

Curio: A Liturgy for the Lean
Week #1: November 7-13, 2022
Theme: The Turning



The Canon

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Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to Curio: A Liturgy For The Lean. I am grateful that you have chosen to participate in this liturgy that I have compiled. One definition of Liturgy means “work of the people”; it is my hope that through this material you would put in spiritual and mental work. Curio means “emaciated” or “weak.” The purpose of this liturgy is to explore the lessons learned from a period of time when my faith felt emaciated. It was during the Fall of 2012 and I had lost my way. At the time, the “turning”-the losing my way- felt terrifying. The foundations of my faith, my very being, were shifting, and I didn’t know what to do with that. I realize now that the turning was necessary to bring about something new. But at the time, it felt like death.

Each week during November, I will be sending out a 3-part liturgy. This is Week #1, the 1st Part. This week’s theme is “The Turning.” When things begin to turn in our lives, it can feel uncomfortable. It can feel lean. Many things can spark this turning: relationship changes, job modifications, anxiety over finances, or loved ones, or an election. This week, as the weather changes and the seasons shift, I invite us to engage in the Turning. To feel the coming cold. And not just feel it, but also embrace the shivers of anxiety that come with the approaching winter, whatever winter that may be for us. To acknowledge and accept our mortality, and our apathy, and our fragility. To realize that the things that kept us warm before may no longer be sufficient. This week, I invite you to acknowledge your frailty. I invite you to feel the pangs of discomfort.

I invite you to be lean.

**Note: Each element of the following Liturgy is related in some way to the theme of “The Turning.” Some of the elements are optional. I invite you to engage and bring as much, or as little, energy to this as you are able.*

Remember: have grace with yourself. If you would like to reach out about this, or discuss anything further, please feel free to contact me. Be Well!

(412) 477-2841

nathan.rosswog@gmail.com

1. Call To Worship

The purpose of a call to worship is to center ourselves as we prepare to learn and think about the "turning." It is an intentional practice to take a posture of learning and of opening up, to the things around us-both that which we can see, and that which cannot be seen. The following three selections invite us into taking a "lean posture."

Selection #1: Ezekiel 2:9-3:1

"When I looked, he had his hand stretched out to me and in the hand a book, a scroll. He unrolled the scroll. On both sides, front and back, were written lamentations and mourning and doom.

"He told me 'Son of Man, eat what you see. Eat this book. Then go and speak to the family of Israel.'"

Selection #2: Khalil Gibran



And you would accept the seasons
of your heart just as you have
always accepted that seasons pass
over your fields and you would
watch with serenity through the
winters of your grief.

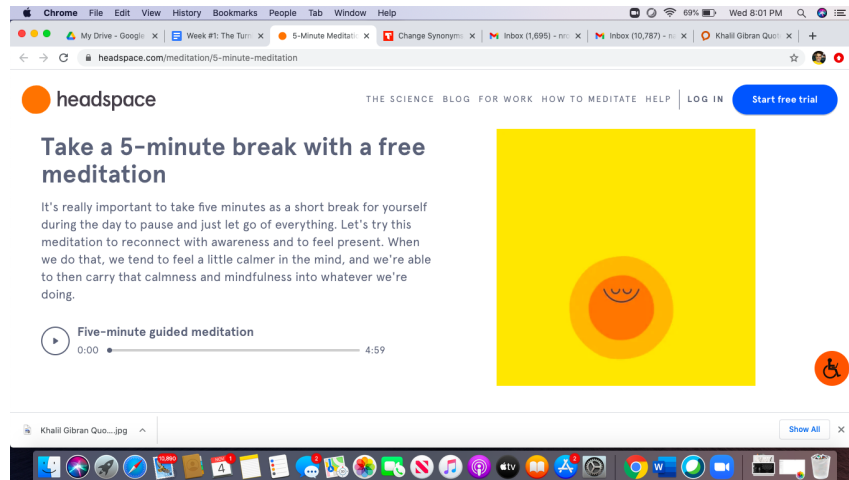
— Khalil Gibran —

AZ QUOTES

Selection #3: 5 Minute Guided Meditation (Optional)

Note: This is a link to a guided meditation on Headspace. Click on the link and it will take you to the Headspace meditation. Scroll down until you see the Meditation. Refer to the picture below.

Click Here: [Guided Meditation](#)



2. Hymn (Song)

A hymn is an ancient song that unites a community in worship of God. While various mediums are used to tell the Story, singing offers an emotional response to that which is being experienced. Songs are an art form which help to open the listener up to the spiritual. Below is a song I wrote when I was lean in the Autumn of 2012.

Note: Click the link below to hear my song *Falling Leaves* on Soundcloud. Once on Soundcloud, click the play button. See picture below.

Click Here: [Falling Leaves \(Part One\)](#)

Click to open the link.
Once open, click the
orange button to play the
song.



3. *Litany*

A litany is a call-and-response in which a leader makes a proclamation, and the community, in unison, responds in a singular voice. If you are with others, feel free to say this litany together. If you are by yourself, feel free to engage however you wish. One option might be to read the "leader" parts silently, then speak the "People" parts aloud.

FOR THE DARKNESS LITANY

Leader: For the darkness of waiting
Of not knowing what is to come
Of staying ready and quiet and attentive,
We praise you, o God.

People: *For the darkness and the light are both alike to you.*

Leader: For the darkness of staying silent
For the terror of having nothing to say
And for the greater terror
Of needing to say nothing,
We praise you, o God.

People: *For the darkness and the light are both alike to you.*

Leader: For the darkness of choosing
when you give us the moment
to speak, and act, and change,
and we cannot know what we have set in motion,
but we still have to take the risk,
We praise you, o God.

People: *For the darkness and the light are both alike to you.*

Leader: For the darkness of hoping
In a world which longs for you,
For the wrestling and laboring of all creation
For wholeness and justice and freedom,
We praise you, o God.

People: *For the darkness and the light are both alike to you.*

4. Reading

A reading is a selection or selections of text that allow the reader to engage more fully in the theme presented. In this case, the theme is that of "turning," of things not being as they appear, of losing that which one holds most dear. of starving to death. of being lean.

This week's reading is a passage from "Acedia & Me" By Kathleen Norris

I once wrote an article about dragging myself to church out of a sense of family obligation, only to find myself confronted with the hymn 'There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today.' Hardly what I was feeling, and normally I would have scorned its verses as pietistic, insufficiently concerned with anything except 'Jesus & me.' But acedia had lately made my world obscenely small, and the hymn allowed me to feel alive for the first time in days. Singing it was a glad response to grace. 'I have the strength to take it all up again,' I wrote. 'This is a day to begin.' After the piece was published, I received a letter chastising me for trivializing the serious illness of depression, and for suggesting that people can snap out of it. I had done no such thing. I had described one of those common but precious awakenings of the heart that point to something greater than the self and give us hope. I stand by it.

A coalescence of music, Scripture, and other people in a worshiping congregation had brought me to my senses. I had been dwelling in a drought-stricken land, like the famished prodigal, who, envying the pigs their husks and slop, suddenly remembers that he is a beloved child who has a home. I know that, in the words of a great hymn, 'Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,' my temperament makes me 'prone to wander from the God I love.' But if I have forgotten who I am, getting back on the road may help me remember. I am both humbled and exalted by the reception I receive when I make my move: the world itself seems to open up and accept me.

Losing one's way and then finding it may mimic the cyclical nature of depression, but it is also part of the natural rhythm of day and night, of the waxing and waning moon, and of seeding and harvesting. However true and even beautiful this turning of times and seasons may be, I tend to resist it as a necessary aspect of the spiritual life. Monastic writers have always emphasized

that maintaining a life of prayer means being willing to start over, after one has acted in a sinful or destructive way. Both pride and acedia will assert themselves, and it may appear that we are so far gone we may as well give up and not embarrass ourselves further by pretending to be anything but failures. It seems foolish to believe that the door is still open, that there is always another chance. I may accept this intellectually, but I have come to appreciate its depths only through experience. Just when I seem to have my life in balance and imagine I can remain in this happy state forever, I lose sight of the value of contemplation and prayer, and try to live without it. Soon enough, once again, I am picking myself up out of the ashes.

5. *The Message*

The Message, often called a Sermon, is the pinnacle of what a teacher or preacher is attempting to convey. The Message often utilizes a variety of elements to deliver a point. This week's message is an essay by Parker Palmer called "The Paradox of Fall"

Autumn is a season of great beauty, but it is also a season of decline: the days grow shorter, the light is suffused, and summer's abundance decays toward winter's death. Faced with this inevitable winter, what does nature do in autumn? She scatters the seeds that will bring new growth in the spring—and she scatters them with amazing abandon.

In my own experience of autumn, I am rarely aware that seeds are being planted. Instead, my mind is on the fact that the green growth of summer is browning and beginning to die. My delight in the autumn colors is always tinged with melancholy, a sense of impending loss that is only heightened by the beauty all around. I am drawn down by the prospect of death more than I am lifted by the hope of new life.

But as I explore autumn's paradox of dying and seeding, I feel the power of metaphor. In the autumnal events of my own experience, I am easily fixated on surface appearances—on the decline of meaning, the decay of relationships, the death of a work.

And yet, if I look more deeply, I may see the myriad possibilities being planted to bear fruit in some season yet to come.

In retrospect, I can see in my own life what I could not see at the time—how the job I lost helped me find work I needed to do, how the “road closed” sign turned me toward terrain I needed to travel, how losses that felt irredeemable forced me to discern meanings I needed

to know. On the surface it seemed that life was lessening, but silently and lavishly the seeds of new life were always being sown.

This hopeful notion that living is hidden within dying is surely enhanced by the visual glories of autumn. What artist would ever have painted a season of dying with such a vivid palette if nature had not done it first? Does death possess a beauty that we—who fear death, who find it ugly and obscene—cannot see? How shall we understand autumn’s testimony that death and elegance go hand in hand?

For me, the words that come closest to answering those questions are the words of Thomas Merton: “There is in all visible things...a hidden wholeness.”

In the visible world of nature, a great truth is concealed in plain sight: diminishment and beauty, darkness and light, death and life are not opposites. They are held together in the paradox of the “hidden wholeness.”

In a paradox, opposites do not negate each other—they cohere in mysterious unity at the heart of reality. Deeper still, they need each other for health, as my body needs to breathe in as well as breathe out. But in a culture that prefers the ease of either-or thinking to the complexities of paradox, we have a hard time holding opposites together. We want light without darkness, the glories of spring and summer without the demands of autumn and winter, and the Faustian bargains we make fail to sustain our lives.

When we so fear the dark that we demand light around the clock, there can be only one result: artificial light that is glaring and graceless and, beyond its borders, a darkness that grows ever more terrifying as we try to hold it off. Split off from each other, neither darkness nor light

is fit for human habitation. But if we allow the paradox of darkness and light to be, the two will conspire to bring wholeness and health to every living thing.

Autumn constantly reminds me that my daily dyings are necessary precursors to new life. If I try to “make” a life that defies the diminishments of autumn, the life I end up with will be artificial, at best, and utterly colorless as well. But when I yield to the endless interplay of living and dying, dying and living, the life I am given will be real and colorful, fruitful and whole.

6. *The Reader's Response (Optional)*

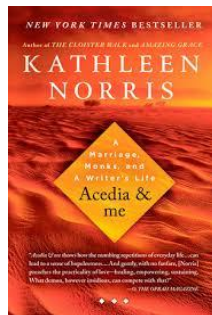
The Reader's Response is a chance for the reader to respond to the Message. This is optional. If you feel inclined, use one of the options below to respond to the message, or find your own way to respond.

Option #1: Journal

*If you are looking for more structure, write about times in your life when you have felt lean. Consider:

- Have you believed something strongly, only to find out things were different than they seemed? What is hard about that?
- What types of “turnings” have you experienced, or are currently experiencing, in your life? (relationships, jobs, faith, etc..)
- Is there anything that you refuse to let “turn”? Why do you think you are holding onto those things so tightly? What would happen if they turned: how would you respond?

Option #2: Read this book: *Acedia & Me* (Kathleen Norris)



Option #3: Lectio Divina with Ecclesiastes Chapter 6

Below is a link for how to engage with the Ancient Practice of Lectio Divina:

[Click Here For A Lectio Divina Tutorial](#)

7. *The Lord's Prayer*

The Lord's Prayer is likely the most well-known portion of Scripture in the world. Here, I offer an alternative version of this well-known text that is appropriate for the given theme.

For Those Whose Harvest is Poor

Creator God, for daily bread
and all who work
to bring your harvest home,
we bring our thanks today.

Forgive our ingratitude,
we who have so much,
yet waste what you have given.

For those whose harvest is poor,
whose crops have withered, whose
Water is tainted, whose children starve...
Help those who bring relief
and bestow on us
an unaccustomed generosity,
that all might share from your garden
and all might sing your praise.

Creator God, provider of all
we bring our thanks today.

- Author Unknown

8. Exhortation:

The Exhortation is a final charge, a last word of motivation to go into the world as you are, and to be your true self. Until next week, consider this charge as a parting word of encouragement.

“But if I have forgotten who I am, getting back on the road may help me remember...Losing one’s way and then finding it may mimic the cyclical nature of depression, but it is also part of the natural rhythm of day and night, of the waxing and waning moon, and of seeding and harvesting...a necessary aspect of the spiritual life.”

-Kathleen Norris, from “Acedia & Me”