

**“Life in Christ: Ascetical Theology and Spiritual Practices”  
2026-27 Syllabus**

An introduction to the basic elements of Christian spirituality and a study of Christian disciplines that move the student further into the transformed and lived life of Christ. This class will emphasize Christian experience in light of Biblical revelation and Christian tradition with Anglican and Benedictine spirituality as the foundation.

**Facilitators:** Canon Meaghan Keegan and Patricia Mackey Stone

**Requirements:**

1. Attend monthly in-person or via Zoom and participate in class discussions.
2. Bring BCP, appropriate text and notebook to class.
3. Read “Pink Book” daily, Keating’s *Daily Reader*
4. Read the Rule of Benedict daily
5. Construct and develop a Rule of Life. Due January.
6. Write journal reflections of 200-300 words consisting of life lessons or class readings or practices that can be shared in class. Due monthly via email.
7. Write a spiritual autobiography. Due last class.

**Texts Required:**

NRSV Study Bible or translation of your choice.

Chittister OSB, Joan. *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Crossroad, Second Edition, 2010. **OR** Sutera OSB, Judith. *St. Benedict’s Rule: An Inclusive Translation and Daily Commentary*. Liturgical Press, 2021

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., November 27, 2008, 304 pages. (Please get paper back, study guide edition, not the hard back edition)

Gatta, Julia. *Life in Christ: Practicing Christian Spirituality*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2018.

Keating, Thomas. YouTube videos of Centering Prayer 1 and 2, September 2017

*The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living*. New York: Continuum, 2006

Brother Lawrence. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. New Kensington, PA.: Whitaker House, 1982.

Shigematsu, Ken. *God in My Everything*. Zondervan, 2013.

Thibodeaux, Mark E. *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen*. Loyola Press, January 29, 2015. And the accompanying app: EXAMEN (with two clouds)

Underhill, Evelyn. *Abba*. New York: Moorhouse Publishing, 1981

von Hugel, Baron Friedrich. *The Life of Prayer*. Eugene: WIPF & STOCK, 2008.

Williams, Rowan. *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B Erdman's Publishing Company, 2016.

Guigo. *The Ladder of Monks*. Cistercian Study Series, Liturgical Press, 1981.

## Sessions

### 1. September– Overview of the class:

- Anglican/Benedictine Spirituality
- Chittister or Sutra Rule of Benedict

Objective:

1. To lay the foundation of Anglican and Benedictine influences on our understanding and practice of the spiritual life.
2. To discuss course expectations and student requirements.

Spiritual Practice: *Rule of Benedict* (Canon Meaghan and Pat Stone)

### 2. October

- Gatta, Introduction and Chapter 1: “Reliving Christ’s Death and Resurrection”
- Gatta, “Rule of Life,” pp. 179-184.
- Foster, Chapter 1, pp. 1-17
- Shigematsu
- Handouts from Pat Stone

Objective:

1. To review Gatta and Foster on Rule of Life
2. Understand Shigematsu’s view of a rule.
3. To construct a personal rule of life.

Spiritual Practice: “*Rule of Life.*” (Pat Stone)

### 3. November

- Gatta, Chapter 4: “Prayer in Solitude,” pp 159-166
- Foster Chapter 5, pp. 78-96
- Guigo, Ladder of the Monks
- Handouts.

Objective:

1. Outline at least three ways to do lectio divina.
2. To participate in and learn movements of lectio divina.

Spiritual Practice: “*Lectio Divina*” (Canon Meaghan)

4. December:

- Gatta, Chapter 4: “Prayer in Solitude” pp.128-139 and pp.148-151 and 154-159
- Foster, Chapter 2 and 3 and 7, pp 19-58, pp.120-136
- Von Hugel, *The Life of Prayer*
- Stone, Pat: “Quiet Prayer” (handout)

Objective:

1. To learn several different approaches to quiet prayer.
2. To incorporate a quiet prayer practice into daily life

Spiritual Practice: “*Contemplative Prayer*” (Pat Stone)

5. January:

- Williams, *Being Disciples, Essentials of the Christian Life*.
- Foster, Chapter 6, pp. 99-119 and accompanying Journal Text
- Sharing Rule of Life

Objective:

1. Identifying some of Williams’ practices in his Rule of Life.
2. Answering the question of the role of community in our spiritual life?
3. Listen and reflect on the Rule of Life of the other students.

Spiritual Practice: Community Gathering/*Group Lectio*: (Pat Stone)

6. February:

- Gatta, Chapter 4: pp. 151-153
- Foster, Chapter 10, pp. 179-196 and accompanying Journal Text
- Thibodeaux, Mark E. *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* and the Examen app.

Objective:

1. To read about and discuss the practice of examen and reconciliation.
2. To practice the Ignatian Examen as a tool for daily use.

Spiritual Practice: “*Prayer of Examen*”

7. March:

- The Book of Common Prayer (please bring it to class)
- Gatta, Chapter 3: “Sanctifying Time through the Liturgical Round” (40 pages)
- Foster, Chapter 11, pp.197-217

Objective:

1. To do a thorough review of the Book of Common Prayer
2. To identify tools and resources in the BCP for personal use.
3. To reflect on Gatta and Foster's view of community.

Spiritual Practice: *The Use of the Book of Common Prayer*: (Canon Meaghan)

8. April:

- Gatta, Chapter 4: "Prayer in Solitude" pp. 139-147, pp. 167-178
- Foster. Refresh Chapters 2 and 3 (review)
- Underhill, Abba.
- Pat Stone: "Handout-The Lord's Prayer"

Objective:

1. To reflect on the purposes of daily prayer.
2. To view the Lord's Prayer from a different perspective.

Spiritual Practice: *The Lord's Prayer* (Canon Meaghan)

9. May:

- Gatta
- Foster
- Brother Lawrence, "The Practice of the Presence of God"

Objective:

1. To consider the whole of life as sacred.
2. To consider the Presence of God in daily life.
3. To hear God

Spiritual Practice: *Recollection* (Pat Stone)



Schedule: Monthly beginning in September 2026 through May 2027

9:30 Morning Devotion, Sharing of Reflections on Text

10:30 Review of Readings, Teaching