

## A Quarantine Guide-A Rule of Life

April 8, 2020

Dear Friends,

A young disciple once asked his wise teacher Abba Moses (a Desert Father from the early church) to give him some wisdom. I suppose he wanted some easy answers to why life is so hard. Abba Moses instructed his disciple to go into his "cell and his cell would teach him everything he needed to know." I am sure the young disciple learned a lot during that time of self-isolation. We, too, have been given an opportunity to learn a lot during this time of self-isolation and quarantine. We are all stuck in our cells, and we can no longer blame anyone but ourselves. Let this be a time of personal growth, so that when we are free, we will be more than just free from our house, but free indeed.

Here is a list of practices that might help you while in quarantine:

1. Set a schedule—In the Christian Spiritual tradition, this is called a Rule of Life. Set a routine for each day of the week. I recommend setting your alarm clock so that your day has a deliberate start, then punctuate your day with certain activities. For instance, have breakfast right at 8:00AM, maybe read the paper, have morning prayer at 9:00AM (you can join us live), complete a morning task like exercise or school work, eat lunch promptly at 12:00PM, complete an afternoon task, have evening prayer at 6:00PM (join us live) with dinner to follow, and spend the rest of the evening in leisure time (Netflix or Amazon, anyone?). Make sure you go to bed at a decent hour and get plenty of sleep. Set your schedule and stick with it! The ancients tell us that a routine like this seems like enslavement, but really it is freedom. The image they have used is a trellis in a rose garden. Without the trellis, the rose cannot grow into what it needs to be. I need a lot more trellises in my life.
2. Plug-in—During this time of isolation it can feel really lonely. There is an old saying that you have to "be a friend to have a friend." This is a great time to foster friendship. Make a list of people you need to call. I recommend using FaceTime to talk to your family, especially grandchildren. There is something important about seeing another person's face, some have said it is like "seeing the face of God." Join in as many live events as you can. The church is live streaming Sunday mornings as well as morning and evening prayer every day on Facebook. Each day we have live "glory sightings" on our Facebook page: interactive questions that help us all continue our conversation together. You can also listen to many live concerts and events throughout Facebook. Do your best to watch and participate in as many live events as possible —this practice helps us keep the bonds of our community alive.
3. Unplug—Many of us are tempted to be on our devices all day long. Almost all of our work and play is now done on our computers, and it is hard to put them down. My phone dings all day long and I hate to miss anything. However, each day we need some time away from the virtual world. Monitor and limit your screen time to only four or so hours a day. Go outside and sit on your porch or take a walk in an uncrowded place. I have had to limit the number of times I check the news. For me, a bit of news in the morning and 30 minutes of network news in the evening is all I can handle (although I try to sneak in a bit more).
4. Exercise and Eat Right—During the Hurricane Michael crisis, I lost over 20 pounds (got them all back within a year). This crisis, however, seems different. I am trapped in my home with lots of food. I am afraid I'll gain 20 pounds if I am not careful. Don't just eat comfort food all the time. Choose healthy options to keep your body in tip top shape. Don't stress eat or stress drink. Monitor your stress and find other ways to de-stress. Exercise is very important and a great way to relieve stress. Join us live Tuesday and Thursday on Facebook for fitness class — there are exercises for all skill levels. Go for at least one walk around the neighborhood every day. You might as well exercise; what else are you going to do?
5. Set goals—Research shows that you can only really have three goals. I try to set three goals for every day. It is also good to set three goals for each week. Use this time at home to its full advantage. Read the books you have always wanted, take up a new hobby (we are gardening), or start a small fixer-up project. Setting goals gives your day some purpose. Let these goals prepare you for the future.

Peace of Christ,



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