

RHYTHM OF LIFE

Contemplative Interbeing

Introduction

In ancient times, monasteries served as reservoirs of contemplation, where spiritual seekers could immerse themselves fully in the rhythms of prayer, study, and sacred community life. However, for those called to live an engaged, worldly existence in modern times, the luxury of cloistered living is often not possible or practical.

And yet, the hunger for spiritual meaning, authentic connection, and a life well-lived remains ever-present in the human heart. We still crave the richness of communal belonging and shared commitment to ideals greater than ourselves - the very treasures monasticism once provided its adherents.

This "Rhythm of Life" document offers a path toward realizing some of the intangible but precious gifts of the monastic tradition, without the literal renunciation of worldly life. By weaving together the three core strands of contemplative spirituality, integral inner work, and solidarity with the suffering, a new type of "unbounded monastery" is envisioned. One where the cloister exists in our heart's resolve, rather than physical walls.

Through its philosophies and practices, the "Rhythm of Life" creates a sustaining ecology of spiritual community, even as we continue lives as lovers, parents, workers, citizens engaged with the world. We are invited to join a virtual "monastery without walls" - deepening our inner lives through contemplation, while stepping up as engaged changemakers and compassionate allies to a world in need of healing.

For the sincerely devoted spiritual sojourner, this path offers a rich new framework for leading an integrated life of meaning, vibrancy and selfless service - a monastic ethos reimaged for the modern soul seeking both transcendence and transformation.

New Monasticism at Contemplative Interbeing

Contemplative Interbeing's new monastic approach to creating a rhythm of life is based on Contemplative and Integral Spirituality which expresses the idea of living a holistic and integrated life. Adopting a new monastic rhythm of life, means contemplative prayer (wake up), developing integral wisdom (open up/grow up) an ongoing conversion of life (clean up), and living from this spirituality in solidarity (show up) with others.

In terms of what's possible for us, our community is based on a very simple new monasticism: we don't live with each other; that's not our goal. What unites us is our rhythm of life, and our rhythm of life is very specific. Which means that every day, our life is focused on three vows:

1. A Contemplative Spirituality
2. An Integrated Life
3. Solidarity

In these we are committed to daily contemplative practice, the mysticism of everyday life (a spiritual life that is integrated with development and daily living, not an add-on activity), and living in solidarity with the suffering of the world.

Contemplation is the intrinsic capacity of each self to touch and be touched by the Source.

Contemplation refers to a universal and unifying view of the world. Contemplation is in service of, and the means by which, we discover the unification of spirit and matter, male and female, intuition and reason, mercy and justice; Interbeing. Contemplation is more than a shift in perception or how one knows. Contemplation radically changes us and our way of living. Contemplation affects the whole of one's life by opening the heart to the Divine Presence in all realities. Contemplation is the change that changes everything.

Integral is a perspective that honors the truths of modernity and postmodernity—including the revolutions in science and culture—while incorporating the essential insights of the great traditions. Integral means comprehensive, balanced, inclusive, and essential for completeness. Integrity means to integrate all parts of our nature; to cultivate body, mind, and spirit in self culture, and nature. Gandhi said, “One cannot do right in one department of life whilst occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole.” Integral spirituality provides a map of the territory of Oneness, love, and abundant life. Through Integral Spirituality we can learn to clean up, wake up, open up, grow up, and show up to life.

Solidarity is a powerful concept that requires us to work shoulder to shoulder in the act of liberation. This implies active engagement and a commitment to challenging the status quo, rather than passively observing or offering empty gestures. Solidarity is rooted in the idea of total identification with the human condition, a recognition that we are all part of a shared narrative called human history.

PRACTICES:

To embark on this transformative path, a library of contemplative practices awaits. From meditation and mindful awareness to journaling and reflection, from body awareness to nature walks, these practices guide us in exploring the depths of our being, cultivating understanding, and fostering positive transformation. Embrace the adventure of self-discovery and engage with practices that resonate with you. You are encouraged to engage with at least one practice for each aspect (clean up, wake up, open up, grow up, and show up). Let your journey begin!

Clean Up refers to doing the inner work of processing our own repressed, disowned, and denied aspects of self (positive and negative):

Healthy ego: Letting go of attachment to ego and its limitations, fostering a sense of humility, openness to growth, and union with the divine. Cultivating self-awareness through spiritual practice, enabling a deeper understanding of our thoughts, feelings, and motivations.

Moral behavior: Establishing clear differentiation between self and others through self-awareness and personal integrity. This allows us to maintain healthy boundaries while respecting the autonomy of others. Taking ownership of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions. This involves acknowledging our personal responsibility and avoiding blaming external circumstances or

others for our choices. Building healthy relationships through effective communication, empathy, and respect for individual differences.

Shadow work: Confronting and understanding our 'shadow' - the unconscious (repressed, disowned, and denied) parts of ourselves that may hinder personal growth and cause harm to ourselves or others. To prevent our shadow from controlling our behavior in unhealthy ways. Shadow work empowers us to overcome self-limiting beliefs and create a life guided by authenticity and awareness.

Wake Up refers to any spiritual experience which overcomes our experience of the self as separate from Being in general. It should be the goal of all spiritual work. The purpose of waking up is not personal or private perfection, but surrender, love, and union with The Divine (Ultimate Reality). Waking up is cultivating spiritual awareness, letting go of limiting beliefs, and embracing your True Self.

Open Up refers to tuning into different aspects of yourself — emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual — for balanced development.

Grow Up refers to the process of development through various stages. The psychological and emotional maturity that persons commonly undergo, both personally and culturally. We all grow up, even if inside our own bubbles. The social structures that surround us highly color, strengthen, and also limit how much we can grow up and how much of our own shadow self we will be able to face and integrate.

Showing Up means bringing our heart and mind into the actual suffering and problems of the world. It means solidarity, engagement, social presence, and a sincere concern for justice and peace for others beyond ourselves. If we do not have a lot of people showing up in the suffering trenches of the world, it is probably because those of us merely focused on either cleaning up, growing up, or waking up. Showing up is the full and final result of the prior four aspects—The Divine's fully transformed *work of art*.

APPLYING TO DAILY RHYTHM:

(this is one very simplified example)

- Meditate as part of your morning routine (Centering Prayer, TM, Vipassana)
- Exercise regularly (with physician's guidance)
- Encounter community (church, book clubs, community centers, service learning)
- Acknowledge your imperfections and work through negative emotions in a healthy way.
(Shadow Work—12 Steps—The Work)
- Supplement with other practices (creativity, yoga, nature, sacred listening, healing circle, etc.)
- Solidarity: Volunteer, practice nonviolence, engage with social justice
- Examen

Remember, creating a rhythm of life is an ongoing process. Experiment, find what works for you, and be patient with yourself. By incorporating these principles and practices into your daily life, you can move closer to living a life filled with meaning, purpose, connection, and a richer quality of aliveness.

DAILY AND WEEKLY EXAMEN:

The Examen is a prayerful reflection which can be a key part of life and which can have a powerful impact on the lives of those who use it. It consists of setting time aside each day (twice a day, at midday and the end of the day, and each week) to reflect prayerfully on the events of the day and where The Divine was in those events. The examen is an exercise in the practice of attentiveness to my lived experience and also in the art of discernment - becoming aware of the ways in which The Divine is active in my life and resolving to co-operate better with his gifts and calling. The Examen should be integrated as a way of encouraging reflection on experiences and to explore the ways in which The Divine is present in that experience. Here it is in a nutshell:

Daily Examen:

Give thanks

Spend a few moments in gratitude for the gifts and blessings of the day.

Ask for light

Ask The Divine to enlighten you, showing where he has been at work and present in your day through events, people and places.

Examine the day

Review the moments of the day, noticing what has led to consolation (when something is deeply and genuinely good for us) and what has led to desolation (when something is not good for us) and my reactions to these events, people and places.

Seek forgiveness

Ask forgiveness for the times when you have acted, spoken or thought contrary to his grace and calling for you.

Resolve to change

Decide what in your behavior or attitude you will try to improve tomorrow.

Weekly Examen:

Setting: Sit on your bed at night, creating a quiet and contemplative space.

Question: Ask yourself, "What one thing am I doing wrong that I could fix?"

This focused question helps pinpoint a specific area for improvement.

Honesty: Acknowledge and honestly consider your shortcomings.

Meditation and Answer: Reflect on the identified issue, seeking answers for improvement. Be prepared for an answer that may challenge your comfort zone but is necessary for growth. Often, we get the answer we don't want and that is most often the sign that it is the answer we need.

Additional Notes:

- This practice can be adapted to different contexts and beliefs.
- The Examen can be combined with journaling or other reflection techniques.