A COMPANION TO THE RULE

Maranatha

Standing the Watch: a nine-minute Christian practice of attention and surrender

Oldboy keeps the watch.

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BEGIN HERE

Come, Lord.

Maranatha is an Aramaic word the first Christians prayed. It means: Come, Lord. It is the central invocation of this practice, and its theological safeguard.

Standing the Watch is the central practice of the Maranatha rule. It draws on my years of watchstanding in the Coast Guard: remain awake, attend to what is present, and be ready to respond. It also draws on years of meditation and practice. It is an original Christian practice using posture, breath, sound, silence, and prayer.

The practice teaches the whole method in nine minutes. Its center is Maranatha. That prayer keeps the descent from closing into self-absorption. You listen inwardly while remaining open to an Other who cannot be reduced to the psyche.

Six movements. Nine minutes. Each morning, take the watch.

WHERE THIS LIVES

Standing the Watch is the WATCH anchor of the daily rule, alongside WORD, BODY, and ORDER. On a hard day, seven minutes of the Watch, one short Gospel passage, and ten minutes of gentle movement are enough. Never miss twice.

MOVEMENT ONE · AWAKEN

Take the Watch

0:00 – 1:00

Sit upright with feet grounded and hands open. Say aloud: *Awake, O sleeper.*

Take three ordinary breaths. You are not trying to achieve anything yet. You are simply arriving, the way a watchstander climbs to the bridge and takes in the horizon before anything else.

THE WORDS

“Awake, O sleeper.”

MOVEMENT TWO · DESCEND

Go Below the Waterline

1:00 – 3:00

Breathe in gently for 4 seconds and out for 6 to 8 seconds. Release jaw, shoulders, belly, and brow. Descend beneath the surface noise without leaving ordinary life.

A ship has a waterline: above it, the weather and the waves; below it, the deep steadiness of the hull. Your attention can go below your own waterline the same way. The noise of the day keeps going. You go deeper than the noise.

THE BREATH

In for 4 seconds, out for 6 to 8 seconds. Gentle. Never forced. If you feel lightheaded, return to ordinary breathing.

MOVEMENT THREE · ENCOUNTER

Resonance

3:00 – 5:00

Hum softly on 6 or 7 out-breaths. Let the sound be low and easy, felt more than heard.

Then sound *Ma-ra-na-tha* on three long out-breaths, one syllable settling into the next. Stop. Listen.

Sound is older than argument. Before the mind can explain the prayer, the body is already praying it. Let the ancient word do what it has done for two thousand years: open the door from the inside.

THE WORDS

Hum on the out-breath, then Ma-ra-na-tha, three times. Then silence.

MOVEMENT FOUR · INTEGRATE AND SURRENDER

Not I, but Christ

5:00 – 7:00

Inhale with *Not I.* Exhale with *but Christ in me.*

Notice where the mind wanders, the way you would notice weather, then return without scolding. The wandering is not failure. It is the ego doing what the ego does, and each return is a small surrender of the center.

This is the heart of the practice: the ego does not discover that it is divine. It discovers that it is not the center. Come, Lord means the transformation is received as encounter and grace, not manufactured through self-observation.

THE BREATH PRAYER

In: Not I. Out: but Christ in me. Return without scolding.

MOVEMENT FIVE · RESURRECT

The Watching Presence

7:00 – 8:30

Let the words fall away. Notice that thoughts, sensations, and impulses are being observed. Rest in that noticing without naming it, and without turning it into an achievement.

With your eyes closed, turn your gaze gently inward and look at the triangle, the point in front of you opening like a triangular portal. Do not strain or stare. Keep it soft, and let the watching rest there. For me, the watching takes the shape of an eye with angel wings. Your image may differ, or there may be no image at all. What matters is the watcher, not the picture. Oldboy is the small, steady watcher within, keeping the watch.

A careful word here. The observing awareness you notice is an experience, not a conclusion. Do not rush to label it. Its meaning unfolds through time, symbol, Scripture, relationship, and discernment. Do not grasp at a special state. Become receptive.

THE POSTURE

No words. No effort. Rest in the noticing itself.

MOVEMENT SIX · PARTICIPATE

Here I Am

8:30 – 9:00

Place a hand on your heart. Say aloud: *Here I am.*

Bow, or make the sign of the cross. Open your eyes. Take the next faithful action, whatever it is: the email, the dishes, the child, the first task of the day. The watch does not end when you stand up. It goes with you into the day.

THE SENDING

"Here I am." Then the next faithful action.

A FINAL WORD

Gently does it.

Keep breathing gentle. Do not hold the breath or force a long exhale. If you live with panic, trauma, dissociation, or other relevant health concerns, adapt or stop any element that increases distress, and seek appropriate professional guidance. This practice does not diagnose, treat, or replace medical or mental health care.

The practice is not a performance system for the ego. Some mornings it will feel deep. Some mornings it will feel like nine minutes of fidgeting. Showing up matters more than how it feels.

JOURNAL

Write one honest sentence about what you noticed. No fixing. Just notice.

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Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Rev. Shawn Garan

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