

A RULE OF LIFE (by Br. Peter, CoS)

Most of us never stop to think about how we want our life to look, at least not consciously. Usually we just respond to what opens in front of us and we go with the flow. Many spiritual traditions invite their members to create or discern a Rule of Life for themselves as individuals and as communities. The Baptismal Covenant in the Book of Common Prayer is the Episcopal Church's vision for its life. It says what we believe to be important and what we intend to do about it. As an exercise to help with your spiritual journey, why not try to create one for yourself?

Your Rule of Life should reflect who you want to be in all aspects of your life. This includes who you believe God wants you to be. So who do you want to be? Feel free to jot some ideas down on paper and remember that there are no wrong answers because it's your life and you get to decide where you go with this.

Begin by making time to sit quietly and to reflect on these areas of your life:

- Relationships
- prayer and worship
- educational/learning/experiences
- service to others
- material concerns
- work
- solitude and creative elements
- fun
- health
- food
- anything else you think is important

What do you want from and for your relationships? What is your prayer like and what are you willing to commit to? Do you like your work? If not, what are you willing to do to change either your job or your attitude about your job? Where does your money go? How do you serve and who do you serve? Do you have fun? Be honest, do you really make time for fun? Does what you eat say anything about what you believe?

With questions like these you can do a great deal of soul searching and self discovery.

As you work on this, if you find yourself judging (and condemning) yourself, stop and go for a walk. You need a time out. In the course of this exercise, whatever you decide about who you want to be and no matter how you progress, be gentle with yourself. In Saint Benedict's Rule for monks he lists all the good works a monastic (or a Christian) should do and then he says: "never despair of the mercy of God." He added that line to invite all of us to remember that we will always be working TOWARD our goal with lots of unskillful movements and some genuine leaps forward. The point of a Rule of Life is the life part and not the rule.

Peace.

Br. Peter - September 2009