

A Common Rule for Monastics

9. PRAYER

1. Although we are always connected with God, prayer is when we are most conscious of it. Prayer is time spent with God, empty and open, ready to receive whatever is offered, ready to give whatever needs to be given. It means being present to the moment, acknowledging the God in us, and us in God, where the divine being and the human being come together as one.

2. What we do in prayer, and how we do it, depends a lot on who we are. It is often shaped by our personality. It can be formal or informal, it can be silent or with words, it can be short or long, it can be structured or spontaneous, it can be done alone, in secret, or when we're in community with others. It can be with music, or candles, or incense, or books, it can be for ourselves or for the world, it can be for telling God something, or for just listening to God. Prayer can even be a walk in the woods, or sitting with our pets.

3. We pray for different reasons, but they're all good reasons. Sometimes we want to give thanks, sometimes we need something for ourselves, sometimes we are asking for others, but sometimes we just want to sit alone with God, to be present with God, and bask in the steadfast love being offered to us.

4. Sometimes we just don't know what to say, or how to say it. And that's when we must let the Holy Spirit speak for us. It may not even be spoken in words, but in images or feelings, because words are often not enough.

5. Prayer usually leaves us changed in some way. Other things around us may not change, God may not change, the problems we face may not change, but the way we understand them may change. And that newness sometimes makes all the difference in the world.

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A fresh approach to action
may be realized,
or we may reconcile
to accept what is.

6. Prayer is the cornerstone of our vocation.
The path to knowing God
is to know our own soul more.
The path to knowing our own soul
is to know God more.
The path to each is prayer.
The more we live in each moment,
the more we will find ourselves
in a state of prayer.
Prayer will blend into service
and into study,
and the three will be hard to tell apart.
And that's the way it should be.

7. Prayer is the breath of life.
Inhaling, we receive God's presence,
love, wisdom, comfort, understanding,
and healing as a gift.
Exhaling, we share this love
in renewal with others as a new self.
It is by this that God will be glorified.