

# Worship as a Rule of Life

Peter Houston

## ABSTRACT

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In this essay the author explores how he seeks to integrate worship with all of life. In a South African Anglican context that is oftentimes quite polarised between theological camps and a variety of church practices, he desires to embrace ancient traditions and appreciate the breadth of spirituality that Anglicanism has to offer.

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Listen to me and you will hear about a fly in a communion cup, a near-death encounter with an angry elephant, a lesson from dirty dishes and why mountains matter. Worship is a way of life that seeks to keep God at the centre in all circumstances, elephants notwithstanding. I follow a Rule of Life to help in this endeavour.

A Rule of Life is an ancient practice that has helped ordinary people deepen their spiritual lives through a personal covenant with God. The scriptures are filled with God's desire to have a personal relationship with each of us, ultimately through Jesus Christ. A Rule of Life expresses my response to God's desire and my intention to work this out as a worshipful response in my daily life.

There are some well-known Rules of Life. The Rule of St. Benedict, or "Little Rule", is over 1500 years old and perhaps the most influential, shaping the worship of the Anglican Church. This Rule seeks to provide a way for followers of Jesus to live integrated lives. Benedictine values are stability, obedience to God, Christ-centred personal transformation, humility, hospitality, care of the sick and listening to God in all of life. Another Rule that I'm even more drawn to is the Rule of St Francis whose approach to worship can be summed up as simplicity, love and justice.

I was drawn to having my own Rule in the early days of being rector of the Parish of Umhlali. I was used to running from one thing to the next as a newly ordained curate in the Parish of Polokwane at the beck and call of everyone. I naively thought this would change when I became the rector of my own parish in 2011, but it didn't. I was now trying to meet the demands and expectations of a whole lot more people. This went from bad to worse when I was made the archdeacon of the North Coast in 2012, while still remaining a rector. I felt as though I was making no discernible difference, was always fighting fires, and

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