

stpec

COMMUNITY

Rule of Life

Updated with amendments: July 2016

[Based, with permission, on the Life Teen Missions Rule of Life]

Foreword

“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me, you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.” John 15:4-9

SPEC is the Diocese of Westminster’s day and residential retreat centre for young people. Serving both school and parish groups, SPEC is an integral part of the Diocese’s youth ministry, the aim of which is twofold: to root young people in the life and mission of their parishes and to accompany them in their journey towards Christian maturity.

Christianity is an incarnational religion at the heart of which stands the person of Christ, the mystery of God made man. As a volunteer missionary your primary commitment is to strive to live in communion with Christ; He who seeks to walk with us, as with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, whose life, death and resurrection has reconciled us to the Father.

For Christians it is the nurturing and proclamation of this primary relationship that is the very stuff of maturity. Christ is God’s most precious gift to humanity. He is the source of our fulfilment and freedom. He is the one who shows us what it is to be truly human and truly ourselves – the image of the God whose likeness we bear. Christ is the mirror we must look into to see for ourselves who we truly are and what we are called to be.

The whole purpose of the Church is to evangelise, to proclaim the gospel, the good news that is Jesus Christ. This rule of life will help us form Christ-like habits, rooting us in Christ and transforming us into witnesses of the Gospel. It reflects the desire to walk with Christ and be Christ for others, that they too may find the answer to the deepest longing of the human heart; love.

Introduction

“God is love.” 1 John 4:16

“Father,...this is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” John 17:3

“God our Saviour desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:3-4

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20

“It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.” Romans 13:11-14

“Now this Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory; this is the working of the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

The purpose of this rule of life is to root our lives in Christ Jesus. A life in Christ calls for dying to self and living in the Spirit. St. Paul exhorts us to put on the Lord Christ Jesus. Obedience to this rule of life leads us to form certain Christ-like habits, transforming us into witnesses of the Gospel regardless of our age, location, or state in life.

Glorify God in prayer

1. *“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me, you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.” John 15:4-9*

“My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Mk11:17

Prayer—remaining in Christ and in his love—is non-negotiable. This entire Rule, or way of life, depends on prayer. We can do nothing if we do not remain in His love. The spirituality of the Rule can be defined as “dynamic orthodoxy”—fully in-line with the Roman Catholic Church, which includes an openness to the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

2. Our rhythm of prayer is the heartbeat of our community. With a special commitment to the Eucharist, we make use of the gifts of the Church including Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, seasonal Novenas, feasts and celebrations. Specifically, our commitment includes:
 - Morning prayer (Liturgy of the Hours)
 - Daily hour of prayer in the evening.
 - Eucharistic Adoration: “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” John 6:35 “Come to me, all who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28 “Come,” says my heart, “seek God’s face”; your face, Lord, do I seek! Psalm 27:8
 - Scripture:
“If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:31-32
“Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ” – St. Jerome
 - Spiritual Reading
 - Weekday Mass as often as possible.

- Regular Sacrament of Reconciliation. *“I said, ‘I confess my faults to the Lord,’ and you took away the guilt of my sin.” – Psalm 32:5* Jesus said to them, *“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”* And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, *“Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” – John 20:21-23*
- Marian Devotion: *“All generations will call me blessed.” – Luke 1:48* *“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother.’” – John 19:26-27*
 - The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship. – CCC 971
 - As a community, we will pray the Rosary (an “epitome of the whole Gospel”), celebrate Marian feasts, and seek a deeper devotion to our Blessed Mother Mary as she points us towards her son.
- Fasting:
 - *“Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy [almsgiving] is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them...So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy.” St. Peter Chrysologus, Doctor of the Church*
 - *“Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off.” – Acts 13:3*
 - *“When you fast, anoint your head and wash your feet. So that you may not appear to be fasting except to your Father who is hidden.” – Matthew 6:17-18*
 - *“The Bishops also wish to remind us that every Friday is set aside as a special day of penitence, as it is the day of the suffering and death of the Lord. They believe it is important that all the faithful again be united in a common, identifiable act of Friday penance because they recognise that the virtue of penitence is best acquired as part of a common resolve and common witness. The law of the Church requires Catholics on Fridays to abstain from meat, or some other form of food, or to observe some other form of penance laid down by the Bishops’ Conference. The Bishops have decided to re-establish the practice that this penance should be fulfilled simply by abstaining from meat and by uniting this to prayer. Those who cannot or choose not to eat meat as part of their normal diet should abstain from some other food of which they regularly partake.” Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, September 2011*
- Praying in the Spirit using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. We will live into the charisms of the Holy Spirit – personally and communally. God inspires and moves in us through our prayer, through our asking ‘how do you want me to pray today?’ and being free to let the spirit guide us, I can only pray because He gives me the gift to pray, I can only understand because He gives me the gift to understand. *“With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit.” – Ephesians 6:18* *“The Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.” – Romans 8:26*
- Worship as a lifestyle – We strive to mould every aspect of our lives into acts of worship, where our thoughts and actions are driven not by us but by the love of God. Our Blessed Mother Mary is the best example of living every moment as worship.

Glorify God in the sacraments

“The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Sacraments.” CCC 1113

“All seven Sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ himself.” CCC 1114

Sacraments are ‘powers that come forth’ from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in His Body, the Church. They are ‘the masterworks of God’ in the new and everlasting covenant.” CCC 1116

“The sacraments manifest and communicate to men, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons.” CCC 1118

“The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial. For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in Charity and in her mission of witness.” CCC 1134

We will partake in the Sacrament of the Eucharist every Sunday, on Holy Days of Obligation, and as often during the week as possible and the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis. We will trust in and call on the Sacramental grace available to us through the seven Sacraments as we strive to be sacrament to one another.

Glorify God in community

1. SPEC is a Catholic community fully in line with the Roman Catholic Church, striving for the communal life described in Acts 2: 42: *“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers.”* While all people are welcome, we will not deviate from a fully Catholic prayer life, particularly the celebration of the Sacraments, devotion to our Blessed Mother, and faithfulness to the pope and his teachings.

“My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” Mark 11:17. SPEC is a place of on-going prayer filled with people striving to make worship a lifestyle. All guests are invited to join in our rhythm of prayer, which is the basis of our communal life. Our goal is to build a community where guests are welcome to join us as we, the body of Christ, experience God as family and serve God as brothers and sisters. “If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing” Philippians 2:1-2.
2. SPEC is a welcome place – where people are refreshed, restored, and revived; where the focus is not to escape “normal life”, but to pursue the reality of the presence of God--to seek the face of God and encounter Him personally. *“Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest” Matthew 11:28.* The SPEC Community strives to be a lighthouse. St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican was designed to be a lighthouse to all humanity. Whenever people lost their way, they could look to the Church and they would be welcomed back with open arms. The SPEC Community will provide many opportunities to encounter the living God personally.
3. SPEC is a school of mission: we strive to conform our lives to the ultimate mission of the Church, the Great Commission. *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” Matthew 28:19-20.* Fuelled by the Holy Spirit, we are committed to teaching young people about God’s loving plan of salvation, to empower them with prayer and the truths of the Church, and to launch them into God’s mission.

Glorify God in discipleship

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.” Matthew 28:19

Christ spoke to thousands while truly investing in twelve through personal relationships. Each of these twelve invested in a few others and so on. This discipleship model that grew the Church depends on soul-to-soul personal investment. We are committed to sharing the love and guidance of Christ through intentional one-on-one discipleship. The goal of discipleship is to journey together and help one another live their faith in the everyday. In discipleship, we will connect bi-weekly to discuss their personhood, prayer life, and community life as we strive for sainthood.

Glorify God in our dependence on him

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ Or ‘What are we to drink?’ or ‘What are we to wear?’ All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.” Matthew 6:25-33

God is worthy of our trust. He desires our complete dependence on Him. God does not ask for more of us, he asks for all of us, for everything. He is our everything. We are committed to depend on God with our worries, our finances, our fleshy desires, our passions, our attitudes, our fears, our joys, our ministry and all that we are.

Glorify God in loving one another

“Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole soul, with your whole mind and all your strength. [...] Love your neighbour as yourself.” Mark 12:30-31

“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Matthew 5:44

“Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honour. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another, do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.” Romans 12:9-18

“Your way of acting should be different from the world’s way; the love of Christ must come before all else...Live by God’s commandments everyday; treasure chastity, harbour neither hatred nor jealousy of anyone, and do nothing out of envy. Do not love quarrelling; shun arrogance. Respect the elders and love the young. Pray for your enemies out of love for Christ. If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with him before the sun goes down. And finally, never lose hope in God’s mercy.” (Rule of St. Benedict, Ch.4)

Glorify God in humility

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 14:11

“I have not come to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.” John 6:38

“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil 2:3-11

“The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience, which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above all.” (Rule of St. Benedict, Ch.5)

All community members commit to humble obedience for a full life in Christ through this rule, continuously striving to be open and docile to the Holy Spirit, while fostering a spirit of listening to God through prayer, which makes us attentive to all He wishes to give us. In a spirit of humility, we strive to be teachable, trusting that God can use anyone anywhere to speak to our hearts as He desires.

Glorify God by dying to self

“Live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16

“Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.” Galatians 5:24

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Matthew 16:24

“I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.” Galatians 2:19-20

Dying to self is a sacrifice. Our love is made sacred when we give of ourselves for the sake of another out of reverence for Christ.

“Unless you change and become like little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). We will strive to be ever more confirmed to the image of Christ. “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14)

Glorify God with rituals

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Paul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off” Acts 13:2-3.

Rituals foster a sense of rhythm in our lives. We are committed to developing rituals, or outward signs that reflect our communal life in the SPEC Community. Specific events that will be made special through rituals includes: birthdays and special feast days.

Glorify God in our personal rule

“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” Proverbs 19:21

“So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31

In all things, we will give glory to God. We are committed to purposeful and intentional scheduling of our time that is not already determined by community life and the retreat schedule. We take time to meet our personal needs so that we can be the men and women God created us to be.

Glorify God in our bodies

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The Holy Spirit is alive in us and empowers us not only to be holy, but also to be whole. Through the Holy Spirit, we have everything we need to walk in complete freedom – spiritually, intellectually, physically and emotionally. Spiritually, we pray and worship. Intellectually, we read and study. Emotionally, we practice forgiveness, trust and healthy interactions with others. Physically, we exercise and recreate (re-create). Use your bodies to re-create and not desecrate the beauty that God has created in you. What is required of us is discipline: *“Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.” 1 Corinthians 9:25-27*

Exercise: Make time for some physical activity that helps you be your best.

Rest well. Find what works for you within the context of the rule and live into it.

Glorify God in what you eat and how much you eat. Treat food and drink as a blessing, a gift, and do not waste it. *“For nothing is so inconsistent with the life of any Christian as overindulgence. Our Lord says: ‘Take care that your hearts are not weighed down with overindulgence’ Luke 21:34” (Rule of St. Benedict, Ch.39)*

Glorify God in the way you dress. It’s important that the way you dress reflects and protects the dignity of your personhood.

Alcohol: We adhere to the legal drinking age and a principle of moderation (an example of moderation would be two drinks on any occasion) keeping in mind that we are witnesses of Christ every moment of our lives.

Leisure time: We strive to choose leisure activities that allow us to uphold every element of this rule of life. We try to safeguard ourselves and our fellow community members from any situation in which we might fall into temptation. We will strive to watch, read and listen to things that help us to grow in holiness.

Purity: glorify God with your eyes; glorify Him in your thoughts; glorify Him in your gestures and actions.

Remembering that Mary is immaculate, we ask for her constant intercession concerning purity of any kind.

Glorify God in our speech

“Encourage one another and build one another up.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11

“No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear.” Ephesians 4:29

“In a flood of words you will not avoid sinning.” Proverbs 10:19

“A talkative man goes about aimlessly on earth.” Psalms 140:12

“A cheerful glance brings joy to the heart, good news invigorates the bones.” Proverbs 15:30

“Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.” 2 Timothy 4:2.

We strive to be uplifting and to glorify God in all of our speech. We are committed to this in all our personal conversations as well as when we are in the role of ministry. We also recognise the importance of silence in our spiritual life and strive to incorporate communal and individual times for silence.

Glorify God in reconciling with one another

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen then, tell the church.” Matthew 18:15-17

Steps to healthy conflict resolution:

- Pray about the situation. Ask God to reveal His truth. How have you been sinned against and how has the situation simply brought up your own pain or sin that you need to deal with?
- Take responsibility for your part in the conflict/situation.
- Commit to loving and praying for the person.
- Address the issue one-on-one and focus on the issue, not the person.
- Person who is approached: When at fault, accept responsibility for the sin/offense. Commit to making the situation right. Thank the person who approached you for caring enough to approach you lovingly.
- Pray together that God may be glorified as both people move forward.

Glorify God in care of the sick

“I was sick and you visited me.” Matthew 25:36

“What you did for the least of my brothers you did for me.” Matthew 25:40

One person in the community will be assigned to take special care of someone who becomes sick. Being sick away from home is difficult. While we cannot take the place of a mother’s care for a child, we will strive to be “home” especially for those who are sick.

Glorify God in relationships

“A clean heart create for me, God, renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51:12

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith.” Hebrews 12:1-2a

Out of respect for the unique opportunity to truly focus on our personal relationship with the Triune God and to develop healthy relationships between men and women, the missionaries commit to not pursuing new romantic relationships during their first missionary year. We aim to be a witness to the freedom and beauty that comes from truly living as brothers and sisters in Christ. Relationships with one another are to flow out of our love for

God and more importantly, His love for us. All community members are committed to engage only in chaste relationships centred on Christ.

Glorify God in how we treat the property of others

“Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.” Matthew 25:21

With everything SPEC and our diocese owns we must be good stewards. Treat all property with respect as gifts from God – from big things like vehicles, offices, and buildings to small things like rubbish and cutlery. We are mindful of how we use heating, electricity, and water. We strive to recycle and to put things back where they belong.

Glorify God in communication with others

“I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you.” Philippians 1:3-4

We commit to regular communication with those from our home community – family, friends, parish - who are supporting our mission year, whether financially or through prayer.

We commit to communicating with others to the extent that it glorifies God. We limit our communication with others only to limit our distractions and free ourselves to be more available to communication with God. In our culture of constant connection and availability through mobile phones and computers, we strive to be in constant connection and availability to Christ. All community members are encouraged to be intentional in communication with others and to schedule time accordingly.

Glorify God within your home

“Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour.” Romans 12:10

This scripture is especially poignant within the home – Keeping in mind that this is first God’s home, which we have been called into. Please respect His home and one another to the extent that you would be proud to welcome visitors at any time. Be mindful of designated quiet hours, cooking and cleaning schedules, and common spaces.

Glorify God in receiving visitors

Receive others as if you are receiving Christ himself.

“All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ.” (Rule of St. Benedict 53:1)

Family and friends are welcome. When friends, family, or other guests visit, they will be invited to join us in our life together, including prayer and work where appropriate. Missionaries remain committed to their regular responsibilities. We have found it most fruitful to invite others to do what we do and to be who we are becoming.

Glorify God away from SPEC

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

We are witnesses of the love of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit at all times. A life committed to Christ is prophetic. This is especially difficult when we return home, or journey to another place away from SPEC. *“For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honour in his native place.” John 4:44*

Glorify God in the local community

Although our mission is to the young people of the whole diocese, we live in one parish and are part of its community. Thus as individuals and as community we strive, in addition to our core mission, to play an active and missionary role in our local community.

Glorify God with your finances

“Honour the Lord with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow.” Proverbs 3:9-10

“My God will supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

We commit to keeping in the forefront of our minds that we are stewards of the money given to us.

Glorify God in hospitality

1. *“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35*

“Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Peter 5:7-11

“Do you realise what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” John 13:12-15

We are footwashers. We will humbly love each other and all our guests sacrificially.

2. *“Hospitality requires not grand gestures, but open hearts.*

Hospitality is not necessarily keeping guests occupied or entertained. Instead, Benedict tells us to offer an open heart, a stance of availability, and to look for God lurking in every single person who comes through the door.

St. Benedict teaches us that if we close ourselves to the stranger, we close ourselves to the sacred.

Little acts of giving, one upon another, pile up to create a huge force capable of repelling the darkness and transforming the world.

Your life is not personal property; you belong to God. We are simply stewards of what God has given us. We are to serve one another in love. Everyone is a guest – even those of us who live here.

God is the host, but God also becomes the guest we receive in others.

The challenge of hospitality is to preserve our way of life while we continue to welcome the stranger.

Hospitality, rather than being something you achieve, is something that you enter. It is not something you do, but something you become. You try. You fail. You try again. You make room for one person at a time. We become more hospitable by welcoming one person when the opportunity arises. Receive every person as if you are receiving Christ himself.”

Radical Hospitality: Benedict’s Way of Love (Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt)

We will strive to see God in all who live in and visit our community: to open ourselves to God by opening ourselves to the stranger.

Conclusion

Following this rule is a great way to live out our loving relationship with God, built on the foundation of the Roman Catholic Church. May it be a blessing. And in the words of St. Benedict, “may the strong have something to strive for and the weak have nothing to run from.”

“But it is as scripture says: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualise; all that God has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9

After all, “God is love.” 1 John 4:16