you add to this list, you would have an easily reviewable gathering, in one place, of your most important insights.

This would provide you with a simple journaling method which would include the recording of events and experience, and a way of amplifying them and involving unconscious processes and wisdom. Since this is a sequential process, with recordings and flow writing involved for sequential periods when one makes entries, this could be done in a bound or spiral notebook, i.e., without provision for later insertion of pages.<sup>466</sup>

### Progoff's Journaling

The most extensive provision for journaling techniques one finds in the works of Ira Progoff. His earlier books on depth psychology <sup>467</sup> provide a background for his two major works on journaling, *At A Journal Workshop* and *The Practice of Process Meditation*.<sup>468</sup>

The Intensive Journal is an attempt to create a context for allowing the inner life of the person to express itself, to express its own truth, to give itself to understanding, so that its contents and direction may be perceived in a nonjudgmental way and so that the person may dialogue with these contents and direction(s) for the creative reshaping of life. The Journal is usually begun in a workshop and then continued as a meaningful tool in one's formation. The methodology is so comprehensive that a workshop is really needed to provide the concentrated time in which the Journal may be started. Progoff's purpose is not only to help persons discern the spiritual in life, but to help them evolve in a direction enabled by their genetic inheritance in the "organic psyche" and move beyond it to new depths, in contact with the sustaining underlying reality of life. Both this and his utilization of a meditative methodology indicate that he would have a deep appreciation for mysticism, evidenced in his

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<sup>466</sup>. If you type rapidly and use a computer, you can easily create the journal as a file within your word processing program, marking the phrases with special meaning as bold type, indexing key themes so that you can create an index of where to find them in your journal entries.

<sup>467</sup>. Ira Progoff, *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology: An integrative evaluation of Freud, Adler, Jung and Rank and the impact of their insights on modern man*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956; *Depth Psychology and Modern Man: A new view of the magnitude of human personality, its dimensions and resources*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959; *The Symbolic and the Real*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963.

<sup>468</sup>. Ira Progoff, *At A Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal*, New York: Dialogue House Library, 1975; *The Practice of Process Meditation: The Intensive Journal Way to Spiritual Experience*, New York: Dialogue House Library, 1980.

production of a translation of and commentary on the 14th century English spiritual treatise, *The Cloud of Unknowing*.<sup>469</sup> As he defines evolution in *Depth Psychology and the Modern Man*:

.... the extension of evolution in man's life involves a disciplined work directed toward developing capacities that are latent in the depths of the psyche; and further, that the high development of these capacities seems always to open a contact with a dimension of reality that transcends human existence, that transcends it and in some ineffable way underlies it as well.<sup>470</sup>

This means that his approach to journaling moves beyond personal history to include the "transpersonal": the spiritual depths that are the universal resource of human life.

His method is "Process Meditation," where meditation is defined as:

the multiple methodologies developed during the history of religion to provide a means of reaching and deepening the experience of meaning in life. Primarily these are the methods of spiritual experience that move beyond intellect. They comprise the various disciplines and techniques for strengthening the inner capacities of individuals so that they can test, validate, renew and extend by their own direct experience the depth and degree of truth of the doctrines of religion and philosophy.<sup>471</sup>

Because of the complexity of Progoff methodology I include a suggested modified and simplified form.

#### Modified Progoff Method

##### My Functional Preferences

It is frequently good to start off this process by using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a simple psychological instrument which helps us understand our preferred ways of functioning: how we perceive and approach our world, how we make our decisions, and whether we are primarily oriented to the outer world (extrovert) or our "inner" world (introvert). It is important to receive adequate interpretation of the results of this Indicator.

##### My History

Next we need a way to get hold of personal history: the experiences, influences and events which have helped to determine the persons we are and the way we feel and think about things. This should not be done merely by analyzing past life, but by sitting quietly, reflecting and meditating on the past. This, and the next two steps, are similar to the spiritual autobiography suggestion in the chapter on "Life As Journey." *Allow* your mind to bring up events, people and experiences which were important to you. (This is a more intuitive approach which takes advantage of the wisdom and memories of your subconscious which may see more significance in an event or experience than you consciously can recall.) List these on a sheet. Then do the same exercise on a second day to take advantage of how your subconscious responds and recalls on this new day. In the process take note of experiences which might have spiritual significance, in which you feel God was participating.

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<sup>469</sup>. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Introductory Commentary and Translation by Ira Progoff, New York: Julian Press, 1957.

<sup>470</sup>. Op. Cit., p. 261.

<sup>471</sup>. Op. Cit., p. 33.

## Steppingstones

Look at your list of remembered experiences from the two days and select, out of these, those life-experiences which seem to be strongly emotionally charged, which seem to be very important. First select them and then arrange them in chronological order. This should be done intuitively.

## Patterns and Truths

Approaching the Steppingstones, placing oneself again within their stream, see if you sense, feel or are aware of any patterns in your life or major truths that seem to emerge. Allow them to emerge or "dawn" on you.

The above steps would help to clarify where you are now in your life. Following this your journal will deal with your life from the perspective of new events and experiences or new reliving of past experiences. You will add to Steppingstones and Patterns and Truths as you discover additional ones in your life process.

You will need to have some way to keep the information that you are gathering. Some form of loose-leaf notebook might be helpful which would then provide room for necessary expansion. Thus far you would have sections on the following:

- MY FUNCTIONAL PREFERENCES (results of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator)
- MY HISTORY
  
- STEPPINGSTONES (for these two you will need)
- PATTERNS AND TRUTHS (space for later additions)

Between the first two and second two categories you will need:

- DAILY LOG - in which to keep your daily experiences after the initial writing of "My History"

To Steppingstones and Patterns and Truths you will add three more categories, to all of which you will be making regular additions:

- DREAMS (if you want to keep track of significant dreams)
- RE-OPENINGS
- MY SPIRITUAL LIFE POSITION

## Daily Log

Here you can keep a daily record of experiences which occur externally in your life and which occur within you. These should include experiences which you sense to be significant, describing your reflections on them and your insights into their meaning. Frequently you will want to glance over what you have written so that you can enter significant material into:

Steppingstones  
Patterns and Truths  
Dreams  
Re-openings

## Dreams

The psychology of Carl Jung has made a great deal of dreams as reflections of our unconscious, personal and archetypal, and consequently telling us much about ourselves. Such persons as Morton Kelsey have also seen dreams as a way that God may communicate with us. You may or may not want to investigate this as a way to discover yourself and God's role in your life.

## Re-Openings

This deals with our attempt to "re-open" past experiences, to discover better what they mean(t), to further develop what is latent within them (all their potential not being yet realized), and even to see in our imaginations what might have happened if we had taken different roads, made different choices. This, of course, can only be done in our imaginations. Not only may we learn from this, but imaginative experience is quite real and may affect our lives. One way to do this is by carrying on an imaginary dialogue with someone from our past. Another way is by recreating in our imagination a past event or experience with enough detail so that we can "live into it." Here take note of the methods advocated by Proffo above. When re-opening past events you want to be adequately sensitive to "resistances" which you feel as you may be bringing up some unpleasant experiences and feelings.

## My Spiritual Life Position

Every so often, at least once a year, or after periods which represent significant experiences and change, one should briefly enter a description of where one is spiritually and in one's life process.

## **St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), *Introduction to the Devout Life* 472**

It is important to examine the discipline of others and to explore the relationship of the discipline not only to their cultural and religious context, but especially within the perspectives of their life experience. Frequently the emphases within a discipline are understandable in these terms. De Sales discipline needs to be understood in terms of a number of influences, including the post-Reformation period, the growth of movements furthering popular piety, his personal struggles with feelings of sinfulness and his rejection of the Augustinian appraisal of human nature after a religious experience, and his deep spiritual relationship with Jane de Chantal. This summary of his *Introduction* is then provided to stimulate the consideration of what is appropriate for your own life.

Along with the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius, the *Introduction* asserts that holiness is possible for those whose lives are entirely in the world, as is stated in the Preface. This work, written in 1608, and *Treatise on the Love of God* written in 1616, are his two spiritual productions. The form of meditation he advises, called "mental prayer," is similar to that of Ignatius. His *Introduction* is full of wise and gentle advice and a wholesome appreciation of the human soul. He also has a gift in using metaphors and similes, as you will discover in reading. Though it would be difficult for a lay person today to incorporate into their practice the whole of de Sales' discipline, his design and its components are sound and well worth consideration. In what follows the

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472. The quotations in this summary are taken from St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, translated and edited by John K. Harper and Brothers, N.Y., 1950, 1952.

*Introduction* is summarized, but frequent quotations are included so that you might taste its flavor. Perhaps then you will be encouraged to read the whole.

Do not get lost in the detail of de Sales' method. Explore the reasons for and values in what he recommends. Don't try to repeat what he suggests. Rather, select what could be of value in your own discipline within the limits of your available time, and do it in your own way. Recognize also that learning a discipline is often like learning to play a piano, where what at first is done tediously, step by step, later becomes a natural and simple flow of actions initially complex.

From the Preface:

"My intention is to instruct those who live in towns, in families, or at court. By their condition they are obliged to lead, as to outward appearances, an ordinary life. ... as the mother-of-pearl fish lives in the sea without receiving a drop of salt water, and as near the Chelodonian islands springs of fresh water may be found in the midst of the sea, and as the firefly passes through the flames without burning its wings, so a vigorous and resolute soul may live in the world without being infected by any of its moods, may discover sweet springs of piety amidst its salt waters, and may fly through the flames of earthly lusts without burning the wings of the holy desires of a devout life."

**The First Part** --- Containing instructions and exercises necessary for conducting the soul from her first desire till she be brought to a full resolution to embrace a devout life.

"True, living devotion, Philothea, presupposes the love of God, and hence it is nothing else than the love of God. But it is not always love as such. Inasmuch as divine love adorns the soul, it is called grace, which makes us pleasing to His Divine Majesty. Inasmuch as it gives us the strength to do good, it is called charity. When it has arrived at that degree of perfection by which it not only makes us do well but also do this diligently, frequently, and readily, then it is called devotion."

This section of the *Introduction* is really preparatory to the development of a devout life and a discipline to form it. Devotion is affirmed as "the delight of delights and the queen of virtues, for it is the perfection of charity." Devotion is affirmed as compatible with every vocation and profession, and the need for a spiritual guide is stressed. The focus is then turned to a process of *purgation* which is designed to break the soul away from its old life patterns

The First Purgation - of Mortal Sin

Here the person reviews his/her life in terms of sins and makes a general confession of his/her whole life.

The Second Purgation - of Affection for Sin

Here the person seeks to cleanse the heart from all affection for sin so that one does not desire what one no longer does and live "with such a spiritual heaviness that it takes away all the grace from their good exercises, which are few in number and small in effect."

De Sales then suggests 10 meditative exercises to effect this purgation, asking that they be done according to the methodology suggested in Part Two of the Introduction:

1. A meditation on our nature as God's creation.
2. On the end for which we were created.
3. On God's benefits, physical and spiritual, to us.
4. On how we have sinned and run from God.
5. On the reality and consequences of death.
6. On the final judgement.
7. On hell.
8. On paradise
9. On the choice of paradise while being situated between heaven and hell.
10. On the choice of a devout life, a choice to be enrolled under Christ the King.

These meditations are to be followed by:

-A general confession

- "An Authentic Protestation, To Engrace in the Soul the Resolution to Serve God and to Conclude the Acts of Penance." This latter is a formal statement, which is suggested by de Sales, in which one commits oneself in writing, with signature, to resolutions which arise out of the meditations. The last paragraph is:

"This is my will, my intention, and my unbreakable and irrevocable resolution, which I declare and confirm without reservation or exception, in the same sacred presence of God, in the sight of the Church triumphant, and in the presence of the Church militant, my mother, which hears this my declaration in the person of him who, as her officer, hears me in this action. May it please Thee, O my eternal God, eternal, almighty, and all-good Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to confirm in me this resolution, and to accept in the odor of sweetness this inward sacrifice of my heart. And as it has pleased Thee to grant me the inspiration and the will to do this, so grant me the strength and the grace needed to perform it. 'O my God! Thou art my God, the God of my heart', the God of my soul, and the God of my spirit. As such I acknowledge Thee, and as such I adore Thee now and forever. Live, O Jesus!"

(Actually this means that de Sales provides for each Christian taking solemn vows as would a priest or someone in the orders.)

Part Two of the Introduction is then given for those who in the light of the experiences induced by Part One now see in a clearer manner "the sins, inclinations, and imperfections which prevent us from attaining to true devotion".

**The Second Part** --- Containing various instructions for elevating the soul to God by prayer and the sacraments.

Prayer is "the holy water that by its flow makes the plants of our good desires grow green and flourish, that cleanses our souls of their imperfections, and that quenches the thirst of passion in our hearts. Above all, I recommend to you mental prayer, the prayer of the heart, and particularly that which concerns the life and Passion of our Lord. By making Him often the subject of your meditation, your whole soul will be filled with Him. You will learn His ways and frame all your actions according to His model. .... we cannot find access to God the Father except through this gate."

Though de Sales strongly recommends all of the prayers which are traditional, e.g. the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostles Creed and the Divine Office, he regards a one hour period



of "*mental prayer*" each day as being very essential. He recommends that this be done before "dinner" ("dinner" is the noon meal) or early in the morning--at a time free from distractions and when one has not eaten a large meal so as to become drowsy. His method includes:

1. The First Point of Preparation -- Presence of God

Place yourself in God's presence by affirming the presence of God in all things and in your heart. Consider the Savior looking down from heaven on all humanity. Represent our Savior as near us in his sacred humanity. Imagination plays an important role in this.

2. The Second Point of Preparation -- Invocation

Imploring God, in his Presence, to give grace "to serve and adore Him well in this meditation."

3. The Third Point of Preparation -- Proposing the Subject of the Mystery

"This is nothing else but to represent to your imagination the whole of the mystery on which you desire to meditate as if it really passed in your presence."

4. The Second Part of Meditation -- Of considerations

After the act of the imagination there should follow the act of "understanding, which we call meditation." (Here the term "meditation" seems to be used for a type of intellectual reflection on the act of the imagination, rather than the way we use the term "meditation" today.) This act raises up the various considerations or issues which come out of the act of the imagination, which have the love of God and our spiritual welfare as their object. The mind then should be allowed to work on whatever consideration attracts it. "Do like the bees, who never quit a flower so long as they can extract any honey from it."

5. The Third Part of Meditation -- Of Affections and Resolutions

Allow the heart to expand into the motions which seem to be produced in the will or the affective part of the soul. (This encourages one to respond to intuitions and feelings.) Don't merely stay with general reflections/considerations, but "reduce them to special and particular resolutions for your own correction and amendment."

6. Of the Conclusion and Spiritual Bouquet

Three acts should conclude the meditation:

- a. Returning thanks to God for the affections and resolutions he has given us;
- b. The act of offering--in which we offer to God his own goodness and mercy in union with our own affections and resolutions; (this concludes with intercessions, the Our Father and the Hail Mary)
- c. The gathering of "a little devotional bouquet." (We ought, "when our soul has been entertaining itself by meditating on some mystery, to select one or two or three of those points in which we have found most relish and which are most proper for our advancement, to think frequently on them, and to smell them spiritually during the course of the day."

7. After the meditation, put your resolutions into practice. If possible, for a while continue to "observe silence and gently remove your heart from prayer to your other employments. Retain as long as you can the feeling and the affections that you have conceived." Learn how to pass from prayer to daily occupations. Whenever the Holy Spirit gives you affections in the process, do not feel that it is necessary to proceed with the above steps, but go with the affections. This is the primary purpose of the meditation, to provide a context in which God may move and guide us. Also, do not make resolutions until after the affections at the end of the meditation, for this might distract the process. While forming affections and resolutions, it is good to use colloquies, speaking to the Lord, angels, saints, persons in the mysteries (the incident or

situation which is meditated on), ourselves, or even insensible creatures. Don't worry about "dryness" (lack of experience in the meditation). You may try various means to arouse your heart, but if this doesn't work, be patient and enjoy the privilege of standing in God's presence.

### *The Morning Exercise*

Besides the formal "mental" prayer which de Sales recommends be done in the early morning, there are other prayers which are important as part of a Morning Exercise which prepares one for all the actions of the day.

1. Adore God and thank him for preserving you through the night.
2. Purpose to employ the day that you may gain eternity.
3. Anticipate the situations, business and temptations of the day so that you will be able to make best use of ways you can serve God and advance in devotion and to avoid or resist whatever is prejudicial to this.
4. Pray for God's blessing and help during the day.

### *The Evening Exercise and Examination of Conscience*

This should be done before "supper" (the evening meal) as the morning exercises should be done before "dinner" (the noon meal).

1. "Recall yourself to the presence of Jesus Christ crucified, whom you may represent to yourself by a single consideration and an interior glance of the eye. Rekindle in your heart the fire of your morning meditation" or arouse "yourself to devotion by some new subject . . ."
2. The Examination of Conscience
  - a. Give thanks to God for his preservation during the day.
  - b. Examine your behavior during the day.
  - c. Thank God for the good done, ask pardon for evil with resolution to confess and redress it.
  - d. Intercessory prayer. Prayer for God's blessing as we go to rest.

The evening and morning exercise must never be forgotten. "By the morning exercise you open the windows of your soul to the Sun of Justice, and by this one at evening you close them against the shades of hell."

### *Spiritual Recollection*

As often as is possible during the day we should stand in the presence of God and sense his eyes lovingly turned toward us. The retiring into the solitude of the heart while engaged in the business of life is important for spiritual advancement.

"Birds have their nests in trees, to which they may retire when they have need, and the deer have bushes and thickets in which they conceal themselves and enjoy the cool shade in the heat of summer. So should our hearts, Philothea, choose some place every day, either on Mount Calvary or in the wounds of our Lord or in some other place near Him, as a retreat to which they may occasionally retire to refresh and recreate themselves amidst their exterior occupations, and there, as in a stronghold, defend themselves against temptations."

### *Aspirations, Ejaculatory Prayers, Good Thoughts*

"We retire into God because we aspire to Him, and we aspire to Him that we may retire into Him. Hence aspirations to God and spiritual retirement are the mutual support of each other, and both proceed and are born from good thoughts.

"Make frequent aspirations to God, Philothea, by short but ardent movements of your heart; admire His beauty, implore His assistance, cast yourself in spirit at the foot of the Cross; adore His goodness, converse with Him frequently on your salvation; present your soul to Him a thousand times a day; fix your interior eyes upon His sweetness; stretch out your hand to Him, as a little child to his father, that He may lead you; place Him in your bosom, like a fragrant bouquet; plant Him in your soul like a standard; and make a thousand different motions of your heart, to give you a love of God and to arouse yourself to a passionate and tender affection for this divine Spouse."

In addition deSales advocates attendance at the Sacrifice of the Mass, in person or in spirit, which he calls "sum of all spiritual exercises," the heart of devotion, advocating an imaginative reliving of the life of Christ during the Mass. He also advocates being present at the office of the hours and vespers as far as convenience will permit:

The day was divided into canonical hours and various prayers and Psalms were assigned to these:

6 am - Prime	Many of these names come from
9 am - Tierce	the practice of numbering the
12 Noon - Sext	hours from 6 A.M., essentially
3 pm - Nones	sunrise. Lauds (Morning Prayer -
5 pm - Vespers	not listed here - and Vespers
12 pm - Compline	were the two major prayer and
Matins	worship times.)

De Sales also discusses the invocation of the saints, devotional reading, the use of confession and preparation for Communion.

**The Third Part** --- Containing several instructions concerning the practice of the virtues.

Here are discussed such virtues as humility, meekness, diligence, obedience, chastity, poverty, friendship, mortification, society and solitude, attire, discourse, pastimes and recreations, desires--and special instruction is provided for married persons, widows and virgins.

**The Fourth Part** --- Containing necessary counsels against the most usual temptations

Here are included disregarding the censures of worldly people, the nature of temptations and the difference between feeling and consenting to it, various remedies, anxiety, sadness, consolations and spiritual dryness.

**The Fifth Part** --- Containing exercises and instructions calculated to renew the soul and confirm her in devotion.

"There is no clock, no matter how good it may be, but must be reset and wound up twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. In addition, at least once a year it must be taken all apart, to

remove the rust that is stopping it, to straighten out the parts that are bent, and to repair those that are worn out. In like manner, he that is truly careful of his heart ought each morning and evening to wind it up to God by the foregoing exercise. Moreover, he ought to reflect often on his condition in order to reform and improve it. Finally, at least once a year he must take it apart and examine every piece in detail, that is, all his affections and passions, in order to repair all the defects that may be there. Moreover, the watchmaker oils the wheels, the springs, and all the works of his watch with some delicate oil, so that the movements of the wheels may be more easy and the whole of the watch less subject to rust. So also after a devout person has made this review of his heart in order to renovate it, he must anoint it with the sacraments of confession and the Holy Eucharist. This exercise will recruit your strength, which has been impaired by time, enkindle your heart, reanimate your good resolutions, and make the virtues of your soul flourish with fresh vigor. The primitive Christians were careful to practice this devotion on the anniversary day of the baptism of our Lord, when, as St. Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzus, relates, they renewed those professions and protestations which are made in that sacrament. Let us also, my dear Philothea, willingly dispose ourselves and carefully employ ourselves to follow their example."

De Sales advocates finding a context for solitude and meditating on the following points:

1. The points of your Protestation (see under Part I), to whom you made it and the heavenly court in whose presence you made it, what induced you to make it and what effects it has had--all of this related to the fact that God has called us to his service.
2. An examination of your soul on its advancement in the devout life.
3. An examination of the state of your soul toward God.
4. An examination of your state with regard to yourself.
5. An examination of the state of your soul towards your neighbor.
6. An examination of the affections of your soul.

De Sales regards this as most important. Advancement in devotion does not occur with those who only examine sins and avoid the state of the heart:

"By the passions of the soul we pass judgement of its (the heart's) condition, when we examine them one after another. The lute player touches all the strings to find which are out of tune and makes them accord either by tightening or loosening them. So also, if we examine the passions of love, hatred, desire, hope, sadness, and joy in our soul and find them out of tune for the melody that we wish to make to God's glory, we may attune them by means of His grace and the counsel of our spiritual father."

After going through this process, give thanks to God for change, acknowledge failure, promise that you will eternally praise God for what he has given you, ask pardon for infidelity, offer him your heart, ask him to make you forever faithful to him, invoke the saints.

After your examination and conferring with some worthy director concerning your defects and appropriate remedies, use one of the following considerations each day in your "mental" prayer, your meditation:

1. The excellence of your soul
  2. The excellence of virtue
  3. The example of the saints
  4. The love that Jesus Christ bears us
  5. The eternal love of God for us
- (Notice the very positive nature of these meditations and what they may suggest to a person who could be impressed with failures during the above examination.)

De Sales then discusses provisions for renewing the resolutions of one's "Protestation", doing so not only on the intellectual level but also on the level of feelings and the will. One is then to go to one's spiritual father, make confession, pronounce and sign again one's "Protestation", and then unite one's renewed heart to the Saviour in the Eucharist. On the day on which this is done, and on days following, one is to repeat from the heart the words of St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Catherine of Genoa and others:

"No, I am no more my own. Whether I live or whether I die, I am my Savior's. I no longer have anything in me or of me: my very self is Jesus and my being is His being. O world! thou art always thyself, and I have hitherto been always myself, but henceforth I will be myself no more."

### **Exercise: Worksheet for Developing Your Spiritual Discipline**

In developing one's personal discipline one should give serious consideration to what the experience and wisdom of the church over the centuries has considered important. However, with the present recognition of differing individual needs (which legitimizes individually designed disciplines) and with the added value of making one's discipline intentional, it is quite appropriate to design one's own. Though one will have certain elements in one's discipline that may be used throughout life, the discipline should be rethought at least once a year. This offers opportunity not only to assess one's spiritual development but also to explore changing personal needs and their implications for the discipline. Also, one's life context may change with the consequence that one has more or less time and the elements of one's discipline may have to be relocated during the day. A change in context may also imply a change in personal and spiritual needs and a different vocational direction, all of which could affect the discipline. The following is intended as a worksheet to assist in the planning of your discipline. In I to III do not be concerned about the number of issues, needs or goals that you express. Include whatever you are conscious of. When you get to IV you can limit this to what is practical and possible.

#### **I THE COMMON CHRISTIAN HERITAGE**

There are many elements which are the common heritage of all Christians, though our divisions have given each church particular histories, traditions and practices. Certainly Scripture and its use belongs to the whole church. Many churches use the church year and some have a tradition of daily offices which involve use of Scripture. Some traditions have in their origin a concern to make Scripture available to all and have encouraged its devotional use. Though we may understand Scripture in different ways and prefer different parts, the use of Scripture for the nourishment of life and faith is important to us all.

The person of Christ is important, though some traditions make Christ less central than others. Thus in some way we wish to recognize "Jesus is Lord," and encourage the appropriation of his life and meaning by "taking his yoke" upon us. (Matthew 11:29)

The Lord's Prayer is central to our prayer life as the prayer which Jesus gave his disciples and became a part of the spiritual discipline of the first century church. The Apostles Creed and the Nicene creed are recognized by most churches, though having varying use. List the common elements to which you would like to give consideration in the development of your discipline.

## II MY TRADITION

If you come from a particular religious tradition, make some notes on the emphases of this tradition in terms of its understanding of central theological issues, the Christian life, devotional practice, prayer, etc.. These emphases should be ones that would affect your practice of the Christian life and your understanding of relationship with God, including any of the "devotional tools and practices" with which your tradition provides you.

## III MY GOALS

What do you understand as the GOALS of your spiritual discipline? What do you want to encourage? What do you think God wishes to happen?

A. In RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

B. In RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

C. In IDENTITY (awareness of who I am)

D. In VOCATION (what God has in mind for me, my mystery, my calling) and the needs of my WORK situation (Sometimes calling and work are the same and sometimes calling needs to be expressed outside of work. Often there is a Christian mission that one can have in one's work situation, even if that is not understood as a particular calling.)

E. In my BEING IN THE WORLD (concerns for community, society, human needs, international concerns, ecological concerns)

F. PERSONALITY TYPE List type indicated by MBTI \_ \_ \_ \_

What does this indicate about elements of a spiritual discipline that would be most attractive and natural to me (preferred):

According to my experience, do I seem to prefer these?

What does what I did not prefer, as indicated by the MBTI, point to as future areas of growth and skill development in my discipline?

List one area, not your innate preference, which you feel it might be helpful to explore.

#### F. ERIKSONIAN MEASURE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

If you took the MPD, indicate the attitudes where a more favorable resolution might be called for (trust-mistrust, autonomy-shame and doubt, initiative-guilt, industry-inferiority, identity-identity confusion, intimacy-isolation, generativity-stagnation, ego integrity-despair).

What might this indicate about important elements needed in your personal discipline?

G. List any SPECIAL NEEDS IN YOUR LIFE of which you are presently aware.

H. List any SPECIAL DIRECTIONS in which you feel God seems to be leading you.

I. Reflect on how you can provide some OPENNESS TO GOD through your discipline, rather than merely trying to design your own development.

IV MY DISCIPLINE to facilitate some of what has been listed above. Please keep in mind that projects and activities may also be a part of your discipline, dependent on what you see as important.

A. TIME. Here you will want to keep in mind the time that is available to you, or that you can intentionally make available, to practice your discipline. You will also want to think of how this time might be located throughout the day both in terms of the time available and the purposes of your



discipline. For example, if it is important to begin and end the day with God, then you need to find some time at the beginning and end of the day to do this. If you want to include meditation or contemplation, you will need a time of the day when you can remain alert - certainly not after a meal. Indicate below the amount of time you can give to your daily discipline and locate it throughout the day (later there will be opportunity to consider what might be done beyond your daily schedule):

MORNING

AFTERNOON

EVENING

### B. PRIORITIES

Go back to I to III above and mark the priority of the various items which you listed by placing a 1 in front of first priorities and a 2 in front of secondary priorities (or use some other coding). Be sure to include the sections on the Common Christian Tradition and your Tradition. Sometimes what you mark will represent a concern for which you will need to find an appropriate expression for your discipline. At other times what you would include in your discipline will be explicit.

### C. DISCIPLINE

Fill out below what you would like to include and when you would intend to do it, taking note also of some of the options listed. Keep in mind also what has been your discipline in the past and what you have found to work for you. Include not only devotional practices, but projects and activities which will help to form your Christian life-style.

	WHAT	WHEN	SOME OPTIONS
DAILY			Recommitment prayer Confession Adoration/Thanksgiving Intercession Petition Meditation Devotional Reading (Scripture) Contemplation/Silence Journaling Lord's Prayer Psalms/Offices Liturgies

WEEKLY,  
MONTHLY,ETC.

Worship  
Prayer Group  
Fellowship  
Educational,Reading  
Period of Reflection  
Projects in Ministry  
and Life  
Period of Silence  
Giving  
Fasting

YEARLY

Annual Retreat  
Time of Reflection,  
Review & Recommitment

PROVISION FOR SPIRITUAL  
GUIDANCE/DIRECTION

Friend to meet with,  
share and be held  
responsible  
Individual Direction  
Group Direction  
(the last two make  
use of experienced  
director or leader)

NEXT DATE ON WHICH YOU WILL INTENTIONALLY REVIEW YOUR DISCIPLINE (This should be no more than one year from the present date. You might wish to review every three months. When you write the date below, also write it in your appointment book and provide some private time for this.)

Date for Review\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_