

LIVING IT OUT

SESSION 12 COMING TO LIFE

The Christian life begins with baptism, with being named and claimed as God's beloved. Expressed by word and ritual, baptism is a re-enactment of dying and being raised to new life in Christ. Does a person literally die? No, but the ritual reminds us that it is only by letting go (dying) of that which keeps us apart from God that we can live fully. And it is only in dying to the aspirations and worldly matters that shackle us that we can offer the gifts of our life passionately and completely. It is only by dying to our perspective that we are God and acknowledging The One who brings life and calls it good that we can live into that goodness.

For generations followers of Christ have not depended solely upon the one time act of baptism to serve as a reminder of this coming-to-life process. Many have practiced praying the divine offices, prayers at set hours during the day and night. The two times of day when those prayers bring us closest to that dying and being raised to new life are the morning and evening prayers. To give our life to God as we go to sleep each night and to behold, with gratitude, the gift of a new day and God's love first thing in the morning is to practice resurrection.

The following is a modified form of morning and evening prayers to participate in each day this week.

Evening Prayer

Scripture – Psalm 141

Song – “Day Is Done” by James Quinn, SJ

Prayer

Holy One, I give my life to you for that is where it belongs and where it thrives. I give my life to you for that is its beginning and end. Into your care, I place my family, friends, work and the world. Grant me rest, O God, that the days of my life may be lived intentionally with you. In the confidence of resurrection I pray. Amen.

Morning Prayer

Scripture – Luke 1: 68-79 (also known as the Canticle of Zachary)

Song – “Morning Has Broken” by Eleanor Farjeon

Prayer

Fresh is the gift of life and new is your creation. I praise you, O God, for the wonders of this day. Be my guide and strength for the hours before me. Come, God Incarnate, that your compassion and hope will find expression in me this day. Amen.

Many prayer books offer guidance and resources for morning and evening prayer and more. You might want to try one of the following edited by Elise S. Eslinger:

The Upper Room Worshipbook: Music and Liturgies for Spiritual Formation, 1985.

The Upper Room Worshipbook, 2007

One of Phyllis Tickle's many books of prayer:

The Divine Hours

The Night Offices: Prayers for the Hours from Sunset to Sunrise

The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime

One retreat model where participants can practice spiritual rhythm, be fed deeply, and encouraged to be in ministry in the world is the Academy for Spiritual Formation. The two-year retreat meets five days per quarter for two years. Five Day Academies are frequently offered. For more information, visit <http://www.upperroom.org/academy/>

– Cynthia Langston Kirk

