



A monastic guide

Over the years we have often spoken of the *Inner Monk* and the *Monk in the World*. With the coronavirus and enforced isolation, we now have an opportunity to live these teachings. Monasticism can guide us — *Ora et Labora, Lectio*, hospitality, solitude, rhythm and routine are sign-markers along this strange Camino we suddenly find ourselves walking together. A few random thoughts that may help:

1. *Have a daily plan, a routine or discipline. From my early Redemptorist novice days we had to make our beds and keep our rooms well ordered. This was re-enforced by the Camaldolese tradition of the sacredness of the cell as a place of, not only prayer, but of beauty and harmony. Pay attention to your living space, a vase of flowers, a lit lamp, a work of art.*
2. *Monastery life requires showing up for prayer and meals a number of times each day — routines involving personal etiquette, hygiene and a dress code. It's important we hold to some standard, even if living alone. It makes a difference as to how we feel about ourselves and how we approach the sacredness of the day.*
3. *Plan your meals, even if from the freezer. Prepare them with care and attention. Dine at least once a day, not in front of the TV, but at a set table. Each meal is sacred, a gift from Mother Earth and a mini Eucharist.*
4. *Stop four times a day for prayer. It doesn't have to be long, but pause — Dawn, Day, Dusk, Dark — for a time of quiet — a poem, a Psalm or two, or the readings from the daily Liturgy. Light a candle or incense, touch the Presence within.*
5. *Take a leaf out of the Shabbat tradition of our Jewish sisters and brothers. As one of your prayer times, preferably at Dusk, light a candle over bread and wine. Say the Offertory Prayer from Mass, which is actually an adapted Jewish Berakhot Prayer, "Blessed are you Lord God of all creation through your goodness we have this bread to offer..."*
6. *Spend time daily in manual labor, cleaning, gardening, decluttering. Exercise is also a must.*
7. *Hospitality is an integral part of monasticism. Welcome the feelings, fears, emotions that surface in you, (at this time they are myriad). Don't suppress them, talk to them and to your inner child who is very frightened and confused. Reach out*

to others by phone, email, text, video chat and social media. Connect, encourage, listen and laugh.

8. *Recreation is vital — watching Soaps, streaming, reading novels. But also sit and observe Spring/Resurrection creeping forth despite the darkness.*
9. *Finally, remember that monasticism has always believed it exists primarily to stand before Mystery on behalf of humanity. Humankind is being plunged into Good Friday, as 'a monk in the world' hold suffering humanity in quiet and place the sick, dying, grieving and dead into the heart of God who holds us all as Michelangelo's Pieta Madonna holds her son.*

Love, deep peace and courage,

Michael

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Who watches over us in times of trial and danger

Thanksgiving fills our hearts,
as we rejoice in You,
our Lord and Holy Protector.
We who live in the midst of storm and sickness,
of war and danger,
who are daily exposed to evil of every sort,
rejoice in Your constant
and parental love for us.
Surrounded by darkness and the shadow of fear,
we do not falter,
for we trust that Your constant care
cradles us and keeps us safe.

With angelic attention,
You watch over our home
and each of our bodily temples.
Your holy spirits surround us
and, in winged wonder, call us to prayer
and to confidence.

Guard us in this time of danger,
as Your Holy Presence
fills the darkness of this moment
with the splendor of Your shelter.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
who watches over us in times of
trial and danger.

Amen+

Edward Hays

PRAYERS FOR THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

Michael update

Michael is safe and well, sends greetings and remembers you at Eucharist. He plans to walk the Via Francigena when it is safe to do so. If you have not seen his 3rd Sunday of Lent Mass video, please visit:

<https://hermitfish.com>

Michael's retreat recordings can help pass the time

If you are in enforced isolation, why not host your own retreat? Downloads of all 13 of Michael's retreats are available, and a few remain on CD. Each is a full retreat, consisting of 5 talks, totaling over 5 hours. Visit:

<https://store.cdbaby.com/Artist/MichaelFish>

Retreat scheduling on hold

Michael's schedule is on hold. To inquire about booking Michael for a future event, please email Laura Hipke, laura@hipkes.com. She will follow up with you after Michael returns.

Support needed for Michael

Michael is entirely self-supporting, receiving no outside financial assistance apart from his own ministry. Your tax-deductible donation to Hermit Fish, his 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, helps to sustain Michael's ministry. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated.
FID: 82-2489475

Visit: <https://www.hermitfish.com/donate>

Creative and logistical support for Michael, his *Buen Camino* newsletter and HermitFish.com website are provided by Enigma | LA, enigmala.com

To be added to Michael's email distribution go to <https://www.hermitfish.com> and scroll to the bottom of the page to sign up.