

Six Streams of Christian Life and Prayer

Study Seven: Practicing the Sacramental Life – The Incarnational Tradition

Based on 'Streams of Living Water' by Richard Foster See items in bold type for a swifter study

Aim

To understand that God desires to be in all aspects and actions of our lives, and that in Jesus there is no division between sacred and secular.

You will need...

A Bible, pen and paper.

Starter

• **Do you ever feel guilty for doing work on what many consider a 'holy' day, such as Sunday, Easter or Christmas? If you do, why?**

Prayer

Jesus and the Sacramental Life

Read [Luke 13:10-17](#)

The division between work and faith has always existed and people continue to reinforce it today, ie: Is it right to pray for people at work? Should we go shopping on Sunday? In this passage we see Jesus breaking down the barrier by healing on the Sabbath. We see no division between the sacred (faith) and secular (work) in the words and actions of Jesus.

• How do you think you would respond if your minister stopped speaking to heal a woman? Or if a homeless person walked down the aisle during the middle of a sermon and asked the minister for money?

God and the Incarnational Tradition

The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is at the centre of the Incarnational Tradition, because Jesus Christ is the Incarnation. In Jesus, God became human and so blessed the physical world in which we live. God as Spirit, created a physical body to inhabit and so harmonised spirit and matter. God became human like us so we can identify with him. As we see Jesus growing up and taking part in everyday human life we can understand that God is interested and involved in all aspects of our lives, not just our religious activity. In the incarnation, God affirmed the value of human life and the goodness of the material world.

• **Have you ever considered that everyday aspects of your life are as important to God and the spiritual aspects?**

As physical beings we find it harder to understand the spiritual world, because we cannot detect the spirit with our physical senses. We often find that our physical body is in conflict with our spirit. The apostle Paul describes this in [Romans 7:15](#) "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." The Holy Spirit helps us by promoting harmony of the physical and spiritual, while through the spiritual disciplines we can subdue our physical nature.

Fasting puts the spirit first.

Serving puts another's needs ahead of ours.

Simplicity stops us getting our own way.

Worship reminds us to put God first.

As we let the power and life of God flow through us we can become the person he created us to be and God becomes known to the world through us.

• How does it make you feel to think that God works through you to do his work in the world.

Practicing the Incarnational Tradition

Begin by cooperating with the Holy Spirit. Remove any barriers that exclude God from our lives, and bring God, family and work together spending as much time as needed with each, rather than a systemised partition such as 10 minutes with God, 2 hours for family, 8 hours at work. All our actions and activities are important to God, because through them we show the presence of God to the world.

• **Take an inventory of your life – list all your activities and rate how well you bring God into each.**

• Remove the barriers which keep God out of your life. – invite God to be present in all you do, even the most mundane or shameful.

• Do your work in honour of God – carry out all your tasks in a manner that brings respect to God.

• Invite God to your meal times – open each meal with a prayer of thanks.

• Attend a church outside your tradition – participate fully, taking care to sense the presence of God.