

The Way of St. Bartholomew

Between today and Easter Sunday, a small group of people connected to St. Bartholomew's youth ministry are pursuing intentional, Christian formation through the ancient practice of taking vows. Inspired by the great monastic traditions of the faith, the five vows that make up this "Way of St. Bartholomew" are an exercise first and foremost in promise keeping. We seek to be faithful as God is faithful, and we know that is something that takes practice. The Way of St. B's should not be seen as a rigid list of rules, as much as they are a tool and opportunity to learn how to "fulfill our vows to the Most High". (Psalm 50:14) That is why each participant has volunteered to undertake this rule of life.

This is where you come in. As with the vows taken in marriage, these vows require community participation. As we experiment with this type of spiritual discipline we will need your help, encouragement and support. So, when we ask if you who witness these vows will do all in your power to support us, we hope that you will answer heartily, "We will."

Lastly, it needs to be emphasized that the "Way of St. Bartholomew" is a prototype of something we may integrate in our larger community life should it go well. It is not the same thing as, or a replacement for Confirmation, nor is it an "exclusive club" for super Christians. Instead, we are a group of people who readily admit to our weakness. We need discipline to be like Jesus and keep our promises, therefore we are taking this 'rule of life' on as our spiritual act of worship. Please ask us how it is going along the way and keep us in your prayers.

Participants have given their own specifics to each of these **Five Vows**. Feel free to ask about them.

Prayer: A promise to a personal discipline of weekly prayer and study anchored in the Bible.

Presence: A commitment to regular, face-to-face meetings with other participants for worship and spiritual direction. (Dispensation given to college students living out-of-town)

Practice: A commitment to personal development in one specific area Christian practice during the season of the vows.

Poverty: A commitment to living simply, transparently and generously with all possessions.

Pilgrimage: A commitment to make a spiritual pilgrimage once during the season of the vows.

Liturgy of Vows (The Way of St. Bartholomew)

Rector In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (+)

All Amen

Dear friends in Christ, we are here today to worship God and commission these brothers and sisters to pursue Christian formation through the taking of vows. Remembering the words of the Psalmist, "From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly. Before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows", we recognize this practice as God-blessed as it empowers the participant to image God's faithfulness in their lives and in the world. Therefore, we stand with you today as witnesses and supporters as you begin this Way of St. Bartholomew.

The Rector says to the Participants

Rector Are all of you taking these vows adopting this rule of life of your own desire and accord?

Participants We are.

Rector Will you do all in your power to keep these vows and live by this rule of life between now and Easter Sunday?

Participants We will.

Rector Will you now commit yourself to a vow of Prayer, involving weekly devotion and study, anchored in the Holy Scriptures?

Participants We will with God's help.

Rector Will you now commit yourself to a vow of Presence, involving face-to-face meeting for worship and spiritual direction?

Participants We will with God's help.

Rector Will you now commit yourself to a vow of Practice, pursuing personal development in your chosen Christian discipline?

Participants We will with God's help.

Rector Will you now commit yourself to a vow of Poverty, choosing to live simply, openly and generously with your possessions?

Participants We will with God's help.

Rector Will you now commit yourself to a vow of Pilgrimage, taking time once during in this season to seek God on retreat.

Participants We will with God's help.

The Rector now addresses the Congregation

Rector Will all you witnessing these vows do all in your power to uphold these persons as they adopt this rule of life?

People We will.

Rector The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

O Lord Jesus Christ, you became poor for our sake, that we might be made rich through your poverty: Guide and sanctify, we pray, those whom you call to follow you under the vows of prayer, presence, practice, poverty and pilgrimage, that by their prayer and service they may enrich your Church, and by their life and worship may glorify your Name; for you reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*