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May 19, 2012
Cohort 2010-1012

Rule of Life for Spiritual Direction

This Rule of Life is my Code of Ethics as a spiritual director. It is appropriate to base this on my personal Rule of Life for two reasons: 1) Spiritual direction is one aspect of my life; and 2) my Rule of Life is similar to the Code of Ethics for the Evangelical Spiritual Directors Association¹ in that it emphasizes my relationship with God and with my neighbor. So this Rule of Life begins with my personal Rule and ends with a Rule specific to spiritual direction.

My Personal Rule of Life

Divine Love says, “The LORD be with you.”² Mary the mother of Jesus responded, “May it be to me as you have said.”³ So “The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”⁴ It is in the physical world that the intangible world meets us. In the Lord Jesus Christ the scrim that hangs between earth and heaven is drawn back. In the Incarnation oneness with God has been restored to those who trust in Immanuel.⁵ Therefore I desire to see all of life in a sacramental (incarnational) manner.

Love for God – In Christ I am increasingly able to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul and mind.⁶ I am well aware that my love for God is solely in response to his love and desire for me.⁷ I am one of God’s creatures, so my instinct is to praise him. I bear about me the mark of death, the sign of my own sin, so I am inclined to fill my need for the Creator with things he created. Yet the image of God within me stirs me so deeply that I cannot be content unless I praise him. God made me for himself and my heart finds no peace until it rests in him.⁸ I am also aware that all that I have comes from God and belongs to God.⁹ Therefore, by the power of the Holy Spirit I choose to respond to God in the following ways:

Worship

- In Christ I delight to worship God corporately in word and sacrament, celebrating the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Risen Lord, be known to us in the breaking of the bread.”¹⁰
- In Christ I delight to devote one day in seven as a Sabbath rest.
- In Christ I delight to worship God privately on a daily basis.
- In Christ I delightfully interact with my wife and other family members about our expressions of faith.

¹ See <http://www.ecswisdom.org/index.php/esda/code-of-ethics>.

² Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23

³ Luke 1:38

⁴ John 1:14

⁵ Thomas Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1984), 34, 46, 57, 64, 81. See also Thomas Howard, *On Being Catholic*, 62: “The Church . . . teaches that in the realm of salvation the physical world . . . has been swept in along with the whole creation, to the precincts of the holy, so that physical things (bread, wine, water) may become the very points at which the unseen and eternal touches the seen and temporal.”

⁶ Matthew 22:37 and Deuteronomy 6:5

⁷ 1 John 4:10

⁸ Based on Saint Augustine, *Confessions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), 21.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 4:7; Romans 11:33-36

¹⁰ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 372.

Stewardship¹¹ of body

- In Christ I delight to exercise regularly.
- In Christ I delight to maintain a healthy body weight.
- In Christ I delight to eat moderately and nutritiously.
- In Christ I delight to eat in a sacramental manner.

Stewardship of mind

- In Christ I delight to meditate on God's word and devotional literature and images that will challenge my intellect and delight my soul.
- In Christ I delight to dismiss thoughts and images that pollute my mind and soul.

Stewardship of time

- Bearing in mind that all time belongs to the Lord, in Christ I delight to devote a measurable amount of time to the service of the LORD God in a variety of ways.

Stewardship of vocation

- In Christ I delight to do the work he calls me to do, relying on him to provide all my needs.

Stewardship of financial resources

- In Christ my wife and I delight to give at least 10% of our gross income to the LORD God through the Church and Parachurch organizations.

Love for My Neighbor – I am also commanded to love my neighbor as myself.¹² Love for my neighbor comes in various forms: family love, friendships, and a unique love for my wife.¹³ There is also a love I am to express for my neighbor that is modeled by our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Good Samaritan.¹⁴ As a Christian I have the privilege of asking God to infuse those natural loves with his love (*agape*).¹⁵ Therefore I am enabled to love my neighbor in the following ways:

Love for my wife

- In Christ my relationship with Judi is my highest and strongest human relationship. Therefore I will guard it above all other human relationships.
- In Christ I desire to love Judi just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her.¹⁶
- In Christ I desire to love Judi in a sacramental manner.

Love for my family

- In Christ I delight to love my parents, brother and sister-in-law, sister, sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren in accordance with their needs and temperaments.

Love for my friends and fellow believers

- In Christ I delight in friendships that are honoring to the LORD and to each friend.

¹¹ Stewardship is an old-fashioned word, yet it is full of meaning. A steward is one who manages another's property, finances, or other affairs (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/stewardship>). That describes my relationship to God.

¹² Matthew 22:39; Leviticus 19:18

¹³ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Inc., 1960), 31-115.

¹⁴ Luke 10:25-37. Joseph Ratzinger Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007), 2001.

¹⁵ Lewis, 116-141.

¹⁶ Ephesians 5:25

Love for my extended neighbors¹⁷

- In Christ I delight to pray for and express kindness to the people in my neighborhood.
- In Christ I delight to pray for, to give and to spend time so that people of all nations may receive the love of Christ.

My Rule of Life Specific to Spiritual Direction

A definition: “Christian spiritual direction is primarily a ministry to which one Christian (the director) helps another (the directee) to discern God’s presence and activity in the directee’s life and also the directee’s reactions and responses to God’s activity.”¹⁸

My Relationship with Directees

- I consider time and place (*kairos* and *topos*) with each directee to be sacred—an occasion for encountering the true and living God. I guard our meetings with appropriate preparation, atmosphere, and boundaries.
- I pray for each directee regularly throughout the course of our relationship.
- I respect each directee as a person made in the image of God; so I treat everyone with appropriate dignity and care.
- I respect, and seek to cooperate with, each person’s religious tradition. As a Christian spiritual director, I assume that God is seeking to establish and strengthen His relationship with the directee through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- I do not expect directees to meet my needs; so I seek to have my personal, interpersonal, and relational needs met outside of my direction relationships.
- At the beginning of a relationship, I present a written covenant to the directee that we discuss and sign. This agreement clarifies significant aspects of our relationship. It also indicates how spiritual direction differs from other helping relationships: a friend, teacher, disciple-maker, counselor, or mentor.
- I take great care to protect the directee’s privacy and dignity. What is shared by a directee in the sacred place is treated as holy and cherished. I share only content for purposes of supervision and/or consultation. That information is held in strictest confidence by all participants.
- I keep in confidence anything a directee shares during a session unless I am legally and/or ethically required to divulge the information. Examples include cases of actual or suspected abuse, or other risks of injury to a minor, to any third party, or to me.
- If the directee is receiving counseling or pastoral care, and wants me to communicate with the therapist or pastor, I receive written consent from the directee before initiating any contact.
- For the sake of confidentiality, I normally do not provide references for directees.
- I endeavor to keep good psychological boundaries and seek to note and dispel instances of transference and countertransference.
- I am careful about physical touch between directees and myself. I refrain from engaging in any sexualizing, abusive, manipulative or coercive language or behavior with directees. Sexual thoughts about a directee prompt me to consult with my spiritual director and/or my peer-group.
- I regularly reflect on the state of my relationships with directees to discern if they are appropriate to continue. If a relationship changes into something more mutual, I discuss this with the directee and graciously terminate the formal direction relationship.
- All of the points listed above are also applicable to participants in group spiritual direction.

¹⁷ Luke 10:25-37

¹⁸ *Code of Ethics* of the ESDA: Several of the following points, and some of the wording, come from that code.

My Relationship with Fellow Directors and Other Professionals

- I maintain collegial relationships within and across disciplines and refrain from disparaging others. I meet periodically with the spiritual directors at the Church of the Nativity.
- If a directee is working with a pastoral counselor or a therapist, I respect that relationship and ask the directee to inform him/her of our relationship.

Accountability

- I delight in the relationship I have with my spiritual director. This connection keeps me grounded and realistic about the Lord's work in my life and in the lives of my directees.
- I regularly meet with a peer group of spiritual directors. Group members provide mutual accountability and prayerful responses to our verbatim reports.