

Living by the Rule

Beginning Steps

Br. Matthias Tanner, O.S.L.

Copyright © 2022 The Order of Saint Luke All rights reserved.

About The Order of Saint Luke

The Order of Saint Luke is an ecumenical religious order dedicated to sacramental and liturgical scholarship, education, and practice. Founded in 1946 by members of the former Methodist Church, our moving and sustaining force is that vision of John and Charles Wesley who sought to bring about a revival within the Church that was sacramental as well as evangelistic.

Traditionally, religious orders are characterized by persons covenanting together to live in community — either physically or spiritually — under a common rule of spiritual discipline. Orders have also been formed to perform a specific task (or 'work') or to develop a discipline for spiritual growth.

The Order of Saint Luke was formed to bring about a recovery of the worship and sacramental practice which has sustained the Church since its formation in apostolic times. At the same Time we seek to help the Church rediscover the spiritual disciplines of the Wesley's as a means of perceiving and fulfilling the mission for which it was formed.

Membership in the Order is open to women and men, laypersons, seminarians, and clergy from the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	page 1
Some Key Words	page 3
Exploring The Rule (with Suggestions and Questions)	page 6
1. We Affirm the Apostolic Hope	page 6
2. We Live for the Church of Jesus Christ	page 8
3. We Seek the Sacramental Life	page 10
4. We Promote the Corporate Worship of the Church	page 10
5. We Magnify the Sacraments	page 11
6. We Accept the Call to Service	page 12
7. Resources	page 14

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to all who are interested in The Order of Saint Luke. The purpose of this book is to help you explore the Order, to understand the Rule of Life and Service, and to explore ways and practices that will help you be observant of that Rule. As the title suggests, this is a beginning. It is expected that, as you live the Rule, you will find that your understanding and observance will both broaden and deepen. There are no limits to the ways in which that, Welcome to all who are interested in The Order of Saint Luke. The purpose of this book is to help you explore the Order, to understand the Rule of Life and Service, and to explore ways and

practices that will help you be observant of that Rule. As the title suggests, this is a beginning. It is expected that, as you live the Rule, you will find that your understanding and observance will both broaden and deepen. There are no limits to the ways in which the Rule and will shape our lives. Whether you are just now encountering The Order, or one who has been a member for some time and wish to refresh your understanding of The Rule, we offer this book as a way to start. We believe that The Rule asks no more of us than any Christian, though perhaps with a particular focus. "Lukans" (members of The Order) are not expected to be holier than anyone else. Only God determines in any case. So, let us begin.

Q: How do you get to Carnegie Hall?

A: Practice ... practice ... practice!

Carnegie Hall, in New York City, is a concert hall with very good acoustics, and it is regarded as a place where only the best musicians perform. So, to play at Carnegie Hall as a soloist or part of a group is an indication that a performer is highly regarded by those whose knowledge and experience enables them to make such a judgment. It is a privilege and a mark of distinction. There is humor in that Q and A, and there is truth, too. No performer picks up their instrument for the first time and hops in a cab to go to perform at Carnegie Hall. They get there through long years of study and performing ... and, yes, lots and lots of practice.

This is the reality for any human endeavor. Some may begin to paint, or be a plumber, or an astrophysicist, or a carpenter, or a shoe designer with some inborn advantages. But all need to develop their knowledge and skill over time. They need to, and they most likely will, if they are willing and able to keep at it (whatever *it* is) day in and day out. It will often feel as though you are "going through the motions"; there will be times when it seems that one is *not* growing in ability; but there will be times when the increase of skill and understanding becomes heartwarmingly evident.

We use this word 'practice' in several ways, but there are three that particularly apply for us. We speak of practice as doing something repeatedly to learn it and become good at it, as in practicing the piano or taking batting practice. We speak of practice as something we typically do as in "it is my practice to take a morning walk". Or we can speak of practice in the sense of working at something, for instance, we might practice law or medicine. Each of these meanings tell us something about our spiritual life and our worship life (which are not always the same thing). We need to devote time to prayer to learn how to pray, to become comfortable with and fluent at prayer, to establish prayer as a basic part of the way we live our lives. This is also true when it comes to worship.

Some who study how people learn a skill tell us that it takes about 10,000 hours to reach a level of mastery in that skill. There is a lot involved: learning the basics, developing a range of knowledge, training one's body to perform in certain ways, increasing one's ability to focus on the activity and ignore distractions. That certainly applies to our life of prayer and meditation, and our ability to participate in worship as leader and participant. It is important to keep in mind, too, that we are speaking of art and not science. A characteristic of science is the use of knowledge in such a way that if you do A, you nearly always get the result B. The art of prayer and worship, the adventure inherent in them, is that there is no guaranteed outcome. Most of the time they seem to be ordinary experiences. Some of the time they will be sheer drudgery and feel like a waste of time. On other occasions they will transport us to the heavenly realms, transform us, and make a positive difference in others' lives.

Our participation in the life of The Order of Saint Luke, our practice of the Rule of Life and Service, has a two-fold purpose. We have been thinking mostly about what we may get out

of it, and what we must do to receive those benefits. The other side of that coin is that our life as members of the Order is not for ourselves alone. We are also concerned with and committed to, becoming channels of blessing for others. The gracious work of God in us flows out into our participation in the human community and as stewards of all creation. It cannot be kept only within our mind and soul. If we try to do so we become distorted and corrupt. As we become more adept and secure in our personal relationship with God, we will be better able to intercede for others. As we become more understanding of public worship and our participation in whatever way becomes more comfortable, we help those around us to worship more effectively. This is not something that we ought (or even can) keep to ourselves. There is no dividing line between our worship and our work; if we try to divide them we betray our faith. If we strive to keep our prayers and our behavior separate, putting a closed door between them, our prayers are empty.

So, we are not talking about a hobby as we discuss the Rule of Life and Service. We are talking about the kind of person we will try to become in every moment and in every place. To be Lukan we do not have to write a Gospel, but we do need to *live* the Gospel, by intention and by the grace of God, as a life-long effort to “go on to perfection.”

Being Lukan will pull us into a community of people through our shared learning about the study of the history of Christian worship, through learning about the way worship works to help us grow in faith, and through learning how to lead and participate in public worship more effectively. This community takes shape as we participate in this work at long distance through our publications and cyber conversations. Some of us can meet face to face in local chapters or member associations, and through attendance at Annual Retreats. We quickly discover that we are not alike in our thinking about everything. We also quickly discover that we are not compelled to be alike, but rather invited to learn from and with each other. We learn, too, that our worship draws us closer to each other and to God. This community grows and deepens over time, and in its own time. I encourage you to be patient and persistent, and I pray that you will be blessed by your participation in the community as I have been.

We encourage you to explore your interest in The Order by adopting spiritual practices that utilize resources published by The Order. What that might be will vary according to your personal circumstances, but properly would include praying the Collect for The Order as a part of your daily prayer practice. If regular times of prayer are not a part of your daily routine, choosing one of the offices in *The Book of Offices and Services* or *A Lukan Book of Hours*¹ would be a good start. Becoming aware of members of The Order who live near you may present possibilities for communal prayer.

SOME KEY WORDS

Within the Rule of Life and Service, and the official commentary upon it, there are some terms that it may be helpful to define. These terms will be useful as you read this book and discover living the Rule of Life and Service.”

¹ Order of Saint Luke Publications offers those exploring the Order a set of our daily prayer books at a significantly reduced price. You can obtain the special offer form from the Companion for Seekers, Inquirers, and Discerners.

✓ *Body of Christ*

This refers to all the persons who have put their trust in Jesus Christ and who are trying to live as Jesus wants his followers to live. This Body is not identical to any one existing organization or tradition. We recognize others as being a part of the Body of Christ when we recognize that they teach what Jesus taught and live as Jesus asked his followers to do.

✓ *Called*

When God identified a prophet in Israel, that person would be said to have been *called* to be a prophet and that the word of God came to that person. Being a prophet involved *listening* for a message from God and then declaring that message to the people. So, the Order of Saint Luke has an awareness that we have been called (asked) by God to do a particular task and to be a particular kind of community.

✓ *Catholic ... apostolic ... evangelical ... reformed*

These four words have been, for decades now, terms used to describe Protestant churches in distinction from Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches.

- We use *catholic* (with a small c) to mean universal, not limited to any geography, language, or denomination.
- By *apostolic* we mean that we see ourselves belonging or relating to the early followers of Jesus Christ and their teaching and hope.
- Saying that we are *evangelical* means that we seek to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others, by what we say and what we do.
- Our intention is to be *reformed* (see "formed" below) by continually examining our life and witness to be true always to the teaching of the apostles in ways that will communicate with the people around us.

✓ *Church*

When capitalized it refers to the world-wide community of Christian believers, irrespective of nation or language or denomination.

✓ *Collective Memory / Shared Hope*

Our *collective memory* is found in Scripture and in the history of the Church. No one tradition has the perfect expression of it or grasp of what we can learn from it.

Our *shared hope*, expressed in many ways, is based on the realization that our human life (individually, and all together) and that we have not cared for creation as God intends us to do. In hope we anticipate that one day it will be.

✓ *Discern*

This is the work of recognizing God's intention and God's call to trusting and acting in a particular situation. So, we might discern what is a proper interpretation of Scripture, or what action God's Spirit calls to do. Discernment can involve waiting to act or decide until clarity comes. Sometimes we invite others to listen with us for discernment.

✓ *Embody*

When we make something visible in the world through our behavior and actions, we embody that quality. One who demonstrates patience, for example, especially when it is difficult, embodies that quality.

✓ *Eucharist*

It is one of several names for Holy Communion. It is derived from a Greek word meaning thankful or grateful. It also describes a life attitude of joyfulness and gratitude for God's gifts.

✓ *Formed*

We use this word to describe the process by which, over time, we adapt our lives to be like Christ's, to turn conscious decisions about how we want to live into instinctive patterns of behavior. We recognize that our efforts are added to the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds.

✓ *Incorporated*

A term that relates to this idea is inclusion. We are willing to be included in the Body of Christ, to be included in the life and work of the Church, and so incorporated into the people who follow Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism.

✓ *Liturgy*

This term refers to the pattern of worship; of what is included, in what order, and in what way it is expressed. The Greek word *leitourgia* means work of the people and when we speak of worship as liturgy the emphasis is on the shared work of the assembly.

✓ *Magnify*

When our eyesight begins to fail, we may need to use a magnifying glass so that what we look at is bigger. So, we speak of magnify as the work of making something bigger, more important, more obvious in the life of the Church.

✓ *Means of Grace*

This phrase refers to ways in which God acts in our lives and in which we make ourselves available to receive God's actions. These include the sacraments of baptism and communion, other sacramental actions such as confirmation, marriage, ordination, reading and study of Scripture, prayer, and stewardship. God is not limited to these means, for we do not know all the ways in which God acts upon, within, or through us. Any means of grace is not automatically and always effective.

✓ *Mystery / Mysteries*

We use the term mystery to describe a kind of literature in which an event is described, and then a process of determining what happened, how it happened, who did it, and why they did it is worked out.

In religious thinking we face a similar situation in that we explore the possible meaning(s) of events in the history of the life of the Church, in our theological understanding, or in our own personal experience. We usually conclude that there is more involved than we can describe or understand, since we are human and not divine.

✓ *Paschal mystery*

This is the mystery of mysteries ... the wonder of the full meaning of Christ's "incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, gift of the Holy Spirit, and coming again." (See the first clause of the Rule.) It is an ongoing, everlasting process of experience and reflection, each insight leading to other and deeper questions. We set out on this journey with our baptism and

reinforce it with each celebration of the Eucharist.

✓ *Proclaim / Proclamation*

This is both a verb and a noun. It is something we do: finding ways to share with others the story of Jesus, what it means to us, what it can mean for others. It is also the term we use to describe the teaching of the Christian Church about that story.

✓ *Reconciled*

When two people have a significant and important difference of opinion that divides them, and then find ways to overcome that division, we may say that they have become reconciled. Our sin divides us from God, from each other, and from the creation. God's actions in Jesus Christ has made it possible for us to be reconciled with God. As with the paschal mystery (see above) this is an ongoing process.

✓ *Re-presents*

This word, without the hyphen, means something or someone standing in for something or someone else, as in algebra the letter x represents an unknown number that solving the equation will identify. With the hyphen, it means to present again, to make present again. The Rule uses that phrase to speak of the way in which the Eucharist establishes a vivid relationship with Jesus Christ. That relationship helps us to be in the presence of Christ and recognize Christ present in our experience. Thus, we grow in our ability to be a channel of God's grace to others and all creation.

✓ *Sacrament / sacramental*

Sacrament (with a capital s) refers to Baptism and Holy Communion (or Eucharist), the two actions or rituals that Protestant Christians label with that term. These two Sacraments relate to specific experiences and actions in Jesus' life.

To say that something is sacramental (small s) indicates that it functions in similar ways in human experience. Some examples are prayer and meditation, the study of Scripture, discussion with other Christians about proper courses of action, reading religious literature, singing hymns, and many more.

✓ *Seek*

The word appears several times in the explanations of the clauses of the Rule. By it we mean to say that there is something that we are trying to understand more deeply and completely, and something we are trying to do more and more effectively. We also use this word when we describe looking for something deliberately and intently. This is also connected to our actions, signifying that our actions are deliberate and hold significance for us.

EXPLORING THE RULE

And now, to explore the Rule. In what follows, the Rule is printed in **BOLD** type, and the commentary adopted by the Council of the Order of Saint Luke is in *italic* type.

WE AFFIRM THE APOSTOLIC HOPE

With the apostles and the Church through the ages, we affirm Jesus Christ, Sacrament of the

presence of God, as the source of our hope. We take our name from Saint Luke the Evangelist, and seek to be incorporated into the paschal mystery he proclaims. We pray that we may be formed by the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, gift of the Holy Spirit, and coming again of Jesus Christ. We are sent forth to proclaim and to live the hope that good news brings.

The earliest disciples, the Twelve and others, who accompanied Jesus as he traveled about, who learned from him and came to recognize him as messiah, who were shocked to the core when he died on the cross, were astonished when he rose again to be among them for a time. After his ascension they were no longer shocked. They lived in the confident expectation that he would come again to establish God's reign on earth, and thus became apostles — sent ones — who boldly declared what God had done in Jesus and would yet do through him. They faced skepticism, scorn, antagonism, even death themselves, without discouragement because of that conviction.

Members of The Order commit themselves to taking that conviction as their own, to make it the basis of their life and work. We open ourselves to be formed by that hope in ways that will always make us Christ-like in all times and places, to be persons who tell others about that hope and invite others to share it. We dedicate ourselves to be instruments for God's use in the world, to bring others into living as though the kin-dom of God is fully present in human history. (I use "kin-dom" as a substitute for "kingdom." This alteration speaks more of the quality of our relationships and less of a particular system of government.)

Luke, the evangelist and physician, gave expression to that hope and described the nature of the kin-dom in the Gospel, especially in the canticles (see Luke 1:46-55; 1:68-79; 2:29-32) that have been a part of the daily prayers of the Church for centuries. He wrote of the importance and influence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life, described Jesus' openness to all persons, told of Jesus' power and willingness to heal physical, mental, and spiritual illness. Through the telling of Jesus' parables, Luke brought forth vivid images that teach us to understand the faithful life God calls all to share.

Some Ways in Which We Might Keep This Part of The Rule

– **By** developing a sense of hope that helps us live positively in personal relationships and society.

By practicing regular prayer that earnestly requests God to act and to show us how to act with God.

By speaking and acting to address those aspects of our personal lives and in our communities that are destructive of body, mind, and spirit, so as to reduce or eliminate them.

By preaching, teaching, writing, and other methods of communication, to share our confident hope and vision of a community faithful to Jesus' teachings.

Through the offering of our time, talent, and resources to support the work of those organizations that are working to make human society more just and healing, and more responsible in our use of creation.

Some Questions to Stimulate Your Thinking

– What signs of hope do you recognize around you?

What do you find discouraging in your personal life and in the wider society? In the creation?

Recognizing that you will not be able to change all that is discouraging, what you can do, individually or together with others, to work at diminishing the discouragements? What or who might be resources for you, in coping with discouragement and strengthening your hope?

WE LIVE FOR THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ and we are called to worship, learning, community, and service as members of the Body. We affirm our fidelity to oneness in Christ, in the Church truly catholic, truly apostolic, truly evangelical, and truly reformed which supersedes all division by denomination, and which we believe God will gather from a broken Christendom. Our mission includes calling the Church to liturgical and sacramental renewal and seeking to bring the healing grace of Christ to all Creation.

Whenever and wherever Christians come together, consciously recognizing that they are Christians, I believe worship, learning, community, and service take place. This may be deliberate; for instance, on a Sunday morning in a building set aside for that purpose, where resources for worship, learning, community, service are gathered for use in that time and place. We do these things to prepare ourselves as God's people to be Christian witnesses and examples at other times and places. Or it may be almost accidental, brief, 'of the moment.' For example, a group comes together for a meal and someone offers a prayer of thanks for the food. Two people find themselves discussing a verse of Scripture or a parable during their conversation. A carload in a morning commute passes the scene. An accident and prays for those involved. There may be a Bible study at work during lunch. We speak words of comfort to one grieving a recent death. Someone speaks a message of praise and encouragement to a graduate, or to a couple on their marriage, or for the birth of a child. These examples, and other moments like them, are instances of the Body of Christ becoming visible in the world and concretely bringing us together.

As members of The Order of Saint Luke, we commit ourselves to active and extensive participation in the life of the Church at any level open to us, and in any way that we can contribute. We encourage others to join us. While each of us comes to The Order from various traditions and denominations, we work to be open to each other's practices and understandings that we may learn from each other. We want the Church and the churches to worship with integrity and in harmony with the historical practice of Christians everywhere.

Some Ways in Which We Might Keep This Part of the Rule

- By faithful attendance to public worship, especially participation in the Eucharist.
- By offering ourselves as leaders and participants in public worship as our tradition allows: for example, reading Scripture, leading hymns, providing service music, preaching, assisting in serving communion, extending the table to those unwillingly absent. These are some possibilities.
- Clergy have the responsibility to lead worship well, to prepare appropriate and faithful liturgies, to teach congregations about worship so that all can participate fully, to train and include others to lead worship publicly and privately, especially to teach about the sacraments.

By encouraging all to invest themselves deeply in worship as the supreme activity of the Church and the churches.

Some Questions to Stimulate Your Thinking

How faithful are you in your attendance and participation in worship? Why is it that way and not some other? What encourages or discourages you about worship?

How do you provide leadership in worship? What would you like to do that you do not, at present, do?

– What about worship would you like to explore and learn more about?

— How can you support and encourage those who lead in worship?

— How might you help others to participate and grow in worship (public and private)?

WE SEEK THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

We are called to become aware of God's presence through eucharistic living. We seek to live out our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. We receive with gratitude all that God has given us and offer it up to God. We receive it again from God, transformed for use for the sake of the world. We join the Church through the ages and around the world in recognizing that all Awe is in God's hands. As we faithfully pray the Daily Office, and live so as to embody our prayers, we endeavor to live the sacramental life. By so doing, we seek to be formed as a means of grace for all those we meet and serve in Christ's name.

Sacraments are actions and events that establish our relationship with Jesus Christ and build experiences that draw us closer and more completely into fellowship with him. The Order follows the historic Protestant identification of Baptism and the Eucharist as sacraments, and we recognize that other actions and events function in much the same way. The sacramental life is one in which we tend to those practices which have proved, in the history of the Church, to be effective in developing relationships with Christ. Here we focus more on our own faith, in our trust in God and our behavior conforming to Christ's teaching. Some of these practices will be more appropriate for us in our circumstances, others will not. Some are individual practices, some are suitable for small groups, some must be done in the context of a worshiping congregation. Spiritual growth is stimulated by *a three-fold practice* involving public worship, personal devotions, and consciously chosen ministry activities. Each of the three informs and stimulates the other.

Some Ways in Which We Might Keep This Part of the Rule

– By as frequent participation in the Eucharist as is possible in our circumstances.

By praying the Daily Office, by oneself or with others, as completely as one can, following any format, but preferring forms that are published by The Order of Saint Luke.

When possible, joining with other members of The Order in the Eucharist, the Daily Office, and for study and discussion.

By offering ourselves as resources for our own or other congregations who might wish to learn about liturgy.

By pursuing the study of liturgy through reading and discussion and in sharing in a variety of worship experiences that expand our experience of how Christians in other traditions worship.

By participating in specific ministries of love and justice ministry as expressions of eucharistic

living.

Some Questions to Stimulate Your Thinking

- What devotional patterns and practices best fit your personality?
- What is or will be your chosen ministry activity?

With whom could you discuss your practice of the Rule for accountability and direction? How do you think this might happen, and how often?

What questions do you have about getting started with praying the Daily Office? Do you know someone who could direct you to resources and guide you in their use?

WE PROMOTE THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

We believe that the corporate worship of the Church is liturgy — the work of the people on behalf of all creation — which is our response to the revelation of God’s grace. Through our collective memory and our shared hope, the Holy Spirit acts in Word and Sacrament making present to us the saving acts of God and transforming us so that we can be God’s people. Through our worship, we seek the glorification of God and the sanctification of the Church. This worship is offered in the name of the community which claims it as the manifestation of its own identity and mission.

We seek to encourage the Church to worship with vitality and integrity, appropriating the rites and services of the Church, historically and ecumenically grounded, which enable us to worship together in the name of Jesus Christ. We honor the worship traditions of the past and seek to be open to new ways of expressing the heritage of faith they embody in ways that speak to us and for us in the present. We witness to the saving and transforming work of God which renews us in Christ’s Body, the Church, through the continual offering of our lives to God.

When Christians begin to meet regularly in one place, likely the first organized activity will be to gather for worship. Whether it is simple or elaborate, it will include gathering, proclaiming the Word and responding to it, giving thanks and communing, and being sent out to love and serve the Lord. First and foremost, this is what God calls us to do as faithful people. Remembering of God’s actions in the past and developing our sense of what God calls us to be doing in our present and future, we are drawn closer to God and to each other. Thus, we begin to experience the kin-dom of God and are led to work with God to make it a universal reality.

The Order of Saint Luke is dedicated to understanding, teaching, and practicing worship so that it can be for us an experience of praising God, learning with and from each other, opening ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst, and becoming channels of God’s healing grace to others, to the natural world, and to the wider society.

Some Ways in Which We Might Keep This Part of the Rule

Learn about the way worship happens in your own tradition by studying the order of service in your denomination’s hymnal and book of worship. What was it like in the past? How has it changed, and why?

Participate in leading worship, in whatever way one can, and ask yourself how does that

experience affect your understanding of worship as leader? as participant?

Learn about and experience worship in other traditions: What is done differently, or similarly to your own tradition? Why is that done and not something else?

Explore worship life in Christian history: Why was it like that? How, when, and why did it change?

– Find ways in which you might share your learning and insights.

Some Questions to Stimulate Your Thinking

Think about the times when you felt really touched during worship. Can you identify what made it so special?

When you go to worship in a different place than usual, do you find it more interesting, more engaging, or challenging? If yes, why? If no, why not? What have you learned from these times?

If you could plan a worship service any way you wanted, what would it be like? How would you want the people there to feel?

WE MAGNIFY THE SACRAMENTS

We believe that the sacraments are Christ's gift to the Church. Individually and corporately we are called to lift up these mysteries in the life of the Church as means of grace through which we are formed as Christian disciples.

Through the baptismal covenant, we are incorporated into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God calls us to live out the redemptive, liberating, justice-seeking ministry of Jesus. We seek to deepen our understanding of the Church, of the significance of the baptismal covenant, and the Eucharist for Christian discipleship and service.

We believe that the Eucharist re-presents the life-gift of Jesus Christ in which the living spirit of Christ is truly present to us, preserving and reforming Christ's Body, the Church. Frequent celebration of the Eucharist forms us in the sacramental life empowering us to become Christ's healing presence in the world.

Within the general topic of worship, The Order is particularly interested in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. We want to understand their meaning as completely as we can, to identify the best ways to celebrate them, to communicate their significance during their celebration, to share these learnings and insights with other Christians, and increase their importance in the life of the Church.

From the earliest days of the Christian movement, baptism was the experience and event that drew persons into the community of the followers of Jesus Christ. At first it was a Spirit-motivated response to an invitation. Later it became the culmination of an intense and lengthy period of preparation, ushering a believer into full participation in the life of the Christian community. We wish to know how we can generate that same sense of significant commitment in our own time, for ourselves and others.

Once fully a part of the Christian community, the Eucharist becomes a unifying experience binding Christians in fellowship with Jesus and with fellow believers. Through frequent participation in the Eucharist, we are shaped and grounded in that unifying experience. From it we receive the wisdom and power to be agents of healing within the Christian community and in all the world. We cannot say precisely how this happens, but we

bear witness to the reality that it does.

Some Ways in Which We Might Keep This Part of the Rule

Look at the ritual for baptism in your denominations' worship book.

With your pastor and your congregation, discuss the significance of baptism, how persons and families are prepared to be baptized, how best to celebrate baptism so that its importance can be experienced.

Offer to help prepare persons for baptism.

Read through the ritual for the Eucharist (Word and Table) in your denomination's worship book.

Find ways in which to participate in the Eucharist frequently, preferably weekly. (That may not be on Sunday mornings.)

Encourage your local congregation to consider and establish frequent celebration of the Eucharist.

Find occasions to teach about the Eucharist, to tell others about its significance for you, to listen to others' testimony about the Eucharist.

Experience the Eucharist in other settings and in different traditions.

(Note: You may not be welcome to share in the communion of bread and cup in some traditions. It would be good to check that before the service begins.)

Some Questions to Stimulate Your Thinking

When were you baptized? What do you remember about the sacrament? If you were a child, what have you been told about your baptism since it occurred?

Have you been present for the baptism of others? What impressed you about that occasion, positively or negatively?

How were you (or your parents) prepared for your baptism? What does that say to you and to others about the meaning and importance of baptism?

What could be done to encourage people's greater awareness and appreciation of having been baptized?

How could you assist in making the Eucharist more widely available to shut-ins at home or in nursing homes, in hospitals, or other settings outside the church building?

WE ACCEPT THE CALL TO SERVICE

By virtue of our baptism, God calls each of us to ministries which are a proclamation of Christ, seeking wholeness for Creation. Through sacramental, prophetic, and pastoral ministries we turn in openness and love to the world. We identify with the whole community of humankind, especially those who live on the margins, and invite people to touch our lives as we touch theirs. Thus may all know the perfect joy of being reconciled with God. In community with our brothers and sisters, we seek to discern ways in which we are called to serve God in the Order, the Church, and the world.

As we have been considering the sections of the Rule, I hope you have begun to

understand that our life as Christians and as members of The Order are not just private matters. We experience worship and community with the express expectation that we will be engaged in service to others, in the Order, the Church, and the world. These gifts are not for us alone; they are resources for us to employ as God's people, adding our work to God's work in creating the kin-dom. What service we provide varies according to our abilities and convictions, by the particular communities and circumstances in which we live, by the practices of our faith tradition. But ignoring the call to service is not an option.

One dimension of that service is to exercise it in community. We help each other identify our gifts and discover ways in which we will use those gifts for the glory of God, the life of the Church, and the healing of creation. We understand that the answers to these questions change through time and circumstance and will not always be a comfortable fit with our inclinations. The community will work to support and encourage our service, whatever it might be, and hold us accountable to be in ministry.

We cannot be content with service within our congregation, or The Order. These are arenas that can and will draw us into service in the arenas of our daily life—work, leisure, area where we reside, and in the political and natural world. The needs of the world call us into a life of ministry as well. God sent the Christ into creation, into the world of human interaction, to draw all into harmony with God and each other. As followers of the Christ, we too are to be agents of healing and reconciliation.

Some Ways in Which We Might Keep This Part of the Rule

We can offer ourselves in service to The Order, and to the Church.

We can accept the avenues of service that are opened to us.

We can identify ways in which the needs of society attract us to offer our time, talents, and resources to address them.

We can discuss with others we trust what our personal gifts and abilities are, how we may best use them, what our appropriate limits are, how we might support and encourage others in the calls to service.

Some Questions to Stimulate Your Thinking

What do you see as your strengths and abilities?

What do others see as your strengths and abilities?

Who might be able and willing to be part of a small group to discuss these questions about and for each other?

What problem or issue in your community and the wider society troubles you the most? What do you think you can do to help address it? Is there a "call to service" there?

POSTSCRIPT

Perhaps this will seem overwhelming to you. There is a lot to consider and make decisions about; decisions that will not always be easy. But this is the most important part of the process:

BEGIN!

Start somewhere, somehow ... just begin. When you get discouraged and let your practice lapse, **BEGIN AGAIN**. God will provide the growth and the blessings that come with a faithful effort, though it may take some time to recognize what God is doing in you. Others may see it before you do. Find your way into a suitable practice over time. It is not

necessary or possible to reach a deep and satisfying life of prayer and service all at once.

You may be beginning, or beginning again, a long-time member of the Order or someone exploring the possibility of becoming a part of the Order. Whatever your particular circumstances might be, just start.

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

Worship and the Sacraments

- Look at the ritual resources in the hymnal and worship book of your tradition.
- If your denomination has authoritative or official statements on liturgy and the sacraments, locate them and read them. (For example, *By Water and the Spirit* and *This Holy Mystery* for United Methodists or “An Outline of Faith” in the *Book of Common Prayer* for Episcopalians, or “The Directory for Worship” for Presbyterians in the USA.)
- Explore *The Book of Offices and Services of The Order of Saint Luke* (Order of Saint Luke Publications, 2012).
- *Two Ways of Praying*, Paul F. Bradshaw (Order of Saint Luke Publications, 2008)
- *Sacraments and Discipleship*, Mark W. Stamm (Order of Saint Luke Publications, 2001)
- *Word, Water, Wine, and Bread: How Worship Has Changed Over the Years*, William H. Willimon

Daily Prayer

- *A Lukan Book of Hours* (Order of Saint Luke Publications, 2015).
- *A Lukan Book of Feasts* (Order of Saint Luke Publications, 2018).
- *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster
- *Prayer*, Richard J. Foster (*HarperSanFrancisco*, 1992)
- *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Reuben P Job, and Norman Shawchuck (UpperRoom Books, 1990).
- *Sounds of the Eternal*, J. Philip Newell, (William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids MI, 2002)

The Call to Service

- Member Mission website—<https://www.membermission.org> The following are recommended books available on the site:
 - *When the Members Are the Missionaries*, A. Wayne Schwab
 - *Living the Gospel*, A. Wayne Schwab
 - *How to Live Your Faith*, A. Wayne Schwab