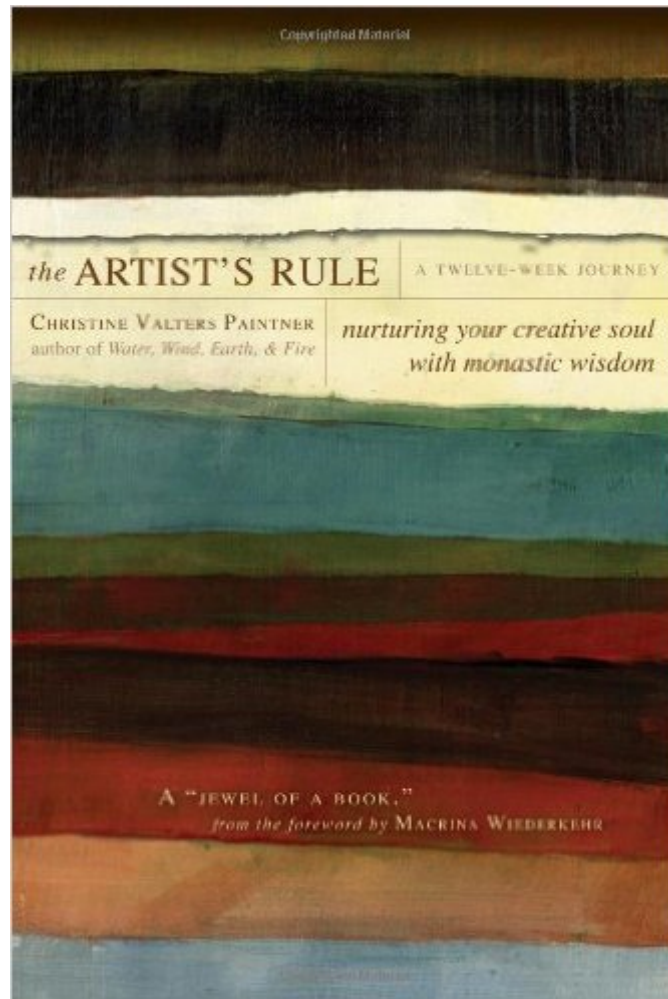


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# The Artist's Rule: Nurturing Your Creative Soul With Monastic Wisdom



## Synopsis

Christine Valters Paintner, author of *Water, Wind, Earth, and Fire*, invites readers to discover and develop their creative gifts in a spirit of prayer and reflection. This twelve-week course draws on the insights and practices of Benedictine spirituality to explore the interplay between contemplation and creativity. Summarized in the phrase "pray and work," *The Rule of St. Benedict* provides the inspiration for Christine Valters Paintner's newest exploration of the mutually nourishing relationship between contemplative practices and creative expression. Artists of all stripes and stations in life--poets or painters, potters or photographers--will discover how traditions of Benedictine, Celtic, and desert spirituality can offer new sources of inspiration for their work. Through this twelve-week course, themes like "Sacred Tools and Sacred Space," "Creative Solitude and Community," and "Nature as a Source of Revelation and Inspiration" are enriched by Paintner's perceptive discussion and enhanced by insightful quotations from well-known artists and writers. Each week offers suggestions for grounding both the creative and the spiritual life through three basic practices: walking, lectio divina, and journaling. In sync with Paintner's vibrant Internet presence, *The Artist's Rule* is supplemented with online resources, including guided meditation podcasts, video lessons, and discussions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Christine Valters Paintner has "a deep love of Benedictine tradition as well as the gifts of Celtic and desert monasticism." She is a Benedictine oblate with training in the expressive arts. She says,

"Creativity and contemplative spirituality nurture and support each other in their commitments to the slow way, to a close attention to the inner life and to the sacred being revealed in each moment." Her book offers support for a graceful journey through creativity and contemplation. The author considers herself to be a monk who lives beyond the monastery walls and gently supports others to find their "inner monk" nourished through silence and "a commitment to see everything as sacred." She also offers many approaches to engage one's "inner artist" through the visual arts, poetry, movement and new ways of seeing the world. I so appreciate all Valters Paintner has to share in this book and realize, she too, is attending to her inner life in the midst of the busyness and speed of the world around us. I have been drawn to aspects of the monastic life myself including the hours of a monastery day from Vigils, also known as matins, the first hour of the day, to Compline, night. The author describes the hours of the day in Week Four: "Sacred Rhythms for Creative Renewal." She offers "seasons of the breath" as a meditation to follow the breath through the directions, the seasons and the hours of the day. This is one of the many practices that doesn't have to be saved to the particular week of the twelve-week course. The breathing practice anchors one in an experience of the actual hour of the day whatever day it may be. As part of that chapter, the visual art exploration task is to create a contemporary book of hours by using paint, images and handwriting. In this chapter and others, excerpts from the writing of the participants of Christine Valters Paintner's program help to form the "creative community" that is the theme of Week Eight. The author offers a set of practices, meditations, and art exploration as invitations and doorways to explore the creative qualities of particular values and virtues. For the purposes of this review, I read some pages each morning and was nourished by Valters Paintner's soothing words and encouragement to integrate my spiritual path and creativity into my daily life. Three practices are suggested as part of one's daily or weekly contemplative and creative journey: walking, lectio divina, and reflection. The four primary movements of lectio divina are: read, reflect, respond and rest. In each of the chapters, the lectio divina is applied to a Bible passage, a poem, or one of the Rules of St. Benedict. Contemplative walking is a way to honor the season of the earth "and of my soul" the author says. Other reflection is done through journaling and each chapter has specific questions for this practice. The author's words are enhanced by her careful selections of poetry and quotes from Christian, Sufi, Buddhist and other spiritual traditions. By Week 13, readers are ready to create their artistic "rule of life" as an articulation of their ongoing commitment to their practice. There are many practices I will go back to: the poetry writing, the "to-be" list and the creation of wisdom cards. This is the book I will take with me as I travel so I will be reminded of the practices and choose a question or two for reflection each day.

by Mary Ann Moore for Story Circle Book Reviews reviewing

books by, for, and about women

I've read and reviewed dozens of books on the creative process, especially the writing process. Few have resonated as deeply as this one. I read one chapter at the end of the day, every night, highlighting this lovely book from top to bottom -- and making notes. Now I plan to do all of the exercises on a weekly basis, as suggested by the author. I happened to stumble on "The Artist's Rule" at exactly the right time, when I needed to take a creative sabbatical and nourish my spirit. And I would imagine it works as well in group settings as it does for individuals. Whether you're a poet, journalist, sculptor, painter, or an "artist of the everyday," this gem of a book will illuminate your own creative process while helping you push past your personal or professional blocks. --  
Cindy La Ferle's Home Office; [...]

recommended this book (and her other two) and for some unknown (at the time) reason, I clicked on ordering all three...and I have NOT been disappointed! Her assignments at the end of each chapter are wonderfully healing. I read the book all the way thru first, and now am going chapter by chapter, reading slowly and carefully, pondering her wise insights. If you are not sure about ordering all three at once, order and read this one first!

I purchased this book as a 'textbook' for the online class 'Way of the Monk, Path of the Artist' as offered by [...] and conducted by the author. In the spirit of full disclosure, I'm deliberately working through the book at the pace of the class and have not completed it yet, so this is only as regards the first four chapters so far! I'll be happy to come back and either edit this review or create a new one at such time as I'm done the class. It comes out of a background of Benedictine and Celtic spirituality and the meditative traditions: as such, there is what I can only describe as a 'Christian-friendly' aroma or atmosphere to the writing. At the same time, it's evident that the author has made a sincere effort towards inclusivity, non-offensiveness, and non-denominationalism. This may distress some people who are looking for a very explicit Christ-focused examination of our artistic gifts and talents, but in my opinion it also makes the book far more accessible to 'seekers', theists of various flavours, and avoids an unpleasant religiosity or aggressive piousness. If you are open to that perspective, you will get a great deal out of The Artist's Rule, whether you are from a Catholic tradition, a conservative Protestant like myself (from a Reformed, Calvinistic heritage, now worshipping in a non-denominational cross-cultural setting!), or simply someone who believes that there is a higher power and a divine motivation in the world which is accessible by humanity. There

are wisdom writings and poems from other traditions that strengthen and enrich the text, but the meditative techniques are based on the monastic 'lectio divina' and on Biblical texts.

Non-Christians/believers from other faiths are encouraged to use other wisdom literature from a tradition in which they are comfortable; mystics, authors, poets, and philosophers, such as Rumi, are quoted. The author's style is personal, affectionate, and supportive, exactly like a firm, kindly mother abbess sharing her thoughts and her collected sagacity. The art challenges that go along with the book are so appropriate and spiritually-based, with a variety of techniques ranging from collage to poetry to construction. I've been doing a lot of prayer, 'inner work' and self-examination as a result of the class - very empowering, and getting me closer to God's desires for my life - but the book itself will also encourage and inspire you as you read and interact with it. Read slowly, reread, ponder, allow yourself to come to understanding, and savour the concepts, counsel, and wisdom contained.

I am delighted to have this book. I read the author's blog regularly and having a book that I can return to again and again is wonderful. She provides well researched information about each chapter's content. She also gives the reader exercises to help with internalizing the concepts presented. The book is insightful, inspirational, practical and encouraging. It helps me to remain focused on caring for the spiritual and creative part of myself.

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