



Rule of Life
for an
ANCHORITE

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Monastery of the Soul

*The habit worn cannot be seen, but for graying head and bones;
And cloister walls do not appear, but for the island hill;
Companions of the life unknown, but for the squirrels and birds;
The office sung cannot be heard, but for "Hello? Goodbye."
The altar served, some think abandoned, all those years ago.*

You cannot see, nor can I—with outward, usual eyes...

*Yet Cross and Ring are worn each day, put on like cowl and robe;
With silence crafting cloister's strength of solitary life;
Saints gather from eternal realms to share both joy and sorrow;
To witness office sung in chant and breath, and offered by the pen;
At altar cherished deep within, the bread and wine become the Lily's Star.*

Susan Creighton+
Christmas Eve, 2002

A Rule of Life for An Anchorite

Prologue

**ANCHORITE, from *anachoréo*, Greek: αναχωρεω
to go away, a secluded place, to withdraw, retire, take refuge**

Down through the ages, regardless of faith tradition, some men and women, longing for enlightenment, or striving to hear the voice of the Lord, and or knowing that their deepest desire has been to become one with God, have embarked upon an inner quest. Often this journey has led them beyond the values and traditions of ordinary society, and they have turned away from family, power, and riches, and sought out the blessings and rigors of silence and solitude. Whether they have been led to the deserts of Arabia, the caves of the Himalayas, the forests of Russia, or the islands off Great Britain, or even the anonymity of urban life, the means have often been the same. This quest is the same as that of Orthodox *hesychast*, the Russian *staretz*, and the Hindu *Sannyasin*, and certainly of the Christian hermit or anchorite.

In our own Anglican tradition, the roots are found in Celtic monasticism with its close affinity to the Desert Fathers of early Christianity. Many saints, monks, bishops, abbesses, and above all, untold numbers of hermits and anchorites expressed the same ideals and mystical spirituality. Surely Julian of Norwich with her classic mystical *Shewings*, or *Revelations of Divine Love*, is the most familiar to us, but we should not overlook Richard Rolle, hermit and spiritual guide, whose *Fire of Love* is a magnificent mystical work, and of course the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the *Ancrene Riwe* (or *Ancrene Wisse*) are clearly written for the guidance of anchorites, as is Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*. Even Nicholas Ferrar and the community at Little Gidding, although not solitaires per se, were clearly inspired by the same spiritual impetus as the others.

In addition to the silence and solitude found by the solitary ascetic, the world's traditions have also generally required specific, concrete disciplines—most Christian hermits and anchorites (if taking vows, which some do not) use the “evangelical counsels” expressed in vows of celibate chastity, poverty, and obedience. The Benedictine rule modifies these slightly and is couched in terms of conversion of life, stability, and obedience. Regardless of the faith tradition, or form of discipline, all recognize that sexuality, wealth, and power are particular foci needing to be addressed.

Yet is literal, physical renunciation sufficient as an end in itself? Are literal celibacy, material poverty, and strict obedience (whether to a superior or a rule) sufficient to bring one into union with God? The tradition is replete with records both of holiness resulting from faithful adherence to

the vows as well as misuse and legalism that results in, at the best, staleness of spirit, and in the worst cases, despair, destruction, and unfaithfulness. All too often, it would seem, the form of the vows is confused with the essence of the spirit they are intended to engender.

Clearly, the intent behind all such vows is to aid in detachment. Jesus' charge to the faithful over and over again is interpreted as "being in the world, but not of it." Another way of interpreting this is to recognize that our ego, body, mind and senses—gifts of God that they are—nevertheless are not the sum total of who we are meant to be. Rather, they may even become barriers to our finding our true identity, our true identity as children of God, as souls made in the image of God, as souls called to love God above all else.

Perhaps this is articulated best by a summation of the teaching of St. John of the Cross:

"The essential act of prayer is to stand unprotected before God. What will God do? He will take possession of us. That he should do this is the whole purpose of life."

Standing unprotected before God, and allowing Him to take possession of us is clearly the purpose of life of the anchorite or hermit. And surely a new Rule, and new interpretations of the vows may be required in particular instances. It is with that intent—meeting the situation of one particular anchorite, at a particular time and place—that this rule is now undertaken.

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The Call

Over thirty years ago, I began to sense a call for God to a deeper life of prayer. In the midst of the Palm Sunday liturgy, I heard a Voice say deep within my soul,

"I have other need of you."
Journal I:64, 15 April 1973

I did not know what the "other need" was, but I knew I must respond. Through several years of deepening prayer and extended service as a layperson in the church, I finally approached my bishop. He recommended further training and ordination to the diaconate. Only days before my acceptance to the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, I wondered—

What if the Lord really is calling me simply to a contemplative form of life where the only purpose would be that of complete union with Him?

*Journal I:164,
 26 May 1976*

However, I was unaware of any means offered by the Episcopal Church of pursuing such a call, even if genuine. During a period of deep spiritual aridity, my bishop told me “say prayers” when I could not pray, but neither he nor seminary nor spiritual directors gave me any tools for deepening prayer within my own soul—or for helping others do the same.

I began seminary the same month that the Church approved the ordination of women to the priesthood. During the three years of study and intense personal growth, I resisted the pressure of friends and colleagues to become a priest, and instead continued to turn my face toward a deeper interior life of prayer. Monastic life (about which I had known nothing previously) opened up as a possible alternative for me, one in which I could not only serve as a deacon, but could also move more deeply into the life of prayer. Following ordination to the diaconate, I entered the Order of St. Helena, a monastic community of the Episcopal Church which offered a ‘mixed’ life of both contemplation and active ministry.

Early on in my novitiate, I realized the call from God was only intensifying. Even as I tried to surrender to the new concepts and models of a religious life, I was also thrust squarely into dealing with the call to the priesthood, which I had so long delayed. At last, I could no longer resist. On a cold, snowy night, with tears streaming down my face, I wrestled with God, weeping, and trying to say, “Lord, you *know* I love you.” But before the words were formed, the Voice came:

Feed my sheep
John 21:17

In the next eighteen months of intense discernment, both on my part, and by the Order and the diocese, I continued to experience the interior call to deeper prayer. Now, the focus became a sacramental one, and I knew in my deepest being—

*Yes, (the Convent) is my place. But I have not yet found
how to survive in it; and still I long for solitude, ...for
quiet. ... Perhaps in my priesthood itself is found my true
solitude. O Lord, grant me thy peace.*

Journal IV:65
11 May 1981

The priesthood brought me to the heart of sacramental living and service, and there I experienced a deeper spiritual solitude and silence than I had ever before known. The Plainchant of the Monastic Offices was balm to my soul, and the ancient cycle of seasons, feasts, and fasts, gave me new and deeper means of “saying prayers” and being “carried by the faith of the Church.” Even so, and with deep sadness, the Convent did not turn out to be “my place.”

Leaving the community a few months before taking final vows, I was soon appointed by the bishop to be vicar of a small urban parish. Service there brought me into even greater active ministry, and with less and less time for my own soul. I believe I was a faithful pastor, but parish ministry did not fit fully, either. Turning then to campus ministry in another dio-

cese, I again found myself thriving outwardly on the many challenges, while still confiding in the privacy of my journal—

...what I do in "work" is becoming less and less real, it is simply the projection, the shadow. And here in the dark and silence and solitude is the substance. ... O Lord, in your mercy, be my strength, my peace, my steadfastness. Shield me with your Love, your Light, your Being.

**Journal VI:53
7 February 1989**

When that position was in imminent likelihood of being cut due to the diocesan budgetary priorities, and recognizing my own overwhelming exhaustion and near-despair, I resigned, and returned to the Diocese of Olympia, and my home on Camano Island.

The decade that followed became a balancing act between my uneven health, and a potpourri of ministry—supply work, teaching at the Diocesan School of Theology and elsewhere, quiet days, retreats, and spiritual direction. And through it all, over and over again in the silence of my own heart, I knew the continual interior call by God remained: *"Be still, and know that I am God."* **Psalm 46.**

The first thing I must do is return to the Silence, and to the Solitude within it.... I am to follow the path of the solitary.... And that means solitude in the midst of the church's liturgy, solitude in regard to friends, solitude in the midst of a frantic world crying out 'Do this! Do that! Hurry!' solitude in the midst of the darkness of depression. My vocation, my call is to go into the DeepLight, at the very center of the Deep Spaces.

**Journal VII:240,
15 April 1995**

By 1999, I knew I could no longer go on simply "saying prayers" and "being carried by the faith of the Church." Although my search had been diligent for over a quarter of a century, through a multitude of ministries, disciplines, traditions, and resources, I now knew I could no longer pretend. Health once again worsened, and I had to cancel several ministry commitments. And then, God opened an entirely new door.

I met someone with extensive experience in the Christian mystical traditions, as well as in other ancient spiritualities. A former Carmelite monk, he agreed to become my new spiritual director, and I began a sabbatical, my first. He affirmed my life-long call to the silence and solitude of the mystical path, and began to train me in classical methods of meditation and interior prayer, as well as supervising my study of ancient mystical texts. This intensive interior work initiated a level of spiritual purgation like none before, but this time within a clear framework of intent and accountability. After many months of this process, I felt myself beginning to truly pray, rather than simply say prayers.

I had expected my sabbatical to last perhaps six months to a year. However, I have long since recognized that this is no longer 'sabbatical' but rather the vocation to which God has been calling me all along. Through all the byways of my journey, from earliest childhood, there has been that deep longing for God, a longing that has truly begun to be met

only as I have moved more deeply into a life of silence, solitude, and deep prayer.

Thus for the last five years, I have been living my life essentially as a solitary, wrestling with the demons of my soul's desert. God has mercifully sent me a wise guide who is like the desert elders of old, as well as the timeless teachings from saints and sages of all traditions. Instead of celebrating the sacraments, proclaiming the Gospel, and counseling and guiding the faithful, my ministry as a priest has been to pray in the dark hours, weep for the pain of the world, and listen to God in my heart. In so doing, I am living this life for God.

So, why is there a need for vows, or for a public declaration of what has until now been mostly hidden? Certainly, I could continue as I am—in a powerful sense, that commitment is already a reality. I am, in a sense, simply living out the fulfillment of my baptismal and priestly vows. Yet the Church has always recognized the value of the “outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace.” In the case of a solitary, that sign is the profession of vows.

Not only does such a public commitment and blessing by the church witness to the authenticity of the hermit's or anchorite's personal vocation, it also holds before the church and the wider community the authenticity of another way of being faithful to Christ, another way of seeking God. Such a commitment holds before the Church a sign of our ancient roots and traditions, as well as being a sign that is cross-cultural and parallels similar vocations in other faith traditions.

But above all, such a commitment holds before the Church a sign of the faithfulness of Christ, calling us to “*seek the Kingdom of Heaven within*” *Luke 17:21*, to “*be one, even as He and the Father are One.*” *John 17:11*

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At the time of this request, the Episcopal Church is far from one. We are deeply divided—possibly even in peril of schism. Should the Church split, I do not know what part might still claim me as a member. For I cannot say, “I belong with this side; I belong with that side.” No—I belong to the whole.

I have always belonged to the whole, for my ministry as a priest has always been diocesan-wide, regardless of which diocese I served in. I do not belong with any one particular parish, institution, or religious community. No—I belong to the whole.

I hold the faith of the One, Holy, Catholic Church—Catholic in the sense of universal; Holy in the most sacred sense that is beyond our understanding or defining; and One in the sense that God is One and we are One in God. It is therefore that same One, Holy, Catholic Church, *the Church as a whole*, that I now ask to affirm my vocation and receive my formal vows as an anchorite.

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The Tradition

Scriptural

The angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.
1 Kings 19:11-12

Elijah sought the word of the Lord, and found that it could only be heard truly in sheer silence, the interior silence of the cave of the heart.

Be still, and know that I am God!

Psalm 46:10

For God alone my soul in silence waits.

Psalm 62:1

The psalmist recognized again and again that God himself could only be known fully, not in frantic activity and or simply through good works, but in the quiet and calm of the heart surrendered to God.

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-42

Jesus is clear: While Martha's service is necessary, Mary's worship and contemplation is the "better part" and brings her closer to the heart of God.

But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

John 17:13-16

In Christ's high priestly prayer, he clearly gives the call to the closest disciples to *be in the world without being of the world*. Thus, since the

earliest centuries of the Church, the saints who have longed to be transformed into the likeness of Christ have sought the silence and solitude of the desert.

Historical

Stillness (*ησυχία – hesychia*) a state of inner tranquility or mental quietude and concentration which arises in conjunction with, and is deepened by, the practice of pure prayer and the guarding of heart and intellect. Not simply silence, but an attitude of listening to God and of openness towards Him.

Glossary, The Philokalia ²

Stillness alone engenders knowledge of God.

St. Peter of Damaskos ³

(The) true vision of God consists rather in this, that the soul that looks up to God never ceases to desire Him.

Gregory of Nyssa ⁴

When God wishes, He becomes fire, burning up every coarse passion that has taken root in the soul. "For our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29) When He wishes, He becomes an inexpressible and mysterious rest so that the soul may find rest in God's rest. When He wishes, He becomes joy and peace, cherishing and protecting the soul.

St. Macarius the Great ⁵

...The anchorites or hermits... have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are now trained to fight against the devil. They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.

Rule of Saint Benedict, Ch. 1

The early church fathers and mothers so often found that their true desire for God could only be fulfilled when material desires were purged from the heart and mind by a discipline of prayer, simple living, and utter surrender to the movement of God in their lives.

Contemporary

I wish somebody had written about the priest as lost in God—the priest as solitary...Priesthood for a contemplative ought, I think, to mean an unusual degree of emptiness and self-effacement...It is here [at the altar], by the way, that I am deepest in solitude and at the same time mean something to the rest of the universe. It is really the only moment at which I can give anything to the rest of men...
Thomas Merton ⁶

Merton's journey of faith led him from ordinary society to the monastery to the hermitage. It was a journey and struggle not only with his own personality and soul, but with the hierarchy of the institutional church. At the end of his life in Asia and encounters with Buddhism, he always remembered his sense of being both Christian and priest.

Men and women hermits, belonging to ancient Orders or new Institutes, or being directly dependent on the bishop, bear witness to the passing nature of the present age by their inward and outward separation from the world.... Such a life "in the desert" is an invitation to their contemporaries and to the ecclesial community itself never to lose sight of the supreme vocation, which is to be always with the Lord.
Pope John Paul II ⁷

After centuries of institutional skepticism and resistance, Roman Catholicism is now once again enabling and affirming the eremitic life through provisions in canon law.

Any Bishop receiving vows of an individual not a member of a Religious Order or other Christian Community, using the form for "Setting Apart for a Special Vocation" in the Book of Occasional Services, or a similar rite, shall record the following information with the Standing Committee on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops: the name of the person making vows; the date of the service; the nature and contents of the vows made, whether temporary or permanent; and any other pastoral considerations as shall be deemed necessary.
Canon III. 30, Sec. 3. ⁸

Our own canons now recognize that some will be called to a form of vowed live as solitaries, hermits, or anchorites. Following the ancient tradition⁹ established by the *Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon* (451), in which only the bishop of a diocese can allow the foundation of new monasteries in his diocese, the vows of a solitary, hermit, or anchorite, are taken directly to the bishop of the diocese.

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The Life Style and Vows

Because of personal circumstances of health, stage of life, and finances, as well as obligations within the church, family, and community, certain alterations and interpretations in the historical expectations of the life style and vows of an anchorite are necessary and appropriate. As I live the vowed life of an anchorite, I will make a faithful commitment to a life of solitude, silence, and simplicity.

Solitude ~ Celibate Chastity / Integrity

The vow of Solitude expresses and enables a life in which, through a life of celibate chastity, the whole of one's creative and relational impulses are directed inwardly, toward the love of God alone. The witness of Solitude to the world is expressed through silence of the spiritual heart, rather than through deeds and activities. And, while outward relationships with friends, family, colleagues, and others, are respected and cherished, and maintained with compassion and charity, the fundamental focus upon God overshadows all else.

Silence ~ Obedience / Surrender

The vow of Silence is not the absence of speech, but rather is an expression of the deepest obedience and surrender to St. Paul's admonition to "pray without ceasing", **1 Thes. 5:17**. The resultant interior silence detaches one from activities that distract from the singular mystical call of God. Obedience to this silence of the heart is essential to the recognition of God's action through circumstances of life, with its challenges and gifts, and leads us to a deeper surrender which knows God as the Source of All.

Simplicity ~ Poverty / Generosity

The vow of Simplicity is an expression of spiritual discrimination, through which one continually sorts out and pares away anything which does not lead to mystical union with God. A simplified, ordinary life-style is maintained, but with constant awareness within the heart of which tasks, possessions, desires, and thoughts lead to God, and which do not. Such discrimination enables both detachment and generosity, as we recognize at deeper and deeper levels that all things can be viewed as a gift from God.

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Worship and Prayer

Meditation and Prayer

It is more important to remember God than it is to remember to breathe.

Gregory of Nazianzus ¹⁰

Prayer is the ascent of the intellect to God.

St. Evagrius the Solitary ¹¹

Prayer is the consent to God's Presence within us.

Jerry Thomas ¹²

Not only are prayer, worship, and meditation the primary means of achieving our goal—union with God—they are also the ‘chief work’ of the anchorite. The work of achieving such remembrance and consent is accomplished only through long, disciplined, and faithful practice. In earlier years this meant saying the Divine Office, however these offices are essentially *corporate* prayer, and I now utilize the full form of them only rarely. Rather, in my solitude as an anchorite my practice consists primarily of several hours of silent meditation and prayer (particularly early in the morning and late at night), as well as practicing the presence throughout the day by the use of the *Jesus Prayer*. I also utilize various forms of chant to help center me when beginning meditation, as well as some breathing techniques which aid in settling and focusing my awareness.

Communion

This is my Body, which is given for you; this is my Blood of the new Covenant. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22

The Eucharist is an encounter with the Divine Christ.

Attributed to St. Francis

But permit the prophets to make Thanksgiving [Eucharist] as much as they desire.

Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions ¹³

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God.

Preface, The Great Thanksgiving ¹⁴

While the general practice of the Church has been to always celebrate the Eucharist in community, there is an ancient if little known tradition of certain hermits celebrating the holy mysteries in solitude, with their community being even larger than any cathedral could contain. This community is the Communion of Saints, the ones whose ineffable pres-

ence accompanies the faithful. Although I will sometimes join the local and diocesan communities for major feasts, I also occasionally celebrate the Eucharist in the solitude of my own home.

Penance / Reconciliation

All may, some should, no one must.

Traditional Anglican teaching

Absolution is never looking in the rear-view mirror again—ever. And it's also realizing that at some level that you can't possibly understand with your human mind, at this point, there is a divine plan. And everything had to happen exactly the way it happened for you to get to the point of the mystical marriage.

Confessor's counsel

When needed, I certainly avail myself of the sacrament of reconciliation and the absolution given by a priest. But my experience has been that the most profound and effective experiences of penance and reconciliation occur deep within the heart through means of deep prayer, reflection, and wise counsel.

~ ~ ~

Lectio Divina

Holy Scripture

Meditate on the Gospel and the other Scriptures, and if an alien thought arises within you, never look at it but always look upwards, and the Lord will come at once to your help.

Abba Macarius¹⁵

Alignment is saying to God, "Tell me what truth is." And then He shows you some of His aspects and manifestations and great teachers, ...that are really in harmony with the nature and essence of the soul's relationship with God.

Jerry Thomas¹⁶

"Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest..."¹⁷—The call of the solitary requires far more than simply saying prayers or meditating with the intellect on the meaning of scripture. Rather, it is a call to the deeper integration and "inward digestion" of God's revelation through Holy Scripture. This requires sitting for an hour, a day, a year, or even a lifetime with a single passage, paragraph, or word—and allowing the power of the Word, the Logos, to move from the mind and then enter and transform the heart.

Fathers & Mothers

Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher.

Luke 6:39-40

Amidst the superfluity of spirituality and theology texts which surround us, it is critical to choose as our guides and mentors only those who have themselves trod the path to God. Only those who have themselves been transformed by the Love of God are able to show us the same path. After decades of honing my skills as a theologian, and exploring many types of spiritualities, I find most reliably that the truest guides to the path to God, to the life of heart and soul, are to be found in texts from traditions of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, and mystics (both West and East)

Other Sources

"In the world, though not of it..."

Our world is not longer constrained by traditional boundaries. Consequently part of my spiritual discipline is to maintain awareness of the world around me through news media and scientific developments, as well as some theological, psychological, and spirituality sources. And the occasional movie or novel provides welcome diversion and recreation.

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Guidance / Accountability

Spiritual Direction

Those who have surrendered themselves to God deceive themselves if they suppose that they have no need of a director...For in accordance with the corruption of our wounds, we need a director who is indeed an expert and a physician.

St John Climacus¹⁸

And if you need help and counsel, then go and open your grief to a discreet and understanding priest, and confess your sins, that you may receive the benefit of absolution, and spiritual counsel and advice; to the removal of scruple and doubt, the assurance of pardon, and the strengthening of your faith.

An Exhortation¹⁹

Whether termed spiritual father (Eastern Orthodoxy), soul friend (Celtic), or spiritual director, the traditions are united: such a relationship is absolutely essential for growth into the life of the soul in God. In the last five years, God has blessed me with just such a relationship, which (although we are separated by an entire continent) is supported by frequent correspondence and conversation.

Annual Retreat

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Mark 1:12-13

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves.

Mark 9:2

Moses, Elijah, David, and even our Lord found it necessary to retreat to desert or mountaintop for deeper communion with God. From my own daily solitude, I find this means making at least an annual, weeklong silent retreat in the presence of others. During that time, I am strengthened by our corporate prayer, chant, and meditation, nourished and challenged by the wisdom and experience of the retreat leader, and above all, am eternally blessed by spending that time immersed in the presence of God.

Accountability to Bishop

Will you respect and be guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of your bishop?

Ordination of a Priest²⁰

Individual Christians, in response to God's call, may wish to commit themselves to the religious life under vows made directly to the bishop of the diocese.

Setting Apart for a Special Vocation²¹

As a priest of the Diocese of Olympia, I am accountable directly to the Bishop. As an Anchorite, that accountability becomes even more specific, and is amplified to reflect the particulars of this vocation. This accountability is maintained by annual reports to the bishop, as well as advice, counsel, and direction from him as appropriate.

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Ministry

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord? Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ? Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
Baptismal Covenant²²

Being a housewife is Martha's share; Mary's share is stillness and rest from all the world's noise, so that nothing may prevent her from hearing God's voice....Martha has her office; leave it to her. You sit with Mary stone still at God's feet and listen to him alone. Martha's office is to feed the poor and clothe them, like a lady of the House. Mary ought not to meddle in this.

Ancrene Wisse²³

My primary ministry as an anchorite is, of course, prayer. My prayer and life as an anchorite also engender various forms of writing. But I am also a priest as well as an anchorite. Therefore, I am available occasionally for sacramental ministry and preaching. Opportunity may also arise for teaching and spiritual direction of persons desiring significantly deeper spiritual journeys.

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Work & Financial Support

Aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and work with your hands so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Idleness is the enemy of the soul; and therefore the brethren ought to be employed in manual labor at certain times, at others, in devout reading. They are monks in truth, if they live by the work of their hands, as did also our forefathers and the Apostles.

Rule of St. Benedict, Ch. 48

Providentially, God has blessed me with adequate financial resources to no longer require salaried employment. This same blessing

does, however, require my oversight and management, which I consider to be a form of 'manual labor.' With proper stewardship, these resources allow some charitable giving. I am also solely responsible for my own health care and insurance, and other personal maintenance needs.

Profession of Vows

*My soul is occupied,
And all my substance in His service;
Now I guard no flock,
Nor have I any other employment:
My sole occupation is love.*

St. John of the Cross²⁴

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Eternal One, hear my prayer. Down through the ages You have called the faithful in every race and nation to be aflame with Your Light: So, too, have You called me all my days to surrender all that I am to Your Love, and to live my life for You alone.

Now, in the presence of the Your Church, and into the hands of *Vincent Warner, Bishop of Olympia*, I, **Susan Creighton**, vow to God Almighty, to live my life as an Anchorite, under the vows of Solitude, Silence, and Simplicity according to my Rule.

Receive my offering, O Lord, my mind, my body, my Soul. Receive me into Your Heart, Your Love, Your Light. And grant in Your mercy, O Lord, that always I will be faithful in living this life for You alone, trusting that, by Your grace and mercy, Your Presence fills my Solitude each day and each hour; Your Voice sings in my Silence, and Your Abundance overflows my life of Simplicity.

In the Name of God the Father who created me;
In the Name of God the Spirit who sustains me;
In the Name of God the Son who calls me Home. Amen.

/S/ _____ Date 6 April 2004

(The Rev.) Susan Creighton
Anchorite, Diocese of Olympia

By the authority entrusted to me, and in the name of the Church, I receive your vows made to God. I earnestly commend you to God, that your gift of self, made one with the sacrifice of the Eucharist, may be brought to perfection

/S/ _____ Date 6 April 2004

(The Rt. Rev.) Vincent W. Warner
Bishop of Olympia

End Notes

¹ Ruth Burrows, **Ascent to Love—the Spiritual Teaching of St. John of the Cross**, p. 63 (Dimension Books: 1992)

² Glossary, **The Philokalia Vol. 1**, p. 365 (Faber and Faber: 1979)

³ St. Peter of Damaskos, “Obedience and Stillness”, **The Philokalia**, Vol. 3. p.107 (Faber and Faber: 1986)

⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, **The Life of Moses**, translated by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, (Paulist Press: 1978)

⁵ St. Macarius the Great, Homily 5:11-13, quoted in **A Different Christianity**, p.111 (State University of New York Press: 1995)

⁶ Thomas Merton, **Entering the Silence, The Journals of Thomas Merton**, Vol. 3, pp. 315, 327, 331 (Harper: 1995)

⁷ Pope John Paul II, **Vita Consecrata No. 11**, March 25, 1996, in **Guidebook on the Eremetic Life**, by Marlene Weisenbeck FSPA, (Diocese of La Crosse: 1997)

⁸ Canon III.30, Sec. 3. **Constitution & Canons of The Episcopal Church** [became Canon III.24.Sec.3, per 2003 Canons. SC+]

⁹ ...it is decreed that no one anywhere build or found a monastery or oratory contrary to the will of the bishop of the city; and that the monks in every city and district shall be subject to the bishop, and embrace a quiet course of life, and give themselves only to fasting and prayer, remaining permanently in the places in which they were set apart; and they shall meddle neither in ecclesiastical nor in secular affairs, nor leave their own monasteries to take part in such; unless, indeed, they should at any time through urgent necessity be appointed thereto by the bishop of the city... But the bishop of the city must make the needful provision for the monasteries. **Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, Canon IV. (451)**... (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Calvin College, CD-ROM, v.4.)

¹⁰ Quoted in **The Book of Mystical Chapters: Meditations on the Soul's Ascent from the Desert Fathers and other Early Christian Contemplatives**, translated by John Anthony McGuckin, p. 74. (Shambala, 2002).

¹¹ St. Evagrius the Solitary, “On Prayer”, **The Philokalia**, Vol. 1, p. 60 (Faber and Faber: 1979)

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- ¹² Jerry Thomas, **Body of Time, Soul of Eternity: Mystical Spirituality**, p. 113. (Mystical Heart Press: 2003)
- ¹³ Chapter 10, v.7, **Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Vol. VII (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Calvin College, CD-ROM, v.4.)
- ¹⁴ Holy Eucharist, Rite 1, **Book of Common Prayer**. (Church Hymnal Corporation: 1979)
- ¹⁵ Abba Macarius, in **The Word in the Desert, Scripture and The Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism**, by Douglas Burton-Christie, p. 125 (Oxford University Press, 1993)
- ¹⁶ Jerry Thomas, personal consultation, June 29, 2000.
- ¹⁷ Collect for Proper 28, **Book of Common Prayer**. (Church Hymnal Corporation: 1979)
- ¹⁸ St John Climacus, **The Ladder of Divine Ascent**, Step 1: On Renunciation of the World (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1978)
- ¹⁹ An Exhortation, **Book of Common Prayer**. (Church Hymnal Corporation: 1979)
- ²⁰ Ordination of a Priest, **Book of Common Prayer**. (Church Hymnal Corporation: 1979)
- ²¹ Setting Apart for A Special Vocation, **The Book of Occasional Services, 2nd Edition**, (Church Hymnal Corporation: 1988)
- ²² Holy Baptism, **Book of Common Prayer**. (Church Hymnal Corporation: 1979)
- ²³ Ancrene Wisse, **Anchoritic Spirituality**, p. 200, translated by Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (Paulist Press: 1991)
Note: "Ancrene Wisse", also known as "The Ancrene Riwe" is a classic of the medieval English mystical tradition, author unknown, but written for the guidance of three anchoresses.
- ²⁴ John of the Cross, **Spiritual Canticle**, Stanza XXVIII, (translated by David Lewis, Introduction by Benedict Zimmerman, O.C.D., 1909, (Electronic Edition with Modernization of English by Harry Plantinga, 1995.)