

Living a Rule of Life

The Christian's rule of Life must, at least, include (1) Praying, (2) Worshipping, (3) Reading, (4) Giving. However, young or old these "ings" must be put into action if one is to exercise militant Christianity. The Rule must be progressive. Simple for young people, more mature for the older, but covering the four "ings".

(1) **PRAYING** As soon as one awakes to dedicate oneself to God, because one must live eternity in one day, and it must begin right. In the Name of the Father, etc., I come from God; I belong to God; I go to God; I praise my God this day; I give myself to god this day, I ask God to help me this day, etc., ought to be a sample of the minimum dedication every day. Then as you regulate your time, other praying, remembering that you are a member of the Whole Church, the One Body, and your praying must be done on that basis, and for it. During the day you can practice ejaculatory prayer. When you pass the Church say, "My Lord and My God" or God bless the clergy and the parish. When you pass a hospital pray for the doctors, nurses, attendants, sick injured and dying. A home of mourning, a passing burial group, or a cemetery suggest prayer for those in sorrow and the departed. Many times during the day developments and events may stimulate prayer to the Holy spirit for guidance. St. Paul urges praying continuously. Learn the art of

prayer. One may be a good baseball or football player, and yet fail repeatedly because lacking in the art of the sports. At noon time the bells, and even the whistles remind us to say the Angelus, a memorial of the Incarnation and its extension through missions. Nights may permit longer praying unless one is fatigued and with the danger of briefing or neglect. Night praying should include Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession of Sin, Intercession. Petition, and Memorials of the Departed.

The church building is always open (if not, why not?) for prayer, and you should practice the habit of stopping in and praying there. Devotional manuals are a guide and should be used, but avoid becoming glued to one only. One of the best comprehensive intercessory manuals is *SURSUMCORDA*.

(2) **WORSHIPING**. It is an art that must be learned, and one must worship to learn. One must obey to love. To love God one must obey Him by worshipping. The Offices of Instruction in the Book of Common Prayer informs us that we cannot love God less than worshipping Him "every Sunday in His Church". That, like much in the Prayer Book is a minimum. From what has been revealed, worship will play an important part in eternity. One cannot miss school, lectures, payments on debts, etc. without incurring a penalty. So with worship. Further, we let the whole Body of the Church down, as well as ourselves, when we miss worship, carelessly. Character building suffers. Our sense of values cheapens. So we must learn to attend the Divine Office, which are Morning and Evening Prayer, as well as the worship of the whole Body of the Church, the Holy

Eucharist. That should not be confined to Sundays. All major Holy Days should be included. Anniversaries of baptism, confirmation, etc. Further, our worship should be offered with preparation, intention and thanksgiving. It is something God gives us which we give back with something in addition. Sacrifice, inconvenience, enthusiasm, coldness, beauty and plainness all are part of the return. When we cannot worship in the Church, when we are prevented in several ways, we can offer up a definite act of Spiritual Communion which all proper devotional manuals direct.

(3) **READING**. Includes the Bible. The Book of Common Prayer sets forth a daily reading scheme in the forefront along with daily Morning and Evening Prayer. Many laypeople read at least one Office a day, and that takes probably twenty minutes. Others follow the scripture readings as most convenient covering the two groups of Old and New Testament readings in four years, and beginning over again. They meditate upon the reading as they have time. Some use Forward because it ties them down to a brief rule, and suggests food for meditation. Some purchase a one volume Bible Commentary and take time to ferret out the meanings of what has been written. Nearly every parish has a loaning library, and very few books are borrowed. Every Priest will direct reading and loan books. Also in building up a permanent small Church reference library on subjects covering topics of continuing ordinary interest, and with indexes so that questions

can be answered when asked. The danger is not in reading too much but reading too little on the right subjects. It is wrong to subscribe to so many magazines and not to one of the Church which acts as a current newspaper. The reason we have so few Church magazines is the lack of demand, our young people and others do not read or demand them. This is sinful, because it lets down those whom God has called to write.

(4) **GIVING.** We believe in the Incarnation, and that means our Lord re-deemed the body and the soul. We belong to God. We must make our bodies work for God, first. That means the body must be disciplined by fasting, abstinence and good works. All that we have belongs to and came from God. Therefore, we must learn to give it back to Him. That includes elements of time, labor, and things including money. When the people of God were a theocracy the minimum was ten percent. That was a duty. It became a sacrifice or an offering after that. Conditions have changed, but a certain percentage must be worked out no matter how many welfare, charitable and tax demanding organizations raid our resources. The Church must come first, and the Church places the family and individual necessary needs first. Our Lord through the sermon on the Poor Widow giving her all sets the standard. He wants in return from everyone no matter how limited one's possessions. He is our teacher in building character for eternity as well as in this life. The church plant is God's.

We should be keen about it being kept up. We should do the work ourselves, offer ourselves for it, or that is done. We should offer ourselves to carry on the work in connection with daily and Sunday services and programs. We should not be asked to make a pledge of money. We should do it, and generously. We should support the work of the Church, now, locally, extend it through missions and all agencies at work, and in the future when we have passed on through endowment funds. Giving is also an art. It is something to be learned and developed.

CONCLUSION. There will never be two Rules alike. They must be made to fit the lives and conditions of everyone. However, the rule we make is the measure of our enthusiasm, and the word enthusiasm means the extent to which we are God-impelled because we love Him for what He is, and we want others to love Him too. Further, we want His Church to grow, and strongly, beginning with "me". Finally, one should give thought to an annual retreat either in a religious house or under the direction of a Priest. Yearly your Rule of Life should be examined and changed according to your spiritual progress. Consider becoming an associate of one of the Religious Orders.



Living a Rule of Life

This tract, scanned from a tract printed many years ago (undated), was written by Fr. Harry Ruth, (long-time Secretary General of the OSV) sometime between 1915 and 1963. In this printing, we have not edited or updated the text to "better fit the times we live in." In the future, this tract will be expanded.

We hope you are edified and inspired by Fr. Ruth's wisdom.



St. Vincent's Tract
No. 10

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