



Pathways of Grace

Seattle 2019

The Order of the Ascension

There are two sections to this packet. The first is common material used in all the Pathways of Grace workshops. The second is specific to this workshop.

Common Material for All Workshops

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Introduction to all the workshops

*I will arise, and in the strength of love
Pursue the bright track ere it fade away,
My Saviour's pathway to His home above.*

John Keble

The workshops are all designed to assist us understand, and enter into, the pathways of grace.

The Presence

How are we to recognize the presence of God, of Angels and Archangels and the whole company of heaven? How might we become more sensitive to God's presence with us?

The Pathways of Grace workshops assume that we're called to place ourselves where God is known to be present – in Eucharist and Office, in Sacraments and Word, in silence and solitude. We don't get to manipulate God's presence. It's not for us to make God appear and act in life. Our part is to put ourselves in the Pathways of Grace.

All the Time

We are working on the assumption that God's presence is common not rare.

God is at our right hand (Ps 16:8), God is not far from each of us (Acts 17:27)

In him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28) The kingdom of God is within you (or among you, or in your midst) (Luke 17:21)

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

In our daily life – in family, with friends and strangers, in joy and despair. In all of our life – God is present, standing alongside us, dwelling within us. A presence that at times we feel.

And as God's presence is so near and ordinary we may learn to better recognize it; to notice it in the "people, things and circumstances of life."

Accepting

We are not trying to conjure up holiness or spiritual feelings or a sense of the mystical. Our faith is not about doing magic. It's not about controlling and manipulating God, the angels and saints. The church is about saying magical incantations that will generate happiness and success. It is about accepting, receiving, noticing, and loving. Finally, it is about repenting, believing, and loving.

Regula

Regula or "rule" is about living our spiritual life with a pattern. Not a random or self-constructed list of rules but a prayer life with a shape; a shape that has emerged from the long experience and wisdom of the People of God.

It is the Prayer Book Pattern, the threefold rule of prayer – Eucharist, Daily Office, Personal Devotions. It is the underpinning of a faithful prayer life.

This pattern, this shape, is the foundational pathway.

Regula - Daily practice, discipline, what is objective – grounds us in God's ways. So, we may notice the moments of holy disclosure and presence. The *regula* is essential. It is how we stay grounded in faith and practice; it is how we become sensitive to the ways of God.

Uniqueness

And yet, the spiritual life is not just *regula*. It is also about our unique and personal experience of God. Both/and not either/or.

So, there are pathways unique to each person. Pathways that allow you to accept the closeness of God.

Balance

So, we have *regula* and personal experience. Each of us needs some balance that fits our temperament, circumstance, and need to grow and have our heart enlarged.

A balance -

- Of *regula* and uniqueness
- Transcendent and immanent
- Unknowable and indwelling
- Our God and my God
- We believe and I believe

Practical guidance

Whether the pathway we are exploring is of the *regula* or of personal experience – our hope is to offer realistic and useful assistance. This is applied theology.

Christian life is social, centered upon the corporate liturgy and expressed in love for the neighbor; it is also intensely personal, a relationship between God and unique individuality. Martin Thornton

Elements of the Program

1. Morning Prayer
2. A way of thinking about it – a model, theory
3. Experiential learning – reflection and learning from your experience
4. A spiritual practice or two to use
5. How you see yourself making use of what you've learned
6. A short time on how this applies to a parish church
7. A booklet, book, or packet to take away

Shaping Your Spiritual Discipline

A Renewal Pathway

General thoughts

- Our pathway is in response to, and in cooperation with, God's love and presence
- The objective: To live in Christ and for Christ to live in use; Holy Worldliness; habitual recollection. We seek maturity in Christ, to live as mature Christians in daily life
 - Not a state of being that once arrived at just continues on; but a state of being requiring the humility of living within the Body of Christ with its dependence on life in community. The core cycle of renewal – apostolate continues at all stages of Christian maturity.
 - Maturity is marked by an increased consistency of personality in which the person is brought into harmony, is reintegrated, as the whole being is concentrated on God. There are two aspects of this harmony I'd highlight – 1). Remembering who we are, i.e., baptized members of the Body of Christ, instruments of his love and 2). Emotional stability; a capacity to be centered; emotional intelligence.
- This maturity is the result of living within the Body of Christ; living in its rhythms, being fed by its sacraments and the organic life of the Body. Christian maturity is the product of persistence in living a disciplined response to God's love.

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

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

A Pattern

What I'd suggest for most of us who live in a modern and/or postmodern culture and age, when we are not automatically reinforced by our culture, is something along these lines –

1. Eucharist and Daily Office

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

2. Disciplined ways of reflecting

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

Three disciplines need for everyone pursuing maturity

- Prayer that brings the stuff of our life into conscious relationship with Jesus Christ, in a manner that allows us to be reflective about our life, e.g., meditation, *lectio divina*
- Spiritual guidance – working with another person; in groups, yearly retreat, one-to-one

- Prayer that develops our capacity for stillness and silence; our ability to listen to God, others, our self.

3. **Other disciplines useful for you**

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

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

Experiment

The way to find the pattern that best serve you at this time in your life, in you current state of maturity – is by experimenting and reflecting on & learning from that process.

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

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The Threefold Rule of Prayer

Our worship tradition as Episcopalians is based on a three-part structure. Michael Ramsey, the one-hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury, referred to it as the “Benedictine triangle.” Martin Thornton called it the “Catholic Threefold Rule of Prayer.” It is the Prayer Book Pattern. The three elements, Eucharist, Daily Office, and Reflection/Personal Devotions, comprise the fundamentals of a disciplined Christian spirituality in the Anglican tradition. The use of this pattern can help individuals and parishes move away from the attempt to base our prayer life on a self-made, unintegrated list of "rules" toward an integrated Rule grounded in the Book of Common Prayer.

Holy Eucharist

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

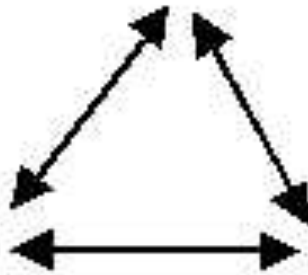
For the fully Christian life is a Eucharistic life: that is, a natural life conformed to the pattern of Jesus, given in its wholeness to God, laid on His altar as a sacrifice of love, and consecrated, transformed by His inpouring life, to be used to give life and food to other souls.

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

Daily Office

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

...a way by which we keep ourselves in constant awareness of the divine order an order of love and justice which embraces and underlies all order ...it is the recurring cycle of prayer and communing with God which gives, as it were, the dominant 'set' to life...the offices keep us in touch with the whole church. They do not impede the individual's spiritual growth, but both nourish it and supply a standard by which it is to be judged"we need immersion too in Christian truth if we are rightly to interpret life and culture - Paths in Spirituality, John Macquarrie



Reflection/Personal Devotions

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

...prayer must involve the unifying of the personality, the integration of mind and heart into one center.... Without self discovery there can be no further progress. 'In order to find God whom we can only find in and through the depths of our own soul, we must first find ourselves.' Without self-knowledge our love remains superficial. -Soul Friend; Kenneth Leech

<p><i>Reflection.</i> Times of consideration; occasions of pondering, musing, and contemplation. Seeking a sense of perspective and direction.</p>	<p><i>Self-examination & confession.</i> Routine times when we can in silence engage in a systematic reflection on our sin and God's mercy.</p>	<p><i>Spiritual reading.</i> The Scriptures or writers on the spiritual life. Slow, reflective reading, possibly a form of Lectio Divina.</p>	<p><i>Other.</i> Centering prayer, meditation, recollection, intercession, petition, stations of the cross, going on retreat, etc. whether done on our own or with others</p>
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Martin Thornton on the Meaning of "Rule"

This is based on *Christian Proficiency* by Martin Thornton, 1959

"Rule is the literal translation of the Latin word *regula*- rule, pattern, model, example-from which we derive "regular" as both noun and adjective. Both words are technical terms of ascetical theology... their meaning is not quite the same as that of common use. Rule, like pattern, model, or system, is an essentially singular word, in some ways directly opposite to a list of "rules," and a "regular" Christian is one who "lives to rule." ...a regular soldier in the regular army-not so much one who keeps a lot of rules or who is strictly disciplined, but an efficient full time professional. If we may stretch the analogy a little, a regular layman is one who embraces the Christian life as opposed to the keen "draftee" who goes to Church fairly often and tries to say his prayers now and again. It implies status more than quality, efficiency more than keenness or brilliance; volunteers and conscripts might prove to be braver and more zealous than regular soldiers but they are unlikely to be more generally proficient. So it must be admitted that rule is not absolutely essential to creative and progressive Christian life. There is minority, I think a very small one, of people temperamentally unsuited to embrace rule – but in general to be a regular and to be a proficient comes to much the same thing."

"Rule is "embraced" not "promised."

It would be Pharisaical, legalistic and quite unChristian solemnly to promise to "keep" a rule; and it would involve the sin of pride and the heresy of Pelagianism at least. In any case you can "keep" only a lot of little rules. A Christian regular is one who chooses to undertake his common obligations and duties, and to develop his personal spirituality, by acknowledging, accepting or "embracing" some total scheme, system, pattern or "rule" of prayer."

"Breach of rule is not sin."

...a breach of rule –technically a "fault" –is strictly amoral; thus the cause of a fault might be sinful, negative, or virtuous. If a man misses Church when his rule prescribes it, by plain downright laziness, then he has committed both a fault and a sin, but his sin is not "rule- breaking" – there is no such thing– but sloth. If he misses Church through oversleeping (assuming it was not a drunken stupor, which would involve gluttony) or by missing the bus or having a puncture; then he has made a fault but there is no sin. Or he may miss Church because, while walking to Church, he stops to rescue someone trapped in a burning house, or assists the victims of an accident. He has still made a fault, but rather than sinning, he has gained the virtue ..."

Rule is, and must always remain variable.

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

"Rule should be, or should soon become, unobtrusive."

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

"A good personal Rule should demand creative discipline without burden."

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



Spiritual Practices

Introduction

There are a number of ways of describing the spiritual state in which we are most fully in Christ and Christ is in us. Habitual recollection is a continuous sense of Christ's presence in all circumstances and therefore, an awareness of our relationship through baptism with God and the communion of saints. As we grow in such a way, we will also find ourselves acting out of the silence and stillness we share in Christ.

This deep harmony with God, others and self is not arrived at by some form of magic. There is some combination of God's grace and our placing ourselves in the pathways where we have learned that God meets us.

Any authentic priesthood must derive from an inner core of silence, a life hid with Christ in God ...Only those who are at home with silence and darkness will be able to survive in, and minister to, the perplexity and confusion of the modern world. Let us seek that dark silence out of which an authentic ministry and a renewed theology can grow and flourish. - Kenneth Leech, 1988 retreat of the Order of the Ascension.

Father Leech offered this wisdom on "dark silence" as he lead the retreat prior to the first Professed Members taking the Promise. In those days they were all priests. His words apply not only to priests but to all the baptized. How are we to develop that capacity he spoke of? How are we to be "at home with silence and darkness?"

Various Practices & Issues

Here we make note of just some of the multitude of practices and issues.

Experiencing God's Presence

- Sitting in silence. Possibly before icon or cross
- Centering Prayer
- Labyrinth
- Meditation
- Spiritual reading.
- Lectio

- Discernment processes
- Retreat
- Quiet days

“Nothing is so like God as silence” Meister Eckhart

“Our most important task consists in remaining silent before the great God . . . he understands only one language, that of silent love.” John of the Cross

I listen

Former CBS anchor Dan Rather found himself unprepared for a television interview with Mother Teresa. Ron Mehl described the newsman’s encounter: “When you pray,” asked Rather, “what do you say to God?” “I don’t say anything,” she replied. “I listen.”

Rather tried another tack, “Well, okay...when God speaks to you, then, what does He say?”

“He doesn’t say anything. He listens.” Rather looked bewildered. For an instant, he didn’t know what to say. “And, if you don’t understand that,” Mother Teresa added, “I can’t explain it to you.

Found him to be at hand

“Moreover, the witness of non-sacramental Christians warns us, that this experience of the Presence cannot be exclusively identified either with the Eucharistic or other particular devotional concomitant; but partakes of the limitless freedom of Christ. It has often visited solitary individual Christians and non-churchmen in their need. It was well known to the early Quaker assemblies, and a chief source of their confidence and strength. “The Lord of heaven and earth”, says Francis Howgill, “we found to be at hand; and as we waited upon Him in pure silence, our minds out of all things, His heavenly Presence appeared in our assemblies, when there was no language or speech from any creature.” Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*

Emotion

“He opened the book, found the instruction by St Simeon the New Theologian, and read: “Sit down alone and in silence. Lower your head, shut your eyes, breathe out gently and imagine yourself looking into your own heart. As you breathe out, say ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.’ Say it moving your lips gently, or simply say it in your mind. Try to put all other thoughts aside. Be calm, be patient, and repeat the process very frequently.” This simple technique performs a threefold office. It acts first as a check upon distractions, next as a cumulative autosuggestion, and last as a path of emotional discharge. “I kiss my child because I love it, and I kiss my child in order to love it,” says Von Hügel. So, too, the humble practice of affective worship evokes love as well as expressing it. On this account, and in spite of its tendency to fall over into sentimentalism, it has an important part to play in the development of the Godward life, and should not lightly be discredited. For though mere emotionalism is a poor index of spiritual worth, it is none the less true that deep and rich emotion must enter into all full and living worship” Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*

Resistance

“So even before we endeavor to find a space for solitary prayer, or decide how we will use this time apart, we can expect to encounter considerable resistance both within and outside of ourselves. Our culture is afraid of silence and bombards us with stimuli at every turn.” Julia Gatta

Solitude

“Whoever cannot be alone should beware of community,” wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer. As a pastor and director of a small residential seminary, Bonhoeffer saw what happened when individual members resist regular periods of solitude. He observed how people are apt to throw themselves into community in a futile attempt to escape their aching loneliness. Such strategies of avoidance are doomed to fail. Rather than alleviate a sense of inner isolation they end up compounding it. And the community always suffers as a result. Without the silence of solitude, speech—so essential for genuine interaction—becomes hollow and cheap. Bonhoeffer also warned against a specious, unhealthful solitude that shuns involvement with others in the church: “Whoever cannot stand being in community should beware of being alone.” Julia Gatta

Today: Daily Office, Lectio Divina, the Word from Silence

In our Anglican tradition two of the primary ways we stay grounded are the Daily Office and spiritual reading and/or Lectio Divina. We’ll do both today. We will also give special attention to the Word coming forth out of God’s silence.

An Attitude of Silence in the Daily Office

The Daily Office is our tradition's first way of developing a deeper inner silence in the baptized person. Day-by-day we are fed by the Word. We may engage the grace of this pathway in the Office itself and possibly even more as we move through the day in moments of recollection.

The Office has three primary elements: psalms, readings, the common prayers. It also has a rhythm. Our focus in this workshop will be on the practices that nurture that rhythm.

As you say the Daily Office with others there are several traditional practices that will aid the harmony of the community and nurture an attitude of silence within you. Together the practices allow you to express, and thereby experience, a stillness and silence that is outward and physical as well as inner, of the mind and spirit.

These pages focus on the Daily Office practices that nurture stillness and silence within us; and more, what Martin Thornton called "habitual recollection" – the "constant recollection of Christ's presence."

*Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in any thing,
To do it as for thee*
The Temple, George Herbert

The Practices

Arrive early

Saint Benedict understood that nothing was "to be preferred to the Work of God", that is, to the Daily Office. The saint wanted the community to set aside whatever other tasks they were involved with and go to the chapel when it was time to pray.

It nurtures our inner silence when we are not rushed and preoccupied during the Office. It is also courteous to others as our arriving late disrupts their silence. Arriving just a few minutes early allows us to settle down, mark our Prayer Book, and become present.

We might also note that Benedict was gentle in his expectation. The first morning psalm was to be said slowly so as to allow a kind of grace period for those slow arriving. He made space for our frailty while expecting our full participation.

Mark the pages

Before the Office begins use the ribbons in the Prayer Book to mark the pages for today's service – the beginning of the Office, the psalms that will be said, the canticles. Do the same with the Hymnal if a hymn is to be sung. Note: All this assumes that those leading the Office have the sense to announce the pages before the Office begins instead of having to exercise control step-by-step through the Office. The information might be put on a small chalkboard, a card outlining the order of service, or some other method.

Sources for Bookmark Ribbons

http://leathermissalcovers.co.uk/index.php?route=product/product&path=63&product_id=68

<https://www.churchpublishing.org/products/riverribbonbookmark>

Silence and stillness

Outward silence and stillness before beginning the Office and after each reading. Some parishes use the ringing of a bell to mark silences. It may help you to keep in mind that your lack of silence and stillness isn't just about you; it takes away the silence and stillness of others.

Making silence

It may help you to think of silence as something you make happen. We "make" silence in the same sense that we "make" noise." So, no whispering or foot tapping. One more thing – be sure your cell phone is off or on airplane mode.

Being still

You are seeking a relaxed stillness. Manage your twitching. It's not the time to take a drink of water, or flip pages in the Prayer Book, or read the order of service. Be still!

Ringling a bell

Some parishes make use of a small prayer bell. It is rung softly before the office begins. It's an invitation to enter into stillness and silence. After 90 seconds +/- the bell is rung a second time. Remain still and silent until you cannot hear the bell. We leave silence, not abruptly, but gently.

A source for a bell. This bell is for a relatively small space.

<https://mimosaspirit.com/product/zen-buddhist-singing-bowl/>

Rhythm and pace

Congregations develop their own rhythm and pace. Allow yourself to become aware of the rhythm and pace of the community before jumping in.

Gentleness

There are several aspects of the gentleness needed. You might invite yourself into calmness and lightness. As appropriate, when gathering acknowledging others and asking after them and those they love.

In saying and singing offer a voice that is neither loud or so quiet that you seem disengaged. We are seeking to be in harmony with one another in our adoration and praise of God. The ability of the gathered community to have a shared rhythm and pace is made easier if each speaks and sings so they can hear themselves and others

Your gentleness allows you and others to be in God's presence in a manner that gives God room to touch us. We may find joy and peace, or truth and justice; we may find a deep tranquility or a nudge that unsettles us. Loud, rushed voices make it hard for us to hear.

Don't compete

There may be someone in the congregation who hasn't yet learned to use a gentle voice. They don't seem to be aware of the pace, rhythm, and volume of the group. You may feel tempted to raise your own voice in order to assert the norm. Don't; it will only add to the problem. Gently maintain the norms or if that becomes impossible, allow yourself to be silent.

Saying the psalms

There are two practices that help feed an inner silence – alternating the saying of the verses of a psalm from side-to-side and pausing at the asterisk. They help us avoid the runaway train system of saying the psalms. Reflection comes more naturally.

Here's what the Prayer Book says –

Antiphonal recitation is the verse-by-verse alternation between groups of singers or readers; e.g., between choir and congregation, or between one side of the congregation and the other. The alternate recitation concludes either with the Gloria Patri, or with a refrain (called the antiphon) recited in unison. This is probably the most satisfying method for reciting the psalms in the Daily Office. (BCP p. 582)

An asterisk divides each verse into two parts for reading or chanting. In reading, a distinct pause should be made at the asterisk (BCP p. 583)

Coaching

For a public daily office to function well in a parish church there needs to be competent coaching. All the elements mentioned only work in an effective and integrated manner if there is active, gentle guidance. You don't want to be harsh but you do want them to have the experience of group unity and harmony. So, if you are responsible for the norms of the Daily office, you need to call on your capacity for persistence and kindness.

Two suggestions:

- 1) When a person is new to saying the public office suggest that they not work hard at participating; that they might be quite and listen until they get a sense of the pace and rhythm of the Office, especially in saying the psalms. A note to that effect might be included on an order of service card.
- 2) Every so often do some coaching before beginning the Office. You'll have noticed when the group, or an individual, is not in harmony. Have the whole group rehearse a practice. For example, if you want to help them move toward a shared volume, have them say a portion of O Gracious Light (*Phos hilaron*). First tell them that you are seeking a shared volume. That may be enough. Thank and praise them if the group attains it. If a person or two are "off" (usually too loud) say something like, "some of you are still a bit too loud. Let's try that again."

Saying the Office on your own

Remember this – you are never really saying the Office on your own! It's the daily common prayer of the church. It's always with others whether sitting next to you or scattered in their homes and places of work. You are saying the Office with the communion of saints and the angels of God.

Most people find that saying the Office is more sustainable if it is said with others. So, if the parish offers daily Evening Prayer, get yourself there at least some of the time. If the parish uses the practices above, you'll be reinforced in those practices when you are sitting alone at the kitchen table with the Prayer Book in hand.

You can apply the practices as seems best for your temperament and situation. When Robert does the Office at home he sits on his sofa often with a cup of tea. Before beginning he looks up the psalms and readings, marks the Prayer Book, and sits quietly for a moment. He reads the psalms slowly, allowing for the pause at the asterisk. His practice is to do Morning Prayer after having read the news and had his first coffee. Sometimes he will do a short Lectio Divina (see below) with one of the readings for that day. Michelle –

Lectio Divina

A slow, meditative reading of scripture. At a time when we are alert. In a quiet and restful place. You need time enough so there is no sense of being hurried.

1. Select a passage; possibly in advance, the day before. Possibly a section of a reading from the Daily Office readings or next Sunday's Eucharist.
2. **Lectio** Read the passage slowly, pause as you want. Read slowly, gently listening for God's word for you. Read it again, and possibly again. Notice the phrases and words. What word or phrase draws your attention or touches you? Possibly read it aloud. Let the facts settle in; brood over them, allow them to enter imagination & memory. It is a matter of our spiritual development to cultivate the ability to listen deeply, to hear "with the ear of our hearts."
3. **Meditatio** - Reflection on the text. Bring to mind memories and associations related to the text. Allow the reading to sink into your heart and mind. Join Mary "pondering in her heart." Gently repeat the word or phrase, allow it to touch your thoughts, longings and hopes.
4. **Oratio** - Listening & responding to God. Respond silently or aloud with thoughts, words, desires, feelings, commitments, sorrow, and gratitude. Are there major concerns or joys in your life at the moment that this reading is addressing? Is there some area of your life where God may be inviting you to grow?
5. **Contemplatio** - Sit and enjoy the presence of God. Allow God to enter a deeper place in us. Trust that God is working within even if we do not notice. Rest in God's presence

Do not be overly tight about the steps. In practice they may flow from one to another; may happen at the same time. It may be a useful learning method to stay with the steps as separate acts for an initial period.

The Rhythm of Christian Life and of Lectio

The Christian life can be seen as a cycle between being renewed in our baptismal identity and purpose and an apostolate in which we are instruments of God's love in the world. The cycle is between a conscious and intentional attention to God, prayer life, our relationships, Christian formation **and** a subconscious reliance upon God as members of the Body of Christ, in the workplace, family, friendship, civic life and congregational life. (See *Fill All Things*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008)

The practice of lectio *divina* depends on that cycle. It is grounded in our developing the capacity for a gentle oscillation between action/practice and receptivity and renewal. In the one we are being transformed into the likeness of Christ. In the other we are actively cooperating with God's grace in human life.

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Word out of silence

“The place of corporate silence is well marked in the early liturgies; and appears to be intimately connected with the development of the collect, or prayer in which the priest or leader gathered up the inarticulate supplications of the faithful and presented them to God. ... The silent intercessory action of the priest within the sanctuary is intended to be accompanied by that of the whole congregation, bound together in this concerted movement of supplication and love. In wordless prayer, joining in the secret prayer of their pastor, all the people pray for all men and for all good things.” Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*

“While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thine almighty Word, O Lord, leapt down from heaven from Thy royal throne.”
Introit, Sunday within the Octave of Christmas

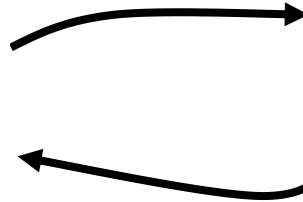
Silence & Action

While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thine almighty Word, O Lord, leapt down from heaven from Thy royal throne. Introit, Sunday within the Octave of Christmas

Silence

In silence we are trained by the Spirit into an awareness of the Presence. We may join in the harmony of the Company of Heaven in adoration and awe.

The "indwelling Christ" – the Jesus who acts and speaks from inner silence. The One in whom we dwell and who dwells in us.



Action

To the extent that we have become silent, have developed an inner silence and stillness, that will show itself in our action – in work, with friends and family, and in civic life.

We act from an inner silence.

Our task

Learning to be silent and still. Opening ourselves to God's silence

The starting place

Living the Threefold Rule of Prayer (the Prayer Book Pattern) nurtures and supports our learning silence. It grounds our silence in sacrament, Word and reflectiveness. For most of us we need to begin with, and nurture, two practices: First, saying the Daily Office. We are to allow ourselves to be fed by saying the psalms, hearing the Scriptures and joining in the Prayers of the Church. Second, a pattern of spiritual reading. For those in the Anglican tradition it may be most fruitful to read within your own tradition allowing yourself to be influenced by God speaking through writers such as Evelyn Underhill, Julia Gatta, Desmond Tutu, Martin Thornton, Frank Griswold, and Esther deWaal. Read a page or so at a time. Read slowly.

In whom we live, and move and have our being

The Presence is usually a sub-conscious awareness of the presence of God, the holy angles, and the whole company off heaven. It's a condition of the mature Christian living in the world as salt and light; as instruments of the Divine Charity. This awareness of God's presence is a state of being in Christ and also being fully in the world. In one sense, what's called habitual recollection, is the end of all our worship. The human personality is brought into harmony as we experience the Presence.

An inner core of silence

Any authentic priesthood must derive from an inner core of silence, a life hid with Christ in God ...Only those who are at home with silence and darkness will be able to survive in, and minister to, the perplexity and confusion of the modern world. Let us seek that dark silence out of which an authentic ministry and a renewed theology can grow and flourish. Kenneth Leech, 1988 retreat of the Order of the Ascension.

Parish priests can aid all in the congregation through their own silence and stillness. This is largely done by nurturing a climate – no rushing, avoiding, controlling, or insisting rather calmness, tranquility, still, quiet, ready for the invasion of Love. In the Eucharist observing the silence of the Breaking of the Bread and the tradition of pausing before beginning a collect ("in which the priest or leader gathered up the inarticulate supplications of the faithful and presented them to God. -Underhill)

What is true for the priest is true for all the baptized. An inner core of silence is necessary if our action is to be holy and righteous.

Fear

We fear silence because we fear loneliness. Our loneliness will move into hostility and illusion unless we learn to meet God in solitude. Fear also prevents us from acting for truth and justice. We fear the consequences of suffering and loneliness that may come.

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Exercises & Reflection

Reflection: Daily Office and Silence

1. What fed the silence and stillness within you?
2. What did you find challenging?
3. Your connection with the spiritual rationale of the Office.

Which of these attract you, speak to you?

___ *enters the ancient cycle of prayer* Evelyn Underhill,

___ *a means by which we pray with the whole church, uniting our prayer with that of millions of other Christians living and dead.* Kenneth Leech

___ *we became more and more aware of the living reality of the invisible "communion of saints"* Jonathan Daniels

___ *It feeds into the invisible economy of Grace, God's hidden plumbing, for the good of the world keep ourselves in constant awareness of the divine order; an order of love and justice which embraces and underlies all order.* Father George Guiver CR

___ *The most important thing the Office does for me is to pry me out of my own agenda, not by helping me ignore my feelings, whatever they might be, but by giving me a place to put them.* Bryan Carr

___ *I come to the text where I am at, and just by virtue of engaging with it (reading it), the Spirit works, often invisibly, sometimes visibly.* Susan Forshey

Which need does the Office primarily address for you? (Either orientation is legitimate; at times we need one more than the other)

___ For prayer as comfort; needs to touch my emotions; needs to feel gentle and encouraging

___ For prayer as discipline; a form of self-giving; of loving obedience. (Father George Guiver CR)

For use as spiritual reading

From *Spiritual Friendship*, Aelred of Rievaulx

From Book One -

1. AELRED. You and I are here, and I hope that Christ is between us as a third. 1
Now no one else is present to disturb the peace or to interrupt our friendly
conversation. No voice, no noise invades our pleasant retreat. Yes, most beloved,
open your heart now and pour whatever you please into the ears of a friend. 2
Gratefully let us welcome the place, the time, and the leisure.

From Book Three -

128. Finally, to close our conference, with the sun setting fast, have no doubt that
friendship grows out of love. If you do not love yourself, how can you love another?
For from the likeness of the love with which you are personally dear to yourself, you
ought to direct your love for your neighbor. 168 But the one who exacts of himself
or inflicts on himself anything disgraceful or dishonest does not love himself. 129.
The first requirement is that each one purify himself, permitting himself nothing
unbecoming, denying himself nothing worthwhile. But one who so loves himself by
following those guidelines should also love his neighbors. 169 Now since such love
includes many persons, let each one select from among them some to admit on
familiar terms to the secrets of friendship and someone on whom to lavish affection,
baring the breast to disclose even its veins and sinews, the thoughts and intentions
of the heart. 170 130. Let his choice not follow the wantonness of affection but the
insight of reason and be led by a resemblance of character and a regard for virtue.
Then let him so devote himself to his friend as to banish all levity, welcome all joy,
and provide the services and duties required by good will and charity. As a friend,
immediately test trustworthiness, honesty, and patience. Then proceed little by little
to shared counsel, dedication to similar pursuits, and a certain similarity of
countenance. 171 131. Friends should so resemble each other that at a glance
one takes on the expression of the other, whether it is downcast by sorrow or
relaxed in joy. When you have assured yourself that a friend so selected and proved
desires neither to seek from you anything shameful nor, if asked, to offer you
anything shameful, and when you are satisfied that your friend considers friendship
a virtue, not a bargain, and that he abhors flattery, detests adulation, and has been
found frank but discreet, patient under correction, and strong and constant in
affection, then you will experience this spiritual sweetness: "how good and how
pleasant it is for brethren to live in unity." 172 132. What an advantage it is, then,
to grieve for one another, to work for one another, to bear one another's burdens,
173 when each finds it a pleasure to disregard himself for the sake of another, to
prefer another's will to one's own, to meet another's need rather than one's own, to

oppose and expose oneself to adversity! Meanwhile, how delightful friends find their meetings together, the exchange of mutual interests, the exploration of every question, and the attainment of mutual agreement in everything. 133. Surpassing all this is prayer for each other. 174 In remembering a friend, the more lovingly one sends forth prayer to God, with tears welling up from fear or affection or grief, the more effective that prayer will be. Thus praying to Christ for a friend and desiring to be heard by Christ for a friend, we focus on Christ with love and longing. Then sometimes suddenly, imperceptibly, affection melts into affection, and somehow touching the sweetness of Christ nearby, one begins to taste how dear he is and experience how sweet he is. 175 134. Thus rising from that holy love with which a friend embraces a friend to that with which a friend embraces Christ, one may take the spiritual fruit of friendship fully and joyfully into the mouth, while looking forward to all abundance in the life to come. When the fear is dispelled that now fills us with dread and anxiety for one another, when the hardship is removed that we must now endure for one another, when, moreover, along with death the sting of death is removed¹⁷⁶—the sting that so often pierces and distresses us and makes us grieve for one another—then with the beginning of relief from care we shall rejoice in the supreme and eternal good, when the friendship to which on earth we admit but few will pour out over all and flow back to God from all, for God will be all in all. 177-

For Use in Lectio Divina

The Gospel reading for the Feast of Aelred of Rievaulx

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. (John 15:9-17)