



Spiritual Rule for Life

Due: October 9, 2022

Purpose:

Grow in holiness- whether this is to learn more about faith, grow in prayer or tackle a serious sin in life but very often they are not sure exactly where to start. The challenge can be overwhelming and what we can see so often is the difficulty and pain of real conversion. So where do we begin?

The propose is quite simply that those that recognize this need should write their own rule of life, a guide for how they live their daily lives. When we look to the history of the Church, so often what brought about the greatest changes and reforms in the culture of the time were those men and women that lived by a rule of life, that had a measure that they held themselves up against. From the monks of the early Church that followed the rule of Saint Basil or the rule of Saint Benedict on to the various religious orders and movements present today, there has always been a recognition in the Church for the need of a standard. This was so especially in times of great chaos in the world, where everything was permissible and spiritual slavery was the norm.

What is so important to recognize with this, (and what makes it so counter-cultural) that the rule is not meant to be a point of slavery, or an imposition of my life, but the point of rescue. How often we can go throughout our days in distraction, filled with sights and sounds empty of content, without really being reminded of who we are, who God is, and what our lives are about. Rather than being a constant and painful obligation, this promise of prayer can rescued you, from one's selfishness, our distractions, and our pragmatism that can so easily exclude the Lord, the One who has created me, rescued us, and leads us to Himself.

We all live in a variety of circumstances, so it is worth each person praying and thinking about what their particular rule of life should look like and what form it should take. Each Confirmation candidate has their own struggles and particular

challenges, so their rule should match up with them, constantly guiding them to meet Christ within the framework of their lives.

Content:

Make a spiritual rule for yourself to follow. Below are some ideas to have in your rule. Have at least two rules that everyone in your small group agrees to do in your rule. This will help bond the small group and keep everyone more accountable. If it helps, make the rule with a fellow friend so you can hold each other accountable, and using the other person as a sounding board to see if the rule is too strict or too loose and needs to be adjusted. What matters more than anything else is that we are seeking Christ and striving to become the person that He has called us to be, not just for ourselves, but for those that He has called us to love. These are just a few notes to keep in mind while making the rule.

1) **Prayer:** Make time for daily prayer, within your schedule, preferably around the same time. We need this time every day to be reminded of who Christ is, and who we are called to be. This should include time for gratitude before the Lord, praying for others (especially those Christ has placed in front of you, family, friends, etc.), and silent meditation with a text, be it the scriptures or spiritual reading. This is everything. This also includes a closeness to the Sacraments.

*Make a concerted effort to pray for discernment for what your state of life will be. The rule must bring you back to who you are called to be and to meet Christ through it. The mystery of the incarnation is God entering the context of a specific time and place all those years ago and becoming flesh. Christ desires to become flesh within the context of our lives, to be a presence there, so the circumstances of my life are the way I am called to follow Him. For you who are still figuring out what they are called to, there needs to be space in the rule for discernment and striving to grow as men and women, so that whether you are called to marriage or the celibate state, they can offer their lives as the men or women you are called to be.

2) **Reading Scriptures:** Suggestion—at least a chapter of one of the Gospels daily or three or four chapters weekly. Consider memorize Scripture verses to mystically clean your mind. The devil works on us when our mind is not engaged, but we want God to work on us instead. “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” St. Jerome

3) **Monthly Confession.** Awareness of weaknesses: It is amazing how quickly we forget how prone we are to sin until we fall. Part of growing closer to Christ is the becoming more and more aware of our fragility, and how much we need His constant presence to rescue us. To depend on is not weakness or a betrayal of one's masculinity or femininity, but an imitation of Jesus Christ, the fullness of our humanity, who constantly looked to the Father.

4) **Marian or other devotion:** everyone needs this, especially when striving to love chastely. This can take many forms, like Rosary, Devine Mercy Chaplet, the use of Sacramentals, Eucharistic Adoration, fasting, novena's, etc.

5) **Encouraging growth:** very often there are many things we would like to do, but never make time for, like exercising, learning a trade, etc. Schedule it in and put it in the rule. Make time to exercise. Grace builds on nature.

6) Caution towards one's relationship with technology: very often we don't realize how addicted we are to technology until we see it profoundly in someone else, like when one sees couples in a restaurant, not talking to each other, with their faces glued to their cell phones. It is so easy to throw away so much of our precious time on Netflix, video games, and just moving from one website to the next without even realizing it. To be cautious and intentional about how much time one is spending in the digital world helps to approach it with greater prudence, and not to waste one's life.

7) A good **Examination of Conscience:** If we took a few minutes every day to stand before the Lord, aware of the ways in which we have fallen away from Him with an amendment to do better, we begin to depend on Him more, and slowly become less attached to our sins. This is crucial.

8) **Fraternity:** We need brothers and sisters, good friends who give us hope that it is possible to follow Christ in this life, friends who challenge and encourage us. It is so easy to settle and swallow the proposals of our culture wholesale without the help of one who challenges assumptions. Find others who are actively trying to grow in holiness, open to constant conversion, and stay close to them. The history of the Church does not lie; those that truly brought reform in times of corruption and difficulty were the ones that were constantly open to personal reform within their community. The return to Christ is always a return to the community, to communion.

9) **Charitable work/almsgiving:** This is not just for the sake of the poor, but because we need this. I have found that the more one stays close to the poor, the more they rescue one from our own selfishness and arrogance. We all need this rescue, the closeness with the poor, and using a part of our money as gift and offering. Very often, without this reminder, we will intend to do it, and never actually do so.

Your Rule of Life is to be at least two complete pages (1.5 spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, no extra breaks between paragraphs, 1" margins all.

Due: October 9, 2022

Heading: Please include at the top of the page the following info:

Your Name; Date.

Evaluation:

Each Life Rule will be evaluated on its adherence to the requirements. This exercise if taken seriously and you follow your will benefit you and help give your life meaning and purpose.

Questions:

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask: Ryan Hillman: 765-423-2396 or RHillman@dol-in.org

***This *Rule of Life* contents comes from Fr. Branson Hipp. He is a priest for the Archdiocese of Atlanta. You can find his blog at: thosecatholicmen.com/author/branson-hipp/