TO LIVE TOGETHER WELL

LENT COURSE 2022



SOUTH CARDIFF MINISTRY AREA

WELCOME

to the first ever Lent Course for the newly formed South Cardiff Ministry Area.

TO LIVE TOGETHER WELL will be using the ancient Christian practice of developing some kind of Rule of Life together. Inspired by the monastic communities which began so many centuries ago to help them live well, we'll be exploring our modern day living here in the South of Cardiff, how we can live and grow together, strengthen the community of Faith of which we are a part, and serve and be a witness to the wider community.

We'll be delivering the Lent Course each Wednesday morning at St Paul's Church, Grangetown, and on Wednesday evenings in a different church within the Ministry Area each week.

However, we'll also be engaging with the material of the course through social media and online, stirring up some online conversations and engaging with the joys and challenges of how **TO LIVE TOGETHER WELL**.

We are grateful to Fr Edward for writing this course, and we are also more than pleased to share it with others beyond our Ministry Area if it's useful to your situation! At the back of this booklet you'll also find some links to helpful resources for some of the sessions.



WEEK I

Setting the Scene Where are we going to go together?

At the heart of the Christian life is growing in knowledge and love of God. Our Christian journey, whilst deeply personal, is never just and individual undertaking. At the heart of the life of faith, is the concept of belonging one to another.

This year we are beginning our journey together as the South Cardiff Ministry Area. But what does that mean in practical terms for our growth of faith? This Lent, though a four-week course, we are going to look at some things that

we can do together to build up our relationships and to deepen our Christian discipleship.

We will explore this through looking at a Rule of Life. We aren't just doing this for ourselves, but rather to look at our life together as churches in South Cardiff belonging to the wider church.

We know that in any group of people you must have a set of expectations of how you will belong together. A Rule of Life is not there to create difficulties for us and make us do things that prove impossible, but rather to help us to reflect on how our journey of faith is going, to think about what we are able to do well and to reflect on the things that we need to do better.





- Why do we need rules?
- How can rules be helpful to us?
- How can rules cause us difficulty?

Within the Christian tradition there are lots of different *Rules of Life*. Initially they were found in the monastic tradition of the Church, helping those early communities to live together well.

The Church in Wales' Rule of Life material promotes four basic activities which it says springs out of the Rule of St Benedict.

Consequently, the four activities are:

- Praying and listening to God daily, worshipping with the church and being fed by him in the Eucharist.
- Growing in our understanding of God by daily Bible reading and reflection and learning together with the church
- Serving God in our daily life and work
- Sharing God's gifts of time, talents and money with our neighbours, the church, the community and the world.

These four activities are seen as our **RESPONSE** to the **LOVE** of **GOD**.

Towards the end of *The City is my Mon*astery, Richard Carter explains how the **Nazareth Community's Rule of Life** was formed. He was asked to think of three verbs that summarized his ministry. He found this small number rather constraining, so he came up with more, and in time, the seven verbs of the Nazareth Community:

to behold | to accept | to gather | to inspire | to enrich | to restore | to live

Seven concepts relating to the seven verbs then followed:

Silence

Service

Sacrament

Scribture

Sharing

Sabbath

Staying

The verbs can be active and passive:

"To behold and to be beheld"

In their completeness, they are threefold, with God beginning the action

so that we are beheld; we behold; we are beheld

Things to think about for next time

- How can a Rule of Life help us as individuals?
- How could a Rule of Life help us as we come together as the South Cardiff Ministry Area?

SETTING THE SCENE



Some explanation may be necessary for going into such an obvious subject as the meaning of prayer. Why not start with something more practical, like how to pray, or how to improve our prayer, and not begin with what must seem like needless concern with words?

But I do not think it is wasted effort to talk about what so many people are not doing, or not doing as well as they could. On all sides we hear it said that the basic problem in the world today is the fact that people are not praying, or not praying enough, and this is true. But it is not enough to say that we should pray and should encourage others to do the same.

We had better also know what prayer really means. Otherwise, as has happened to so many of us, without actually giving up prayer, we do not profit as much as we should from what is by all odds the most profitable enterprise in which any person can engage. There is nothing more profitable in which any human being can engage than to pray.

- Why do you pray?
- How do you pray?
- Do you feel confident in your prayer life?

Prayer is Conversation

We begin therefore by describing prayer in as simple a language as we, that is, I can. Prayer is conversation with the invisible world of God, the angels and the saints. We shall take each one of these terms in sequence, and first talk about prayer as conversation.

What is conversation, any conversation with anyone? Or from another viewpoint: What do we do when we engage someone in conversation? We do several things.

First. We begin to converse with somebody when we become aware of that person. Awareness, then, is the first condition for conversation.

Suppose I am just talking out loud to myself without realizing that I am being overheard. Is that conversation?

Well, no. Why not? Because I was not aware of the other person's presence. If I was doing anything I was in conversation with myself. In fact, I think most people spend most of their waking hours in selfconversation, which is called, to give it a kind term, soliloguy. Whereas, true conversation is always colloquy. It is not only awareness, but awareness of someone else's presence besides my own. And so many people go through life, I'm afraid, only dimly aware of anyone else's presence except their own. That is why selfcentered people, even when they are apparently in conversation out loud



with someone else, are most often really talking to themselves. Ever watch it? It is a spectacle. Real conversation begins when I become aware of another, with stress on the other, and not only of myself.

Second. Besides being aware of someone, and it has to be someone else, conversation means that I wish to share with that other person something of what I have. I wish to give of myself, of what is inside of me, or a part of me to that other person.

There are thoughts in my mind that I also want them to have. There are sentiments in my heart, desires in my will and feelings in my soul, that I do not wish to possess alone. So I enter into conversation in order to share.

So true is this, that logically and psychologically I should not begin a conversation unless I have something that I wish to give someone else, which presumably that person does not yet have. That is why the highest act of charity among human beings is conversation, provided it is genuine and not spurious conversation.

Third. There is still more to conversation, as the very word implies. When I begin to converse, I literally turn toward the one with whom I wish to speak. The movement of my body facing that person is only the

external symbol of what I should be doing inside of me. I am turning my spirit toward the one with whom I wish to talk.

But as we know, it is quite possible to be physically facing someone without really conversing. There is no conversation worthy of the name, unless I have thus inwardly, turned aside from self and directed myself to another. We seldom reflect on the fact that the words convert, conversion and conversation all have the same fundamental meaning of redirection; a turning away from one thing, in this case self, and toward something else, in this case another person.

True, sincere, deep, genuine, total conversation is more rare than we think. So often, I believe, we use other people, as we say, as sounding boards to listen to our own voice. They are just convenient to help us in what is still a continuous soliloquy. All real conversation, therefore, has this element of self-denial, or from another viewpoint, self-sacrifice where I turn from preoccupation with my own thoughts and desires and direct them toward someone else.

Fourth. What is my purpose when I hold a conversation?

My purpose is, or should be to com-

municate. My intention is to bridge the gap that separates me from another person to unite myself with that other person, in a word, to communicate by transferring something of what is me to become part of what is he or she. We become united mainly by what we share of our own spirit with another person.

Our Saviour expressed for all time the deep meaning of conversation as communication when He told the Apostles how they were no longer strangers to Him but His friends (cf. Jn. 15:15). Why? Because "I have shared with you what is in Me. I've told you what, before I spoke, was only on My mind. Now it's also on your minds. We have become united because part of Me is now part of you. You and I are united because I have communicated to you what before I spoke to you was only Mine."

And then to emphasize the gravity of what He was doing He said it was the Father, who first in conversation with the Son, had shared the plenitude of the divine nature so that the Son in turn might share of that fullness with others who would mainly become His children because they would now receive what before belonged only to the Trinity. "You belong to Me," still Christ in paraphrase, "and I belong to you because we now have in common the secrets that were hidden with God from all eternity."

We might, with reverence, re-describe the Trinity as the eternal, infinite conversation among the three persons who constitute the Deity.



Fifth and finally. Every conversation in some way or other employs a response from the one to whom I am speaking. Conversation is not merely talking to someone, it is talking with someone.

Unless that person also says something to me I may be giving a speech or making an announcement, but I am hardly conversing. The way that person responds to me is immaterial. It may be just a smile, or depending on what I said, a frown. It may be only an occasional word or two; it may be only a yes with different inflections. You know, of course, there are at least fifty ways of saying yes.

No matter what I say to that person, it must evoke something that he says to me or we are not, in the deepest sense of the word, in conversation. It takes two, at least, to converse, even when one may do most of the talking and the other, or others, do most of the listening. I should add, just for the record, that when I speak publicly, besides looking at the script I mainly watch the eyes and faces of my audience. I want to make sure that we are in conversation.



Things to think about

How might you find something new in your prayer life?



As a Ministry Area, the Eucharist is at the centre of our witness. There is a Eucharist every day of the year. But why is it so important?

The Eucharist is an important part of the catholic tradition and has extreme significance to the Church and its people.

This significance is strongly asserted by the Church since the Eucharist is the only time that the "Real Presence of Jesus" can be found as the body and blood of Christ; represented by the Bread and Wine.

The significance of the Eucharist is not only derived from the fact that it is the Real Presence of Jesus; but is important and significant as it is food for the nurturing of our soul in the form of Jesus.

- How were you introduced to the Eucharist?
- Are there any parts of the structure of the liturgy that you find significant?

Transformation

During the Eucharist we see the work of transformation taking place

We...

gather
confess our sins,
listen to the Word of the Lord,
revealed to us in Holy Scripture,
pray for the needs of the community,
offer the gifts of
Bread and Wine to God,
receive Communion,
depart with God's blessing.

Bread and Wine

Physical nurturing of the body for the human during the Eucharist

Body and Blood of Christ

Found in the Bread and Wine is significant as it nurtures the human soul and internally helps us be cleansed of our sins.

In the Papal Encyclical: Ecclesia de Eucharistia,
Pope John Paul II states that:

The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is "the source and summit of the Christian life... For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our Passover and living bread. Through his own flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men".

This evidences the importance of the Eucharist due to it is the true source of spiritual wealth that is inherited by taking in the body and blood of Christ.

By taking this we are receiving Jesus' sacrifice and his offer of life to all who believe in him.

The Last Supper

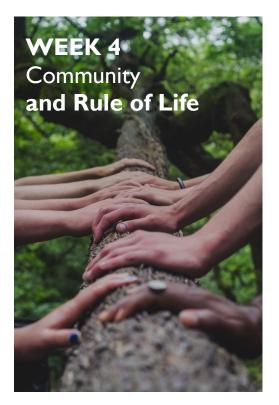
The Eucharist is also significant due to it's connection to the Last Supper.

Every time the Eucharist is celebrated it is the re-calling of the first ever Eucharist that occurred; in conjunction with Jesus' final moments, it clearly dictates the importance of the meal we are receiving.

It emulates the Last Supper and it is clear to us that Jesus and God are substantially present in the sacrament.

- How does the Eucharist strengthen your faith?
- How can we help deepen our experience of the Eucharist?
- How can we help introduce people who are new to the Church to the importance of the Eucharist?





Going to church can be hard. It's a commitment on a weekend morning that will likely require you to get up early, you might have to drive to get there, and it's fairly likely that you won't feel like going when your alarm goes off on Sunday morning.

It can be hard to find a church that feels right, especially if you're a new Christian or have recently moved. And...church is full of *people* and their idiosyncrasies, problems and faults.

Plus, these days you can watch a sermon online—recorded or live—from

the comfort of your own home, in your PJs, while eating your breakfast. Isn't that good enough?

No, and here's why:

God intended us to gather together to worship Him. He's aware that you can do this alone with your bagels, and He still created the concept of "church" and then made sure that the Bible tells us how important it is. He did this for our sake...and there are some really good reasons behind it. So why should you go to church?

You need to be under some kind of spiritual authority.

I know...nobody really loves to hear that. What we're *not* talking about here is being under the authority of a spiritual leader who wants to control every aspect of your life, or who demands unreasonable or unbiblical things of you. What's important is that you've got someone who is looking out for you, who you can go to with questions, and who you will listen to if you've gotten off course in your walk with the Lord or in your life choices.

The Bible clearly lays out requirements for those who are in a position of authority in a church (*Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7*), and although we can all bring to mind situations where church authority has sinned or

abused power, the vast majority of the time church leaders are helpful, trustworthy, and willing to work with you when you hit hard times.

You need to be in community. The church is a gift—a community, a new family, and a place where you can connect with other believers in a meaningful, life-changing way. The Biblical concept of "church" is not that it's a building or the place where people meet...it's the people who meet there that make up the church. Going to church and attending the Eucharist, and the other events in the life of the Church, will give you the opportunity to meet a wide variety of people. These people can quickly become a second family.

Jesus assumed that we would be meeting together, and the early church gives us examples of the importance of gathering together in worship. Apparently, there were issues with "Lone-Ranger" Christians back then, as well—which is why Paul wrote this to the Hebrews: "not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 25:10)

You are needed in the community. God has given all of us unique spiritual gifts...and these gifts are designed to be used in community. Your ex-

pertise, experience, and abilities are needed in some area of the church community-whether it's teaching in the Sunday School or helping with more practical tasks. Your life experience has given you knowledge and understanding that can help other Christians on their spiritual walk, and God can use even the difficult things you've been through to help others. When you don't go to church, the gifts and knowledge that are uniquely yours go to waste...others are missing out on what you have to offer, and you are missing out on a chance to see how God can use you in ways you never thought possible!

Points for Discussion

- What do you think are the main benefits of gathering in Church?
- When we couldn't worship together during the lockdown how did that make you feel?

Rule of Life

The tradition of the rule of life comes out of religious orders who specified guidelines for how they chose to live out their lives in community. But we can write our own personal rules of life based on our own gifts, life situation, and calling.



KEY INSIGHTS

Intentionality and Accountability

The process of writing a rule allows us to be intentional about our personal call:

how we each believe God is calling us.

It also provides accountability when we come back to it and evaluate our fidelity to it and God.

Structure and Support

Just like tomatoes, beans, and vines need structural support or healthy growth, our lives can benefit from the structure and support that a Rule of Life can provide

- Do you feel that you need a Rule of Life? How might it help you? What might it include?
- Do you think we need a Rule of Life as a Ministry Area? How would it help us live well together?

FURTHER RESOURCES

SESSION I

www.ruleoflife.com https://himpublications.com>rule-of-life-examples www.oxtonstsaviour.co.uk>wp-content>uploads>2019 www.practicingtheway.org

SESSION 2

www.prayingeachday.org www.desiringgod.org www.24-7prayer.com www.therosary.online www.jesusprayer.us

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