



# AXIOM

*Global Monastic Community*



## RHYTHMS & RESOURCES

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST  
ENGAGING CULTURE  
EMANCIPATING THE OPPRESSED

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*"Over the margins of life comes a whisper, a faint call, a premonition of richer living we know we have been passing by. Strained by the very mad pace of our daily outer burdens, we are further strained by an inward uneasiness, because we have hints of a way of life vastly richer and deeper than all this hurried existence. A life of unhurried serenity, peace and power."*

*- Quaker Contemplative, Thomas Kelley*

# *Invitation*

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*Dear Axiom Participants,*

I want to thank you for accepting our invitation to become learners with us in our global Monastic Community. Our goal is to explore what it means to live a life of prayer that leads to both an ever-expansive, loving communion with God, and an active faith and engagement with the world. Those of you who have joined us in practicing our first three Rhythms of Formation - Daily Moments of Reflection, The Weekly Eucharist/Communion, and a Yearly Pilgrimage/Retreat - have en-





couraging stories to share. Many of you have experienced very intimate moments with God as you've made sacred space to learn how to be loved by Him, and as well, many have experienced seasons of spiritual dryness and difficulty centering. Both are real and significant aspects of the journey.

The purpose of this handbook is threefold: to acknowledge some of the very real challenges of contemplative living, to offer some words of encouragement and helpful resources, and to expound on Axiom's last four rhythms of formation: Wellness/Body Care, Acts of Service, The Prayer of Examen, and Lifelong Learning. Enjoy experimenting with these life-giving practices. You may find, with these additions, the emergence of a wholistic dimension to your relationship with God, a contemplative activism that will have a profound effect on those around you.

*"How we do our lives is our last and final truth. "*

*- Richard Rohr*

## AN ESSENTIAL REMINDER OF HOME...

Within each of us resides a living flame of love, a secret chamber where peace and power have made their home. (John 15:4) As Christ-followers, we have come to know this Living Treasure of unspeakable worth to be the very Life of God, the heart of our existence; however, in daily experience we often lack the awareness of this life that is in love with us, and whom it is that we carry in these clay vessels. We've adapted the spiritual disciplines of Jesus as a way of expanding our inner awareness of *"Christ in us the hope of glory."* (Colossians 1:27)

*"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.  
My Father will love him and we will come to him  
and make our home with him. " - John 14:23*

This handbook will challenge us to weekly make space to care for the temple, our bodies, where His life resides, and to live in the world in such a way that others become homesick for what Psalms 63:3 refers to as a "love that is better than life."

Your friend,

*Jeff Pratt*

**P.S.** Our third Axiom handbook will be devoted to expounding on our third value: "Emancipating the Oppressed", offering resources and global opportunities.

*"I want to inspire Christianity to remove the disciplines from the category of historical curiosities and place them at the center of the new life in Christ. Only when we do this can Christ's community take its place at this present point in history."*

*- Eugene Peterson*



## FOURTH PRACTICE

# Wellness & Body-care

*"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" 1 Corinth. 6:19*



**"Anyone who knows me knows that I'm a foodie..."**

I'll even arrange my day around different foods I'm desiring to make sure that I get to have, or experience, them. Yet I am thin at the same time. Yes, one reason I work out at the gym and jog a couple times a week is so I don't look like I'm a foodie. The other reason is that I've noticed my clarity of mind, energy and ability to listen to others and God is often dictated by how I'm physically feeling. When I have a rhythm of formation that combines both body and spirit, there is joy in the journey that exceeds the comfort of eating whatever I want, when I want it. After living this discipline for a while, I find I actually desire the kind of foods that my body needs. That being said, I'm also the first to find my favorite gelato flavor on our Pilgrimage in Assisi, Italy!"





## APPLICATION

In addition to eating in moderation and choosing foods that look like they did when they came out of the ground (remember there are no marshmallow trees), the Center of Disease Control and Prevention in the United States, and Dr. Mehmet Oz, recommend that all adults get a minimum of 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity, like brisk walking. That comes down to just over 20 minutes per day. As an alternative, you could go for 75 minutes, per week, of vigorous activity like jogging, or some other form of physical exercise.

We realize that Formation is wholistic, and what we eat and how we exercise affects our interaction with God and others, as well as our present state of being. As we properly steward these vessels that carry the very Life of God, we are able to see body, soul, spirit and intellect working in partnership. We, with vitality, may then more adequately be messengers of hope to this world, limiting potential physical hindrances. Axiom has experienced physical trainers available for consultation as needed, and a couple bodybuilders as well :)!

*"Through meditative prayer, I found Abba in a thin place where the void between heaven and earth falls away. In that moment, a journey to stay yoked with my Savior had begun. This search has led me to the truth that without good nutrition and exercise my relationship with God can never reach its potential. Now, just like my Creator, I long for His presence. "*

*- Jamie Burrell, Axiom Participant and Trainer,  
Santa Monica/Venice Beach, California*

*"Physical training is of some value, while godliness has value for all things, holding promise both for this present life as well as the life to come. "*

*- 1 Timothy 4:8*

## FIFTH PRACTICE

# *Weekly Acts of Service*

*"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." James 2:26*



**Axiom Participants are encouraged to invest a minimum of three hours a week into acts of service for our neighborhoods and local communities.**

Such acts of service are broadly defined (see suggestions in the Application section), and Participants are invited to record their journey and their learning through such acts. These acts of service are the foundation for the reality of walking with God, who invites us to become the willing servant of all. Indeed, little would be known of the character of God outside the life and physical manifestation of the Divine in Jesus Christ during his earthly pilgrimage; therefore, as contemplative activists, we need to demonstrate the reality of the gospel in this way. Given our own ability to live forgetful of our good intentions and to avoid a privatized spirituality, we encourage this minimum number of hours per week to ensure that our



commitment is visibly and tangibly gifted into the world Christ died to serve and to save. (Realizing that a number of Axiom Participants are full-time Christian workers, the challenge here is to consider, "Is our service influencing, in a tangible way, the neighborhoods in which we reside?")

## APPLICATION

These acts of service might include: supporting food pantries and soup kitchens, cleaning homes and landscaping yards for the elderly, environmental services such as picking up trash in city parks and on the streets, urban gardens, landscaping public places, teaching English to those for whom it is not their first language, reading to children and others in hospitals, serving the physically and mentally handicapped, serving neighborhood and city volunteer programs, prison visitations, befriending someone who has a debilitating disease, training and volunteering as a community mediator, running youth activities, etc.



# *The Prayer of Examen*

*"Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth." Psalm 26:2,3*



*"The Prayer of Examen awakens in me the truth of why I was created and gives me daily awareness of God's ever-abiding presence, allowing me to live a life that is truly alive in Christ."*

*- Wayne Corrigan, Axiom Participant, Australia*

The Prayer of Examen is an ancient technique of prayerful reflection. Before one retires at night, reflect on the day's events in order to detect God's presence, conviction, affirmation and direction. The following steps may be helpful in leading you into a teachable position of heart, asking the question, "Have you loved well during the day?"



1

PREPARE YOURSELF by quietly focusing your attention on God.

*"In Him we live and move and have our being." Act 17:28*

2

REVIEW YOUR DAY with thankfulness and a spirit of reconciliation.

*"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you in all truth." John 16:13*

When did you live out of love and freedom in Christ?

*"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence or if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Phil. 4:8*

3

THANK GOD for what is happening through this experience, and ask for his guidance and grace for tomorrow.

*"Now to Him, who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations." Eph. 3: 20, 21*

*"The Prayer of Examen has given me a moment of heavenly perspective on a day to day basis, allowing God to talk to me using the consolations and desolations of my daily life."*

*- Miguel Chucon, Axiom Participant, Guatemala*

*"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you - unless of course, you fail the test?"*

*- 2 Corinthians 13:5*



# *Lifelong Learning*



**This Axiom Practice is more of an attitude of heart and mind, where we acknowledge formation as wholistic, involving body, mind, and spirit.** We value living with intention and exercising our intellect, as well as social formation, as an important and fulfilling aspect of life. This removes the distinction between spiritual and non-spiritual, revealing that there is a spiritual dimension to every sphere of life. The objective remains that a mature follower of God might emerge from this process. Axiom's whole life and purpose is captured in this concept of effective formation, a work of grace that continues throughout our lives; a work for which we take responsibility and great enjoyment in collaboration with our God.





## APPLICATION

*"Albert Einstein once said, 'Any man who reads too much and uses his brain too little falls into lazy habits of thinking.' Simply studying the wisdom of others isn't enough. We have to think through ideas ourselves. Axiom encourages participants to spend time journaling, meditating or contemplating over ideas you have learned. Why not create a 'Learning List,' which is a list of things you are interested in but have never taken time to explore? These can be areas of practical interest, not just academic subjects. Such lists of friends we know include developing an herb garden, learning to cook, sketching and photography, etc." - Micha Jazz, Spiritual Director of The Contemplative Network, an expression of Axiom Monastic Community in Great Britain.*

*"Everything is beautifully spiritual, minus sin."*

*- Francis Schaeffer*

# *A Contemplative Sourced Prayer Model*

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## **WORSHIP**

*John 4: 24, "For God is the Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

*Romans 12:1, "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him."*

## **CONFESSION & REPENTANCE**

*Psalms 139:23,24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."*



*Psalm 51:10,17, "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God."*

## **PETITIONS & REQUESTS**

*Matthew 6:11, "Give us today our daily bread."*

*Philippians 4:6, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done."*

## **FRIENDSHIP TIME (CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER)**

*Psalm 27:4, "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."*

*Hebrews 12:2, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."*

## **INTERCESSION FOR OTHERS**

*1 Timothy 2:1, "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them: intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them."*

*Romans 8:26, "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words."*

## **THANKSGIVING & WORSHIP**

*1 Thessalonians 5:18, "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus."*

*Psalm 100:4, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name."*



# *Christian Mantras*



**A Mantra is a sound, syllable, word, or group of words that is considered capable of assisting an individual in preparing one's heart and mind for spiritual transformation.** Some Christians repeat the following phrases and scriptures a number of times throughout the day, or in a time of need, or during a time of meditation, to center themselves on truth.

*"Abba . . . I belong to You."*

*"God you are here now, help me to be here now."*

**The Jesus Prayer:**

*"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me a sinner." Luke 18:38*

*(Classic Book on The Jesus Prayer; "The Way of The Pilgrim.")*



*"Jesus saves me now."*

*"Be still and know that I am God." Ps 46:10*

*Be still and know that I am.*

*Be still and know.*

*Be still.*

*Be.*

*"Yeshua I am Yours, and You are mine."*

*"Christ in me the hope of glory." Col. 1 :27*

*"God lives and breathes in me as He did in Jesus." Romans 8:11*

*- Eugene Peterson's paraphrased version of The Bible, called "The Message."*

# *Common Questions*



**With the Spiritual Practices, especially with Silence, Solitude and Prayer, how do I gauge success?**

In response to this question, the Author and Speaker, Brennan Manning, shared the following story with those of us who had invited him to come and minister to our community: "Every Friday night I used to visit a friend of mine, and we would get caught up, usually over a piece of cheesecake. However, during one season of our friendship, my friend started not serving cheesecake as much, and I stopped showing up as much. Then eventually I stopped visiting him all together. A couple weeks later I received a call from him that was rather embarrassing. "Brennan," he said, "did you stop coming and visiting me on Friday nights because I stopped serving cheesecake?" Brennan said he blushed. Then in reference to silence, solitude and prayer he said, "You measure success by simply showing up and shutting up!"





God is worthy of our time and attention, regardless if we receive any emotional payback, or profound revelations, or spiritual cheesecake!

*"Faithfulness' is the new radical, the 'dirty secret of success' is the ability to just show up, day after day."*

*- D. Darling*

**When I try "seeking His face" through Centering Prayer, do I picture an actual face or image?**

*"Some people find a relatively imageless awareness of God is not only more authentic in their experience, but also theologically more faithful to the essence of God, 'in whom we love and move and have our being'. (Acts 17:28) God's presence in the atmosphere births and embraces all of creation (Eph. 1:23), the eternal 'I AM that I AM.' (Ex. 3:14) As such, the mysterious presence of The Divine can be in active relationship with people, calling us, moving us, inspiring us, loving us, and desiring our love in return, and all the while unrestricted by our minds."*

*- Gerald May, M.D.*

## **What is Contemplative Activism?**

Let's remind ourselves that Contemplative Activism combines two ideas, the first one being the essential, yet often lost art of drawing aside with God for prayer and learning how to find Him in every aspect of life. Contemplative experience provides a door to discovering so much more about ourselves, each other, God and His ways.

However there is a danger having ascended the heights through Contemplation, that we may not want to return and make our descent back into the streets of chaos within which we are called to carry out the mission of God. Secondly, therefore, we seek to live out prayer by rolling up our sleeves and serving the needs of the surrounding community. The Contemplative Activist develops the rhythm of ascent and descent in living the Spirit filled life.

(thoughts from Micha Jazz)

# *The Challenges and Liberties of Making Space for God*



**Sometimes seeking God through the spiritual disciplines can feel barren and lifeless, and we don't feel like we're finding Him.**

Since inviting Christ-followers around the world to journey with us in relational acts where we respond to, seek, and nurture intimacy with God, there are common struggles along the way. In this section we will define these struggles, with the goal of breathing hope into the often tattered sails of our faith, and for us to know we are not alone in our pursuit. Let's persevere together, sharing both the joys and pains of our journey. Let's revisit why we create space for God, the roles of spaciousness and emptiness, and why God can seem elusive in our earnest at-

*"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart."*

*- 1 Chronicles 28:9*





tempts in trying to have an encounter with Him.

### **An Elusive but loving God?**

If God is ever-present and loving, why, at times, does He seem hard to find? When I spend time in silence, solitude and prayer, I often first encounter what Gregory Boyd calls, "The programmed, idol-addicted, ego-centric flesh brain." This brain and my ego are havoc-producing bedfellows. Their plan is to dull my awareness and appetite for all things eternal, and to enchant me with the temporary and the trivial. Coupled with the fact that, because we live in a culture that is so immediately satisfying, it's hard to remain spiritually hungry. So while endeavoring to position my heart and mind before God, I find that there are many negative and unhealthy ways of thinking that I need to unlearn.

*"Contemplation is the ultimate recovery, because it is from the universal addiction to our own preferred way of thinking. Many of us have been learning that through the contemplative practices it all starts with dying to our own addictive, compulsive, and negative ways of processing reality. That is the biggest and hardest death of all, and it has no social pay off or immediate satisfaction whatsoever."*

*- Richard Rohr*

Change in my life is produced as I take responsibility for my often unhealthy state of mind, and turn back to my heart's truest desire - a deep abiding union with a God who aches for my full presence. Time and again, as I get in touch with His ache, it always draws me back home where I find God to not be elusive, but immanent, shockingly, forever present.

*"God in immanence is already too close to us, too intimate, too at one with us to be a clear-cut object. God in transcendence is too great to be apprehended. God is wholly other from us, and intimately united with us at the same time."*

*- Gerald May M.D.*

In contemplation, I'm awakened to the reality of His immanence, while allowing myself to be awestruck by the mystery of His transcendence. No longer will these two aspects of His character seem to be in opposition of one another. His immanence makes Him appear to my emotions as more human, while His tran-



scendence more God-like. One anchors me in His love, the other in the reverence and wonder of His mystery and majesty; both are bottomless oceans of truth that is worthy of a life of contemplative exploration.

While I wait on God in prayer, His immanence melts my heart with the realization that He is so affected by me, and His transcendence reminds me that this allowance doesn't make Him weak and needy like me! Then I can fully understand that He doesn't love me out of need, but needs me because of love.



### **Permanently Affected by the Adoption of my Sons. . .**

The following story took place the day I chose to adopt Brandon and Patrick to be my adoptive sons. They were living on the streets and in shelters of northern Connecticut for a year and a half before being placed into a Foster home. Their Foster parents were getting ready to retire, resulting in the boys potentially being separated and placed in different homes. They were seven and eight years old at the time. This story took place in the foyer of my house, after spending a day at the beach with Brandon and Patrick, while they were loading their backpacks so they could be taken back to the Department of Family Services.

"Can I come up there, before you take us back?" Brandon asked with an ache in his



eyes so deep that no written words could adequately capture. Seeing my confusion at this question, he pointed to my shoulders. "You want to sit up here before I take you back?" "Yes," he said with a slight smile. While I began to lift him up, I remembered that the only photograph I could find of Brandon and Patrick and their biological father before he abandoned them, was when they were toddlers at the beach sitting on his shoulders. I looked at our reflection in a large mirror in front of us. We were silent for a moment. Then he leaned down and said, "Sir, I don't want you to call me Brandon anymore." "Then what do you want me to call you," I asked? "Can you please call me your son?" His question made me breathless for a moment, startled at its humble directness. If I said the word "son", if I chose him to be mine, I knew what the ramifications of that decision would be; I would be allowing his every joy and pain to affect me for the rest of my life. Also, although I ached to be committed to someone, I was enjoying the freedom of living a single life. Even with this knowledge, I took the life-altering risk and said, "Brandon, today I choose you to be my son, from this day onward you are mine." "You want me," he questioned? I said, "My life would be incomplete without loving you."

Let's contemplate for a moment what it means to have a transcendent God who is so affected by us, His creation. Let's consider the ultimate vulnerability of Him who "chose us before the creation of the world." Ephesians 1:4

*"Beloved of the Lord rest secure in Him, for He shields you all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between His shoulders."*

*- Deuteronomy 33:12*



# *Spaciousness, Emptiness, and the Myth of Fulfillment*

(paraphrased Gerald G. May M.D.)



*"At its best, practice is the active seeking of soul space and heart-freedom, to ache and to sing, to suffer and to play."*

*- Gerald May M.D.*

In biblical Hebrew, the letter 'yodh' and 'shin' combine to form a root that connotes "space and the freedom and security which is gained by the removal of constriction." From the YS root comes words like yeshua, which refers to salvation.

How both challenging and liberating it is to discover that space is intimately associated with salvation! Space is freedom from confinement, from preoccupation, from oppression, from drivenness, and from all the other interior and exterior





forces that bind and restrict our spirits. Thus, the creating of space in our lives is essential for us to allow our compulsions to ease and our bonds to loosen. To the extent that space is permitted by our discipline and willingness, we discover expanding emptiness in which surrender and consecration can happen - room for love to make its home in us.

Spaciousness comes to us in three primary ways:

## **1** FORM

Physical, geographical spaces like the wide openness of fields, water and sky and the welcomed simplicity of uncluttered rooms.

## **2** TIME

Pauses in activity when we are freed from tasks, agendas, and other demands.

## **3** SOUL

This is inner emptiness, the room inside our hearts, the unfilled quality of our consciousness.

Depending upon how we meet this soul-space, we may experience it as open possibility or void nothingness, as creative potential or as dulling boredom, a quiet peaceful serenity, or as a restless yearning for fulfillment.

### **A Realignment**

We must somehow realign our attitude towards spaciousness. We must begin to see it as a presence rather than an absence, a friend instead of an enemy. This is the most practical challenge we face in being consciously in love with God, because we have come to associate space with fear, emptiness, and negativity, and lack of fulfillment to dysfunction. The things I have put off, the worries I have been avoiding, the bad feelings I have stifled.

Space can potentially become both restful and therapeutic when it is encountered

with the willingness to experience things as they are. The more true space we give ourselves, the less we repress. We most want to escape from our longing for love because it hurts too much. Thus, we approach spaciousness as a place where we point ourselves to love's source and where we welcome the flow of grace. It is where we allow ourselves to remain empty till He chooses to come and fill us, in His time and in His way. Could this be the true meaning of spiritual poverty?

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:3*

*"Space is life, sunlight, and fresh air towards which the buried  
uglies of our soul crawl in search of healing."*

## **The Myth of Fulfillment**

This generation is particularly addicted to the filling up of every kind of space we encounter. We are addicted to the pursuit of consistent fulfillment, to the eradication of emptiness. Sometimes we would rather have the anesthetized serenity of dullness than the liberating disease of truth. Together, our addiction to fulfillment and our flight from truth weave a harsh, desperate barrier against participation in love.

## **Let's love the questions...**

We were never meant to be completely fulfilled; we were meant to taste it, to long for it, and to grow towards it. In this way, we participate in love becoming life, and life becoming love. To miss our emptiness is to miss our hope. As contemplatives, let's learn to live into our longing rather than trying to resolve it, to enter the spaciousness of our emptiness instead of trying to fill it up.

*"Be patient towards all that is unresolved in your heart and try  
to love the questions themselves. Live the questions now. Perhaps  
over all there is a great motherhood as common longing."*

*- Rilke, poet*



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*"Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evening, how to spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything."*

*- Father Pedro Arrupe, General Society of Jesus*





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