

Rule of life

Those who officially join the Missionaries of the Gospel adopt a common 'rule of life' (daily spiritual practices, prayers and routine). It is provided here (together with some MG traditions and the community feast days) for those who are discerning or would simply like to deepen their spiritual life in the Spirit of Bl. John Paul II.

We begin with a message from Bl JPII's to lay people. You 'have been a unique gift to me, and I thank Providence for them every day. They are so numerous that it is impossible to list them by name, but I carry them all in my heart, for each one of them has made his or her own contribution to the growth of my priesthood. In one way or another they have shown me the way, helping me to understand my ministry better and to live it more fully... In effect, I have always been very aware of the urgent need for the apostolate of the laity in the Church.

When the Second Vatican Council spoke of the vocation and mission of lay people in the Church and the world, I rejoiced: what the Council was teaching corresponded to the convictions which had guided my activity ever since the first years of my priestly ministry' p69- 70 G&M.

Daily Commitment:

- Goes to Mass, otherwise: visit to the Blessed Sacrament and/or prayer for spiritual communion (e.g. "O Jesus I turn toward the holy tabernacle where You live hidden for love of me. I love you, O my God. I cannot receive you in Holy Communion. Come nevertheless and visit me with Your grace. Come spiritually into my heart. Purify it. Sanctify it. Render it like unto Your own. Amen" Cure of Ars).
- Morning prayer: Consecration to Mary (*) and morning offering, Spending time in silent prayer (15 minutes), Meditating on the Scriptures (10 minutes).
- During the day: At least one decade of the Rosary, Spiritual reading (10 minutes), Prayer for the sainthood cause of JPII ("O Blessed Trinity, we thank you for having graced the church with Pope John Paul II and for allowing the tenderness of your fatherly care, the glory of the cross of Christ, and the splendour of the Holy Spirit, to shine through him. Trusting fully in your infinite mercy and in the maternal intercession of Mary, he has given us a living image of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and has shown us that holiness is the necessary measure of ordinary Christian life and is the way of achieving eternal communion with you. Grant us, by his intercession, and according to your will, the graces we implore, hoping that he will soon be numbered among your saints. Amen).
- Night prayer: Perform a daily examination of conscience, silence, prayer of thanksgiving for what you have noticed God doing during the day, prayers of intercession and then an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.

If you are able to: pray the Divine Office or part of it (such as the format provided in the Magnificat booklets that are printed monthly) and adoration (pray before the exposed Eucharist daily).

(*) “Totus tuus ergo sum, et omnia mea Tua Sunt. Accipio Te in mea omnia. Praebe mihi cor Tuum, Maria (I belong to you entirely, and all that I possess is yours. I take you into everything that is mine. Give me your heart Mary).” It has been said that Bl. JP II prayed this prayer each day.

At other times:

- Annual retreat.
‘We come on retreat to examine our self, to examine with attention and care the image of God which is found within us. A retreat is a wonderful thing, and you must remain faithful in making it’ p11 The Way to Christ. ‘Making a retreat is a great gift from God. It is the one time when everything else can be put aside so as to encounter God and listen to Him alone. This is without a doubt a most valuable exercise for the retreatant. For that reason, no one should ever be put under pressure to make a retreat, but, if anything, the interior need for it should be awakened’ p173 Rise, let us be on our way.
- Monthly confession (It is said that JP II went weekly).
- At least 1 hour each week in adoration.
- Praying the rosary regularly (JP II Rosary recommended).
- Praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet at least weekly (you are encouraged to try saying the Chaplet in Polish).
- Practice fasting/abstinence regularly (the sisters choose to do this: for the community on Wednesdays and for the conversion of souls on Fridays).
- Supporting other members of the community in some way e.g. with prayers, financial support etc.
- A work of charity (especially if this is not already incorporated into your work e.g. being a mother at home with your children). This could include running a bible study group or rosary group from your home, or doing some volunteer work.
- It is particularly important in these early stages of the community’s growth that members remain in dialogue and prayer with one another, in order to develop both our understanding of, and our capacity to live out the JP II charism.
- Spending time outdoors, exercising and allowing God to speak to you through the wonder of His creation. This might be as simple as finding time each week to go for a good walk, to go hiking, canoeing, playing a sport etc.
- Marking the feast days of the community into one’s diary and trying where possible, to celebrate these when they occur.

Where possible:

- Monthly day (or evening) of reflection (prayer, formation and a meal) with the larger community.
- Meet monthly with a spiritual director or mentor.
- Receive ongoing formation provided by the community. One of the ways this is provided is through smaller groups that meet for prayer, bible study, studying JPII documents or themes etc. (preferably weekly).
- Attending major community events where possible. Examples: Celebration of feast days, entrance of new members, events such as poetry/theatre/music nights/bush walks/camping/ canoeing trips.
- Pray the stations of the cross on Fridays (and each day during lent);
- Prayer for vocations: To you, Virgin of the Annunciation, do we entrust ourselves. Teach us, and all consecrated persons to be actively receptive to the Holy Spirit and be a complete gift of self as you were throughout your life. You who did the will of the Father, ever ready in obedience, courageous in poverty and receptive in fruitful virginity, obtain from your divine Son that all who have received the gift of following him in the consecrated life, may proclaim the mighty things which the Lord has done, and be enabled to bear witness to what we have received by our transfigured lives. May our example open other hearts to hearing God's call and following it. Help us to be happy in our giving, tireless in our ministry, and generous in our sacrifice, so that we go forth to meet human needs, to bring help, but above all to bring Jesus. Queen of the family, bless and guide all married couples and families. May you who is Mother of the Church, also be the mother of "the church of the home." Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the cross, comfort the sufferings and dry the tears of those in distress because of the difficulties of their families. We ask you, that in everyone and in everything, glory, adoration and love may be given to the Most High Lord of all things, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Cf. *JPII, Speaking to Religious in 1982, Vita Consecrata and Familiaris Consortio.*

Some customs/traditions of the community pertaining to our spiritual life

- Bowing our upper body when saying the 'Glory Be' prayer;
- 10 minutes of thanksgiving after Mass where possible;
- Prayer to the Holy Spirit and Consecration to the Sacred Heart each week.
- Consecration to Our Lady (St. Louis de Montfort)
- Wearing the scapular and JPII crucifix. 'I never put on my episcopal pectoral Cross carelessly; I always accompany this gesture with a prayer' p197 Rise, let us be on our way.

- Marking the top of each page in the right hand corner with +m as we pray ‘Totus Tuus’ and entrust our work to the Lord.
- We learn to pray slowly, involve our whole body (e.g. posture and breathing), sing/chant where possible and use visual aids where it might be helpful to help us enter more deeply into prayer (e.g. praying the rosary and meditating upon an image for each decade).

Feast days for the community

- ❖ Feast Days additional to those celebrated in the Church calendar: JP II’s death anniversary (2 April), JP II’s Birthday (18 May), St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (9 August), Queen of the MG’s (22 August), Election to the Papacy (16 October- members are encouraged to give away all that they don’t need on this day), St John of the Cross (14 Dec), Members names days.
- ❖ Extra Solemnities: MG’s Foundation day (23 June), and the Memorial in the Church calendar to celebrate the life of JP II- Rome and Poland (22 October). A novena is said leading up to these solemnities and Divine Mercy Sunday.

Suggestions of how to celebrate these feast days: Special additional prayers, prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, putting up posters and quotes from JP II, eating special food (e.g. polish food or a special dessert- JP II’s favourite dessert is said to be kremówka), sharing memories about JP II, reading plays or poems, going for long walks near beautiful nature (such as mountains), and of course gathering together with other community members where you can.