

The Process towards profession in the Order of St. Aidan

1. Identify your Soul Friend

The Soul Friend is the key element in this process. It is this person who works with you to develop your personal spiritual discipline. It is this person with whom you reflect on the "fit" of the personal Way of Life you have developed. It is this person, who with you determines your readiness to enter each stage of the process.

So what is a Soul Friend? First of all, he or she is a friend with whom you can share the joys and struggles of your walk in Christ. The Soul Friend should be a person who is equally serious about growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The relationship should be strong enough to permit accountability, i.e., loving confrontation when we fail to follow through, with an attitude of encouragement to press on rather than condemnation.

Must the Soul Friend be a member of the Order of St. Aidan? No. They should be familiar with the elements of the Aidan Way as set forth in the booklet. They should value this way of discipleship even if they do not feel called to follow it themselves. The Order of St. Aidan does not assign, recommend or approve Soul Friends. This is to be a personal relationship.

NOTE: Generally speaking, the Soul Friend should not be a member of the opposite sex. The level of closeness that develops over the life of this relationship can sometimes lead to inappropriate attraction. An obvious exception would be your spouse. While not all couples can work together in this way, there are instances of excellent soul friending between spouses in the Order.

2. Making the Explorer's Covenant

The **Explorer** is one who has reviewed the Aidan Way and decided to pursue it and who has found a soul friend to be their companion on that Way. They make a covenant witnessed by their soul friend, sometimes in the company of friends or their local church. The Explorer's Covenant is similar to the first vows of the traditional religious communities. In the period following the covenant service the Explorer and soul friend work together to build the Explorer's personal Way. When this process is complete, the Explorer is ready for the next stage.

Composing your personal Way of Life

What is a "spiritual discipline?" A spiritual discipline, also known as a "Rule of Life" or "Way of Life" is a set of practices that we undertake to strengthen and deepen our lives as disciples. If you are unfamiliar with this practice we recommend Richard Foster's work **Celebration of Discipline**.

Some Guidelines: Begin where you are, not where you think you ought to be. For instance, if you read the Bible only on rare occasions, it's probably not wise to begin your discipline by committing to 3 hours intensive Bible study each week. In many ways taking on a routine of spiritual discipline is like beginning an exercise program, if you start too ambitiously you'll end up immobilizing yourself and feel too sore and discouraged to continue.

The Aidan Way of Life encompasses ten elements which are briefly addressed in the booklet. Address each element as you compose your personal Way of Life. Working with your soul friend you can identify which of the elements of the Way are already expressed in your lifestyle and which need to be incorporated. Further, you may want, at least initially, to focus on one or two elements rather than taking on a radical life changing pattern all at once.

Beyond these guidelines the composition and approval of your Way lies between you and your soul friend. While you are always welcome to write or e-mail to our office for clarification or advice, please note that none of us are professional spiritual directors, but ordinary Christians living by God's grace. These months are a time of testing your Way of Life. The actual living out of your discipline will show you where you have been both too hard and too easy on yourself. One good measure of assessing one's Way of Life is through the guideline given by the late Fr. Martin Thornton in his book, **Christian Proficiency**. (The notes in parentheses are ours.)

"In general, therefore, I think that Rule (*way of life*) should be such that is invariably kept without strain but *occasionally* makes a definite demand on the will. It should normally be kept with no fault (*fault - a failure to live up to an obligation taken on in your way of life*) occasionally, a few faults frequently, and if it goes all to pieces very rarely there is little to worry about."

3. Making the Voyager's Covenant

The **Voyager** stage begins with a covenant similar to the Explorer's. In the period following this covenant service the Voyager is testing their Way and the realities of being part of a far-flung community. The Way is tested as to its realism: Is it concrete enough to provide accountability? Does it accurately reflect the Voyager's life circumstances? Is it gentle enough to fit well, but challenging enough to enable growth? The realities of scattered community may be difficult for some. We are as yet a small fellowship, scattered across North America. The member of the Order of St. Aidan may often feel isolated. At the present our primary contact is through e-mail and an Internet chat site. The determination of when to enter the final stage is left up to the Voyager and the soul friend. This stage is Life Profession.

4. Life Profession

Having completed the Explorer's and Voyager's stages, the member makes the covenant of Life Profession. This covenant is renewed annually on its anniversary or on the Feast of Aidan of Lindisfarne, August 31.

(Note: In Christian history great witnesses in the Faith were remembered on the anniversary of their physical death which is considered to be their birthday into the full joy of Heaven. Thus these heroes have "feast days" which are celebrations of Christ's victory in them.)

To begin the Process of Profession, or to ask for information not covered here write us at:

St. Aidan Trust
P.O. Box 4241
Evergreen, CO 80437-4241