
**PASTORAL SPIRITUALITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE,
IN MINISTRY, AND BEYOND:
THREE LOCATIONS FOR A PASTORAL SPIRITUALITY**
TONE STRANGLELAND KAUFMAN

Abstract

Based on an empirical study of clergy spirituality in the Church of Norway (CofN), this essay identifies three *locations* for pastoral spirituality: *everyday life*, *ministry*, and spiritual practices that must be sought more intentionally located on *the margins of daily life*. The empirical findings of my study suggest that the interviewed pastors attend to their relationship with God in the midst of the messiness of ordinary life, both privately and professionally. I therefore argue that Dreyer's (1994) and Miller-McLemore's (2007) concern about a spirituality of everyday life (primarily directed towards lay people) is also highly relevant for clergy as well as an asset to their ministry. Thus, a spirituality of everyday life is a significant, yet rarely noticed, source for pastoral ministry and for religious leaders. Moreover, the three locations for a pastoral spirituality are analytical distinctions that help see and acknowledge each location. Yet, they should not be seen in opposition to one another, but rather as mutually enriching.

Introduction

Are pastors bad at praying, and what counts as “real pastoral spirituality”?

- “I am bad at praying!”
- “I am not as spiritual as the previous pastor!”
- “I am not very good at what is the most important [thing to do; that is to pray]!”
- “My prayer life is not much to cheer for!”

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These comments are self-descriptions made by pastors in the Church of Norway in the context of a research interview for the study on clergy spirituality, upon which this essay is based.¹ Although the spiritual self-image of some interviewees in the research (certainly not all of them) can be characterized as rather poor or at least modest, the same pastors still experience their relationship to God and their faith as being very significant. Further, when analyzing the data, I was puzzled by a discrepancy between *descriptions* and *evaluations* of the spiritual practices of some interviewees. They expressed an image of themselves as “not very good at praying,” yet described their everyday lives both in ministry and privately as more or less enveloped by prayer and other spiritual practices. Some of the participants realized this gap as we were speaking, and came to see their spiritual life with new eyes. Olav, who was in his mid-fifties, and serving in a rural area at the time of the interview, reflects on his prayer life in the quote below:

I find that it [my prayer life] is not much to cheer for. Because I am not the one praying the long prayers. But most of the time I do pray.... Prior to

¹ Data are based on 21 open ended qualitative interviews with ordained pastors in the CofN recruited from three different dioceses. They represent ecclesiological and theological diversity in the CofN. The overall research design of the study draws on the model or method of mutual critical correlation proposed by John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 95. combined with the ‘hermeneutic approach’ outlined by spirituality scholar Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, Elizabeth A Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows, eds. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 6. Because the spirituality of Norwegian clergy is a fairly unexplored area of research, it seemed fruitful to develop new empirical, qualitative data by means of in-depth interviews with rather few interviewees, instead of distributing a survey to a larger sample. As I was interested in the research subjects’ own reflections on their experiences and practices, interviewing was chosen as the methodological approach of the study. Semi-structured, open ended in-depth interviews provided rich data necessary for ‘thick descriptions,’ and enabled me to attain a more nuanced understanding of their spirituality.

the service, I pray for the service. I mostly pray before things are going to take place. And then I feel...I mean, my prayer life is mine there and then (...) There is much in that, I guess. There aren't many things we do around here that don't begin with a prayer.²

Olav's notion of a prayer life "that you can cheer for," as he puts it, seems to be one that consists of "the long prayers." Yet, he doesn't regularly practice a prayer life according to such ideals. On the other hand, though, both Olav and other interviewees clearly engage in a number of spiritual practices that nurture them as pastors and as human beings. However, some of these practices, such as table grace, pondering the details of a spider's web with a child, evening prayer with children, caring for a chronically ill spouse or child, small prayers offered in between ministry tasks or while being underway, have become so *embedded in daily life*, so *automated*, that they are more or less invisible to some of the participants in the study, including Olav, at the outset of our conversation.

What, then, counts as "real spirituality" or "real pastoral spirituality"? What can be sustainable sources of spiritual nurture for clergy and other religious leaders? Where is pastoral spirituality located? These questions might call for a wider understanding of pastoral spirituality than what has traditionally been the case, and also for the willingness to look for such spirituality outside of the explicitly "religious or spiritual sphere."

Where is Pastoral Spirituality Located?

Pastors³ and other religious leaders very explicitly exercise their faith *as professionals*.⁴ This makes them

²All the quotes were first recorded and transcribed in the original Norwegian language. Next, they were slightly revised in order to make them more readable. Stuttering, incomplete sentences, and the like have for example been omitted unless such language forms are of significance for the interpretation. Third, the quotes have been translated into English, which involves a second interpretation.

³ In this article the term 'pastor' in English ('prest' in Norwegian) refers to the ordained leader of a Christian community, both within and outside of the

somewhat different from those who are not employed by the church or a religious organization when it comes to spirituality. However, the way they relate to God and express and nurture their faith *privately* does not necessarily differ as much from the spirituality of lay people, and might also be of great significance for their spirituality as pastors as well as for their ministry.

While some argue that the spiritual practices for clergy are to be found in the liturgy, or more broadly in the pastoral ministry itself (*vocational spirituality*),⁵ others opt for the necessity of spiritual practices as a foundation for—and as a supplement to—the core tasks of ministry.⁶ The latter must usually be sought more intentionally or deliberately, and are located at the margins of daily life. Such practices are here called *intentional spiritual practices*, and they include practices such as setting aside a specific time for contemplative prayer, going on a spiritual retreat, or seeing a spiritual director.

In this essay I argue that *vocational spirituality* and *intentional spiritual practices* are both legitimate spiritual sources and practices, and of significance to the interviewees. Additionally, I suggest a third location for pastoral spirituality; that is, *everyday life* as it is lived in the

Church of Norway (CoFN), and when referring to the interviewed pastors I use the terms ‘pastor’, ‘clergy’, ‘interviewee’, ‘participant’ interchangeably.

⁴ Although I have interviewed parish pastors, their experiences might also resonate with pastors in other churches and contexts, and with other ordained or non-ordained religious leaders in churches and various religious organizations and movements. The crucial point here is that they exercise their faith as professionals.

⁵ The term “tjenesteorientert spiritualitet” is used in Halvard Johannessen, “Pastoral spiritualitet i endring,” *Halvårsskrift for praktisk teologi* vol 27, no. 1 (2010), 3-14. This understanding of pastoral spirituality will be elaborated in the following.

⁶ Swedish author Magnus Malm, who is widely read amongst clergy in Norway, claims that Christian ministry (whether ordained or not) should be based on a personal relationship with God, and that this relationship needs to be nourished for the sake of itself, and not only in and through ministry in order to have something to give or preach to others. When God is reduced to being an employer, the spiritual life, thus, equals work, which can easily quench a healthy spirituality and be experienced as draining, in *Veivisere: En Bok Om Kristent Lederskap* (Oslo: Nye Luther forl., 1991).

private sphere. During the last decades a number of scholars in spirituality and religion, as well as practitioners in the church have emphasized the significance of *everyday spirituality*.⁷ Yet they have usually done so in order to make a case for what is often termed *lay spirituality*, at least in Catholic and Anglican circles.⁸ However, a spirituality embedded in everyday life, as described by some of these authors, is also a significant source of spiritual nurture to *clergy* in my research.⁹ I, therefore, make the case that a spirituality of everyday life is a significant source not only for laity, but also for pastors, and possibly for religious leaders and church employees more generally.¹⁰ Yet, spiritual practices of everyday life are rarely noticed in literature on pastoral spirituality.¹¹

⁷ See Elizabeth Dreyer, *Earth Crammed with Heaven: A Spirituality of Everyday Life* (New York: Paulist Pr, 1994); Claire E. Wolfteich, "Towards an Integrative Lay Spirituality: Living, Faith, Family, and Work" (PhD Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1997); Elizabeth Drescher, "Practicing Church: Vernacular Ecclesiologies in Late Medieval England" (Ph.D., Berkely, 2008). Moreover, recently, contributions viewing parenting as a positive means for spiritual growth instead of a drawback have been published both in the US, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*, The Practices of Faith Series (San Francisco, Calif.: Wiley, 2007), and in Scandinavia, Lena Bergström, *Att Ge Plats För En Annan: Om Andlighet, Föräldraskap Och Vardagsliv* (Örebro: Cordia, 2002).

⁸ See references in the previous footnote, especially Dreyer, Wolfteich, and Drescher.

⁹ Tone Stangeland Kaufman, *A New Old Spirituality: A Qualitative Study of Clergy Spirituality in the Church of Norway* (Oslo: MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2011).

¹⁰ This is only an assumption. In my study I only interviewed pastors.

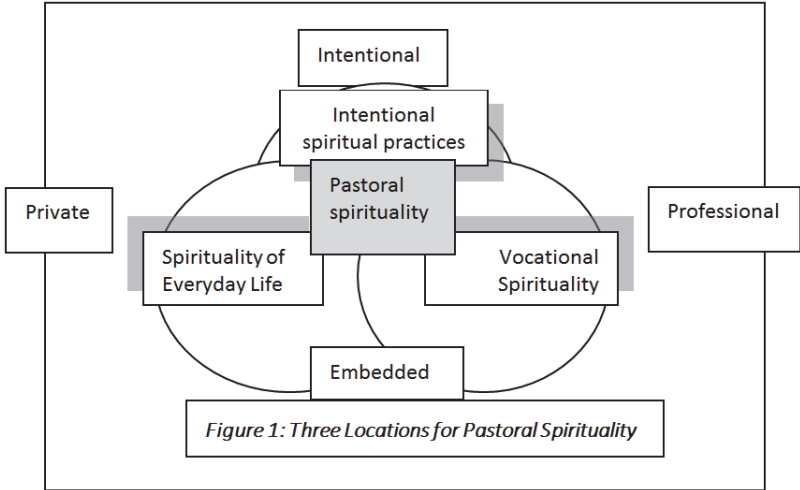
¹¹ See Mary Ellen Hughes, *Maintaining the Well-Being of Clergy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988); Urban T. III Holmes, *Spirituality for Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982); Harald Olsen, "Mot Stillheten Og Skjønnheten: Endring i Norske Statskirkepresters Spiritualitet," *Halvårsskrift for praktisk teologi* vol 25, no. 2 (2008); as well as Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Continuum, 1996), Henri J.M. Nouwen; *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Continuum, 1996); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Living Reminder* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1977); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Nachfolge*, ed. Martin and Tödt Kuske, Ilse, vol 4; Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke (München: Chr.

Seeking to portray the analytical distinction between spiritual practices *embedded in the everyday life* of the participants, both *privately* and *professionally* (in ministry),¹² and those located *at the margins of daily life*, figure 1 (below) introduces two axes: a horizontal one running from *Private* to *Professional*, and a vertical one going from *Embedded* to *Intentional*.¹³ Thus, three locations where the participants in this study find spiritual nurture are identified (overlapping circles). Crucial for my understanding of a pastoral spirituality is that these three locations are not opposites. Rather, they should be seen as mutually enriching. However, for *analytical purposes*, and in order to see and acknowledge each of them more clearly, it is helpful to distinguish between them. Particularly, the (many) practices embedded in daily life are made explicit and visible, within this conceptual framework, and these should be acknowledged and appreciated as important spiritual sources to the clergy in my study.

Kaiser Verlag, 1994); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Gemeinsames Leben* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1987); Kenneth Leech, *True Prayer: An Imitation to Christian Spirituality* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1995); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Experiencing God: Theology as Spirituality* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1985); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Eye of the Storm: Living Spiritually in the Real World* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Soul Friend: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Spirituality and Pastoral Care* (London: Sheldon Press, 1986); Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, Studies in Spirituality, Supplement 8 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

¹² Here the term *professional*(y) simply refers to practices undertaken *in the role as pastor*, as opposed to practices engaged in *private*(y) *as private persons*.

¹³ Although the concept intentional is used in a somewhat different manner than Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), it is to a certain extent inspired by her work. Moreover, the encounter with interviewees who clearly expressed a proactive or intentional attitude towards practices seeking to deepen or enhance their spiritual life made me keep this attitude or value as an analytical perspective throughout the research process.



My understanding of Christian spirituality is largely informed by Sandra Schneiders’ definition of the phenomenon, emphasizing *experience*, but also by Elizabeth Drescher’s critique of Schneiders, and her move towards *practice*. In this essay, *Christian spirituality* is defined as “the way in which a person experiences the relationship to God, and nurtures and expresses his or her faith with a special emphasis on Christian practice.”

Tensions for Pastoral Spirituality

As indicated in the introduction, I was puzzled by the paradox that while each and all of the participants report that they experience their relationship with God and their faith as a profound part of their lives, some still describe themselves as being “bad at praying” or “not as spiritual as the previous pastor,” as a few of them put it. Olav’s comment that “a prayer life to cheer for” equals “praying the long prayers” could very well mean having a specific time set aside for prayer concurring with the pietistic ideal of a having “a daily quiet time.”

In the Norwegian context, the spiritual tradition rooted in 18th century Pietism has contributed to shaping

ideals for the Christian life.¹⁴ This especially pertains to the south and west of the country, as well as other “Bible-belt” pockets. Such Christian backgrounds seem to be the common denominator for the pastors in my study who consider their own spiritual lives or practices as insufficient. This might be one reason why spiritual practices that don’t exactly fit the pietistic ideal of a “spiritual life” are not so easily noticed or acknowledged by these pastors. When Nina, a young pastor and a mother of a child, was asked if she used to pray with someone else in private, she was about to say no. Then I specifically inquired about evening prayer with her child:
 Nina: Oh, yes...he [my son] counts then perhaps, yes.

T: He counts.

Nina. Yes, I do pray....I do pray, when he... I mean, evening prayer with him. That’s right...thanks. It is such a natural thing that I forget.¹⁵

Olav and Nina, in the examples above, came to see their spiritual practices—for example their prayer lives—with new eyes because some of their automated practices were made visible to them. Other interviewees explicitly distinguish between having a *defined quiet time* and “*prayers on the go.*” The latter refers to the continual small dialogues with God attended to “on the go” throughout the day, in between things, and in the midst of various situations. “Prayers on the go” are prayers said on the way to the bus or train or in the car, a quick prayer of thanksgiving for the beauty of a snow covered mountain or the stunning sunset, a prayer offered before a confirmation class or in the office before dividing

¹⁴ Since the revivals of the 19th and 20th centuries were partly embraced by the Lutheran Church of Norway, which was a state church until 2012, pietistic and revival spiritualities have had a significant influence on a considerable number of CofN pastors and lay people. This tradition has been existing side by side with the “folk-church” tradition. The latter – at least to a certain extent – resembles mainline churches in the US.

¹⁵ In this quote I deliberately kept the stuttering and pauses, because they indicate how Nina, in the midst of the interview, came to see her prayer practice with new eyes.

confirmation kids into groups, etc. Hanne, a younger pastor and the mother of three children, says:

I am not the type who has gotten very fixed times for when I pray or take time to myself. I have realized that I am not such a very structured person in the first place either. But I do feel that my faith follows me and carries me in all situations, in my professional life. Also when I am on the go, I do pray when I am about to do something, or when I am in the midst of something (...) my spiritual life, is influenced by the life phase that I am in.

As opposed to Olay, Nina, and some others, Hanne sees and acknowledges these “prayers on the go” and other spiritual practices embedded in her everyday life. The analytical distinction between embedded and intentional spiritual practices helps show that spiritual practices are often invisible precisely because they are so embedded in everyday life and ministry. Moreover, this essay argues that it is important to make them more visible and explicit, and that they also count as “*real* spirituality,” even “*real* pastoral spirituality.”

Spiritual Practices Located In Ministry or Beyond?

Should pastoral spirituality be embedded *in* the ministry itself, or does the pastor rather need to look for spiritual sources and practices *in addition to* the ministry? One view of clergy spirituality is to claim that the spiritual life of the pastor should primarily, though not exclusively, be nurtured by the core tasks of ministry itself, and by presiding in public worship in particular.¹⁶ In the essay “Pastoral Spirituality Undergoing Change,” Norwegian theologian Halvard Johannessen¹⁷ considers Lutheran liturgist Gordon Lathrop a representative for a

¹⁶ Additional core tasks in the Norwegian Lutheran context would be preaching, counseling (meeting with parishioners), and *diakonia* or the pursuit of social justice.

¹⁷ Halvard Johannessen, “Pastoral Spiritualitet i Endring,” in *Halvårskrift for praktisk teologi* vol. 27, No. 1 (2010), 6-7.

vocational and *liturgical* understanding of pastoral spirituality. This is primarily based on Lathrop's book on pastoral spirituality, simply called *The Pastor: A Spirituality*.¹⁸ Instead of claiming that the pastor should primarily look for spiritual sources *in addition to* his or her ministry, Lathrop insists that *the ministry itself* is the hub for the spirituality of the pastor. In that regard, he considers "learning the [pastoral] tasks by heart" a spiritual practice.¹⁹ However, arguing that the primary source for a pastoral spirituality is the liturgy itself, Lathrop additionally recommends spiritual practices that are rooted in the liturgy, yet are practiced in the daily life of the pastor in the private sphere.

Lathrop's book has two main parts, whose headings capture the author's vision for a pastoral spirituality. He suggests that pastors are to *learn the tasks by heart* (part I, primarily related to the *ministry*) and to *live from the liturgy* (part II, primarily related to the *life* of the pastor in private). However, the two are deeply interwoven, and the pastoral tasks are not to be separated from the life of the pastor. Rather on the contrary, when "embarking on a lifelong catechumenate,"²⁰ and when "learning the tasks by heart,"²¹ the pastor cultivates a way of life shaped by the Christian symbols. Lathrop encourages a deep intertwining of *Sunday worship* and *daily life*.²² In my reading of Lathrop, his spirituality does include what I term intentional spiritual practices, but the crux is still the liturgy and the ministry itself.

Adhering to Lathrop's vocational spirituality, Johannessen, more clearly than Lathrop, considers this vocational and liturgical spirituality to be different from—and even opposed to—intentional spiritual practices that must be sought in addition to the core tasks

¹⁸ Gordon Lathrop, *The Pastor: A Spirituality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress; Edinburgh: Alban [distributor]), 2006.

¹⁹ Lathrop, viii-ix, 21, 24ff.,

²⁰ Lathrop, 1.

²¹ Lathrop viii-ix, 21, 25ff.

²² See also Lisa E. Dahill, *Truly Present: Practicing Prayer in the Liturgy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

of ministry. In his essay, he critiques contemporary Norwegian pastoral spirituality for not being sufficiently embedded in the liturgy and in the specific pastoral tasks. Rather, he claims to identify a movement towards precisely *intentional spiritual practices* and towards ecumenically oriented *contemplative spiritual practices* such as seeking spiritual direction and attending silent retreats. In Norway, this kind of contemplative spirituality has been offered by the Scandinavian retreat movement²³ and representatives from the Ignatian spiritual tradition.²⁴

Having examined some significant contributions on pastoral theology from past centuries in the Norwegian context, Johannessen's argument is primarily based on the fact that this literature on pastoral theology did not usually include a separate chapter on the spiritual life of the pastor. Instead, this theme was woven into the chapters on the pastoral tasks or ministry.²⁵ This makes him conclude that the spiritual life of the pastor, according to these works, should be embedded in the ministry. His conclusion can be questioned, but going into a detailed discussion with Johannessen is not my point in this essay. Here I simply use him as a representative of a position that sees vocational spirituality rooted in the ministry in opposition to intentional spiritual practices. My own research supports Johannessen's claim that there has recently been a move towards a more ecumenically oriented contemplative spirituality, particularly inspired by the Ignatian tradition.²⁶

²³ See for example <http://www.sandomstiftelsen.no/> (accessed July 5, 2013).

²⁴ See for instance Jan Schumacher, *Tjenestens Kilder: En Bok Om Pastoral Spiritualitet*, Presteforeningens Studiebibliotek; Nr 32 ([Oslo]: Den norske kirkes presteforening, 1990).

²⁵ Johannessen, 6-7.

²⁶ Kaufman, *A New Old Spirituality*. See especially chapter 8. See also Tone Stangeland Kaufman, "Ignatiansk spiritualitet for norske prester? Jakten på en mer erfaringsnær spiritualitet" i Knut-Willy Sæther, ed. *Kristen Spiritualitet: Perspektiver, tradisjoner og uttrykksformer* (Trondheim/Oslo: Akademika Forlag, 2013).

My interviewees are clearly spiritually sustained from their ministry. Yet, although this is a significant source, they also draw from other sources. One of these subjects is Julia. At the time of the interview, she was a single pastor in her mid-fifties, who has benefited immensely from the Ignatian spiritual tradition. She regularly attends silent retreats, practices contemplative prayer, and reads spiritual literature. Moreover, for many years she used to meet regularly with a spiritual director and see a counsellor. However, albeit drawing from a number of spiritual sources, Julia still emphasizes Sunday morning worship, the liturgy, as crucial spiritual source:

When it comes to sources and stuff, I've used a variety of different things. But as a pastor, I have to say that working with the service and the service in and of itself is a huge source, because in a way it's always there, the fellowship at church and in the service, etc. Both participating in the service....That is, I suppose, what is time-wise the largest source.

To Julia both worship in itself and the congregational fellowship are two important aspects of why public worship is such a significant spiritual source to her. Perhaps more importantly, she stresses the pragmatic fact that "in a way the service is always there." I interpret her statement to mean that Sunday morning worship stands out as a spiritual source because of its presence and availability: "Because in a way it is always there," as Julia puts it. It is embedded in her professional life as a pastor, and in her everyday life when off work.

Further, the ministry is regarded as a spiritual source because it requires the pastor to reflect on and process her own experiences theologically in a profound way in order to be able to preach and convey the Gospel authentically. Being a "professional" religious leader and having a profession that involves one's faith is considered *both a blessing and a challenge*, and having a spiritual vocation makes pastoral ministry different than ordinary jobs. Recent research on pastoral burn-out in a Norwegian context documents that the ministry clearly

can also be experienced as spiritually draining.²⁷ The participants in these empirical studies have experienced severe conflicts, loneliness, an exhausting work load, burn-out, and other severe difficulties related to their ministry. Hence, they depict a more problematic or even disharmonic relationship between the ministry and what is experienced as spiritually refreshing. In my view, then, such experiences in ministry make spiritual practices solely based on the ministry itself vulnerable. When ministry is only experienced as draining, it is hard to be spiritually nurtured by it. Then it is necessary to draw from other sources as well.

A Spirituality of Everyday Life: Sanctifying the Ordinary²⁸

To be sure, neither existing literature on clergy spirituality²⁹ specifically, nor Christian spirituality more generally has traditionally devoted much attention to the role of ordinary family life and parenting when it comes to shaping the spirituality of pastors, church employees more generally, or other religious leaders.³⁰ Rather, this kind of literature has focused on intentional spiritual practices, where a prerequisite has been that you are able to withdraw from—or do something in addition to—

²⁷ Leif Gunnar Engedal, "Meningsfull tjeneste - belastende arbeid: En undersøkelse av slitasjefaktorer i norske menighetsprestens arbeid," in *Halvårsskrift for praktisk teologi* 25 (1) (2008), 3-16; Inger Helene Nordeide, Ståle Einarsen, and Anders Skogstad, *Jeg er jo ikke Jesus heller! : Arbeidsmiljø og utbrenthet blant norske prester* (Bergen: Fagbokforl., 2008).

²⁸ This phrase is inspired from the second chapter of Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*.

²⁹ See footnote 10.

³⁰ An exception is Richard Douglas Shewman, "Grace Overflowing: Deaconal Spirituality in the Context of Marriage and Ordained Ministry" (Doctor of Ministry, Saint Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology, 2005), who in his study of the spirituality of Catholic deacons in the US points out that spiritual practices undertaken in the private sphere of family life is a perspective that has previously been more or less neglected in spirituality studies of ordained fulltime employees. However, he finds this aspect to have a significant impact on the overall spirituality of the deacons in his sample.

ordinary daily life. However, “a spirituality of everyday life” is a perspective that has become more common in studies of *lay spirituality*, particularly in Catholic and Anglican circles.³¹ Highlighting this often-neglected area of spirituality might help us better understand the spirituality of clergy as well, especially those living in the context of a family.³²

Where and how is God encountered in everyday life? How do the daily circumstances of life, such as parenting children, contribute to shaping the spirituality of the pastors in my research? In this section I set out to shed light on these questions, thus demonstrating how the ordinary can be sanctified. I will start out more broadly by describing how the interviewees experience that *the spiritual is not situated in a sphere of its own*, but rather *in the midst of everyday life*, and how they encounter what Elizabeth Dreyer terms “the worldly face of God,”³³ which entails attending to all of human life. Following this I examine how God is encountered in parenting children and ordinary family life, and how such experiences color pastoral ministry.

The term “a spirituality of everyday life” here has a twofold meaning. First, it refers to *spiritual experiences and practices which are embedded in everyday life*. This can be seen as opposed to considering the spiritual life of something that is divorced or separated from daily life and activities, belonging to a sphere of its own. Second, it refers to *the private sphere*, as opposed to the professional sphere of ministry, with a special emphasis on how faith is expressed in the context of family life.

From Separate Spheres to Integration in Daily Life

A number of the interviewees comment that the location of their spirituality has changed from being in a separate sphere (often in the fashion of an activity) to

³¹ See footnote 7.

³² This applies to the vast majority of my interviewees and to a number of clergy in a non-Catholic context.

³³ Dreyer, 77.

being integrated in their everyday life. For example, Karen, a mother of young children serving in an area of strong pietistic and Evangelical influence, has experienced a transformation in her spiritual life, and has come to appreciate encountering God in her daily life distinct from activities or events arranged by a church or a parachurch movement. As a student she used to attend prayer meetings and be part of an evangelism group, but now it is more important to her to keep in touch with her maternity group.³⁴

I mean, I think, perhaps my faith has become more of an everyday faith over the years. Maybe that's the thing. As a student it was important to me to be part of evangelism groups and such things. Now it is more important to me to be part of the maternity group, to keep in touch with my maternity group in a way, I mean (laughter), where I probably actually do evangelize much more than I was on those....

Karen points out that this group of mothers with small babies is a place where she can share her faith. Laughingly, she comments that she can actually “evangelize” more effectively there than she could at the evangelistic outreaches she used to take part in, where sharing one’s faith was an activity you did from, say, 7-9 in the evening. Here, the sharing of faith is embedded in her daily life in a different way. Karen clearly adheres to this approach to the spiritual life, and continues offering

³⁴ What I call maternity group here is my translation for a specific Norwegian kind of group called “barselgruppe.” It consists of mothers (or fathers) on maternity/paternity leave (mostly mothers), who live in the same local area, and who have delivered their babies approximately at the same time. These groups are arranged by the local health center, where babies are taken for check-ups (weight, height measurements, etc.), and where a pediatric nurse organizes and hosts the group at first. After a while, though, the group usually continues meeting on a more informal basis during the time of maternity leave, either in coffee shops, in the homes, or out walking with the babies. Norwegian parents have a paid year of maternity/paternity leave, and most often the mother will take at least the first six months of the leave. The father has to take at least ten weeks, but it is becoming more common to split the leave more evenly than that.

examples of an everyday spirituality embedded in daily life, including prayer:

And I think that I am a bit this way with prayers and such things as well. I mean, *the things that I bring into my everyday life*. Whether that be saying grace before meals or evening prayer with the kids or "Our Father in Heaven" in public worship, it is in a way part of [my life], it is natural and integrated in my life. It is not necessarily an organized activity. Something that I am supposed to accomplish (emphasis mine).

This example is taken from a crucial point in the interview with Karen, who shares much about her faith having become more of an everyday faith. Central to this development in her spirituality is that these *practices are part of, and thus naturally integrated in her life*. Although worship is a clearly outspoken religious activity situated in the religious sphere, she sees this practice as distinct from *both* organized activities such as door-to-door evangelism *and* from something that she has to accomplish. She especially refers to the "The Lord's Prayer" when she mentions worship, and this is a prayer that, to a large degree, connects the spirituality of the professional sphere with the spirituality of the private sphere. Furthermore, "The Lord's Prayer" and the liturgy have become embodied knowledge, embodied habits. Therefore she finds rest in these practices.

Elizabeth Dreyer's phrase, "Encountering the worldly face of God" means looking for God's presence in "the 'stuff' of our daily lives,"³⁵ as there is no clear cut dividing line between spiritual and human or personal. Like some of the interviewees, Carl, an urban pastor in his fifties, refuses to keep his "spiritual life" apart from his "ordinary life" or "the rest of his life." Instead, these aspects of his life are deeply intertwined:

Carl: I have not focused that much on it [my own faith life]. I have not distinguished that much between my own life and my faith life.

³⁵ Dreyer, 140-141.

T: But even if it is not visible, do you experience having a prayer life?

Carl: Yes, I do. Indeed, I do. But I experience that it is very integrated in what I think and feel and and say, breathe.

T: Yes. Can you say a bit more about that?

Carl: It is about me, in relation to...praying, it is not something I do from one point to the other. I haven't done that since I was sitting in the prayer room in seminary, sort of. And [there I] was having half an hour following a [set] schedule, right? (...) I experience that I don't have such particular spheres, then, as...prayer, this is my spiritual life, here is my...the other life. I mean, I understand little of such [kind of division]. Or perhaps, I want to understand little of it. There has not been anything conscious that has made it this way, it has simply become this way. It is my daily living that has made it this way.

His body language and voice clearly underline his words, which makes me interpret him to strongly distance himself from the kind of prayer life practiced in seminary. As opposed to other participants in this study, though, Carl seems to see this understanding of the spiritual life as opposed to intentional practices that must be more deliberately sought. He is critical to locating prayer or spirituality to a specific spiritual sphere, and has not focused much on his "faith life." That is probably why, he reasons, people consider him "less spiritual" than the previous pastors.

To some of the interviewees it has taken a while, and has often been a tiring and draining journey before realizing that *God is actually present in the midst of everyday life*. William, who is the father of several children, and who was around forty years old at the time we met, started out the interview by sharing about his first years of ministry, which he found hard, full of tension, and very busy. However, this has changed. Now he has discovered that God is in the midst of his everyday life and daily toil. This has made his spirituality far more down-to-earth,

but at the same time more open and more able to embrace all of life. Now he can encounter God in all the little things of daily life, such as the joy of being able to have dinner with his children:

God encounters me wherever I am if I seek him. In the midst of the everyday and in the midst of it all. And this made it an entirely different experience for me, and an encounter between me as a human being and experiences of God. That became much more commonplace, but in a way it also got much greater, for all of a sudden I could see God in small things. In the joy of being allowed to eat..., of having dinner with the kids, and it was much more the everyday stuff that all of a sudden became fundamental. That there was something about, that's where God's faithfulness was appearing.

William also makes the connection to public worship and his preaching. This major turning point of his own spiritual life has influenced his sermons. Realizing that he must use whatever "raw material" he has got, he now dares to include more of his own experiences, at least as background material when preaching. When asked what made this happen, he reflects:

What made this happen? [I guess] it was a longer process. But after some time [I think] it was the encounter with a kind of spirituality that helped me find God in my everyday, where I am at. A kind of insight into [the fact] that the raw material God has to use here is my life right now, just today. It is not my life the way it is tomorrow, or the way it should have been or could have been, but exactly that...to try to be present in the moment. That's where...God is. God is not before me so that I have to rush in order to try to encounter God.

The theological and spiritual literature William was reading helped him in the process of integrating his faith and spiritual practices in his daily life. Now they are no longer separate rooms "out of touch with each other," as he puts it later in the interview.

According to Hanne, life should not be taken for granted. Rather, all of life is wondrous and given by God, and she can:

Find God in all things; and for me it is a little more significant with a bit more concrete things. I have a very *earthy* faith [in God] that is more oriented towards creation perhaps. I mean, I find that many things in life point towards Christ and towards both God incarnate and God the creator. And I also try to let this be expressed in my preaching. I think there is something about the perspective that life is wondrous and given by God, and in a way it gives...an open and good perspective on life. Because God is omnipresent, and therefore God can also enrich us in so many ways. I think, anyhow. It's not like it's one particular thing, or place or...(emphasis mine).

In Hanne's spirituality the material and spiritual are deeply intertwined, and this is a point she makes when preaching. Furthermore, the experience of a number of the pastors is that God's presence is not limited to one specific practice or place, as Hanne puts it in the quote above. Rather, God can enrich us in so many and unexpected ways, which leads us to the next section on parenting children as a spiritual practice.

Parenting Children

Seventeen of the twenty-one participants have one or more children living at home. However, age, number of children, and circumstances of life vary considerably between them. One of the pastors is divorced and has shared custody of the child. Others parent children or live with spouses who are chronically ill. And others again face the ordinary challenges of the "time squeeze" caused by parenting children in addition to both spouses having a demanding job. It seems as if having children colors the spiritual life and ministry of the pastor in various ways, and parenting can be seen as one way of sanctifying the ordinary.

Some participants with young children living at home report that they are in a special "phase of life," or that

their life, including their relationship to God, has changed after becoming parents. First, the *content* of the spiritual life has changed for some of them. Second, the amount of *time* they have to themselves is far more limited than for other interviewees, which for most of the participants seems to influence the way the spiritual life is shaped and lived. Third, *having children seems to be an asset in developing a down-to-earth spirituality which is embedded in everyday life*, helping interviewees to (re)discover the beauty and sacredness of creation and everyday life.

After having described his spiritual development and different strands of inspiration, David ends up with a reflection on how being the father of a toddler has changed his spiritual life, which now even includes children's songs. He considers the practice of singing such songs part of his prayer life. Hanne, too, emphasizes the phase of life she is in, and finds that being a mother profoundly shapes both her spiritual life and her ministry:

But at the same time I learn stuff from being a mother, and I feel that it gives me, how should I put it then, sacred...sacred moments (laughing), that I believe are God given. And it gives me ideas for my preaching that I also believe can contribute to opening up for others.

Hanne could have expressed frustration about not having enough time to herself or not being able to go away on conferences or attend retreats, but instead she has deliberately decided to let her children be an important source of inspiration both for her (spiritual) life and for her ministry. As she expresses it later in the interview: "I have chosen to have a positive outlook on [these] things [being a parent], because I believe it is good theology." According to Hanne, God is present in the life she lives here and now, not in some ideal life with ideal spiritual practices or disciplines described by desert monks, medieval mystics, or the pietistic tradition. In this phase of life, experiencing "sacred moments" with her kids seems more important than spending time alone in the sanctuary or reading a book, although she would have appreciated such practices if she

had had more time to herself. When asked to describe such “sacred moments,” Hanne reflects:

It can simply be the way a 4-year-old understands or talks about her first experience with death, right? (...) They always have that first experience, but they use it to interpret new experiences. That was an entirely new experience to me. But it can of course also just be that one of them makes you aware that the raindrops on the spider’s web look like diamonds. Or such things that make you lose track of time, or what should I say? It is of course great when one is able to enjoy it. To simply be together, right?

Attending to children the way it is described by Hanne in the quote above illustrates the spiritual practice Miller-McLemore calls “pondering.”³⁶ This is a practice of being attentive to the small wonders of ordinary life, like the reflections of children, or the shared joy of discovering something unexpected in nature, such as the raindrops which resemble diamonds in the spider’s web. Parenting children is a source of inspiration for ministry for a number of the other interviewees as well.

Evening prayer with kids and table grace are two of the most salient spiritual practices undertaken by the participants in this research. Both of these practices are strongly connected with having children, and wanting to establish some family practices and habits. Hence, Karen notes that “saying grace before meals and such things” was not as natural for them before having kids:

But of course I notice that for us, table grace and evening prayer have been brought into our lives through our kids. It has actually done something to my Christian life and my faith as well. That was not as natural for us before having kids, table grace and stuff. But with the kids we have sort of gotten table grace and evening prayer into our daily life. It is okay then (laughing cautiously) with such simple, natural things that remind us that there is somebody to give thanks to and that there is somebody to pray to.

³⁶ Miller-McLemore, 40 ff.

However, although table grace and praying or singing with the kids in the evening are widely practiced among the participants in this study, these practices seem to vary in significance to them. Like other interviewees, Karen, for example, really appreciates this practice, as she and her family are “reminded that there is somebody to give thanks to and pray to.” She further acknowledges that these practices have positively influenced her faith. This statement is underlined by her being clearly emotionally moved when sharing about it in the quote above.

In this section I have explored how the faith of the clergy is expressed in “the ordinary” or “mundane,” and the context of family life has emerged as particularly significant. Moreover, it seems as if quite a few of the pastors have undergone a change in their spiritual lives towards encountering God in the ordinary practices of family life with all its limitations and routines, and not only in a separate religious or spiritual sphere. Thus, many of them have also come to greatly appreciate spiritual practices embedded in everyday life.

A Spirituality of Everyday Life as a Rarely Noticed Spiritual Source for Clergy

The majority of the participants in this research report that they experience the presence of God in all the small things of daily life, thus expressing a spirituality with an emphasis on creation and incarnational theology. Not specifically addressing the spirituality of *clergy*, Bonnie Miller-McLemore and Elizabeth Dreyer argue for a spirituality that can be lived “in the midst of chaos,” as the former puts it.³⁷ Their approach to spirituality challenges much of classical spiritual literature, which is usually written by a spiritual elite with the opportunity to live in a monastic context, or withdraw regularly from ordinary life or family life.

Amongst classics in spirituality, however, Luther is an exception. Both the Lutheran doctrine of vocation as well

³⁷ Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*. Quoted from the book title. See also her preface, xv.

as the way Luther himself practiced his faith clearly acknowledge the mundane toil of everyday life, including caring for children.³⁸ As Miller-McLemore admits, she had never expected to find a male theologian in the 16th century who was also encountering God in stinky diapers and crying babies. Hence, she was baffled and named a paragraph in her book: “What a friend in Luther!”³⁹ Luther has a well-developed theology of creation, for example expressed in his comments to the Faith in the Large Catechism.⁴⁰ In Luther, God is found in the mundane of everyday life: “Thus the world is full of God. In every alley, at your door you find Christ; stare not at heavens!”⁴¹ Luther, then, offers several examples of a spirituality deeply rooted in creation, incarnation and daily, ordinary life, which is of course related to a theology of vocation, where he was redeeming ordinary work from being considered secondary to the vocation of pastors and those having taken religious vows. Hence, the doctrine of vocation has primarily been used to acknowledge the vocation of *lay people*, as Luther strongly opposed a two-tier spirituality and a spiritual elite. This critique was aiming at the Catholic tradition of leaving ordinary life to enter a monastery, as this was considered a higher calling than being a baker or a blacksmith. The Lutheran pastor, however, was to live his life and serve

³⁸Birgit Stolt, *Luther Själv : Hjärtats Och Glädjens Teolog* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2004); Bradley Hanson, *A Graceful Life: Lutheran Spirituality for Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2000). Regarding the recognition of the spiritual in the mundane, there are of course other exceptions as well, such as Brother Lawrence in *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982 (1691)) but few of them were responsible for the daily care of children.

³⁹ Miller-McLemore, 28.

⁴⁰ Theodore G Tappert, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 412.

⁴¹ WA 20:514,27f. quoted in Vitor Westhelle, "The Word and the Mask: Revisiting the Two-Kingdom Doctrine," in *The Gift of Grace: The Future of Lutheran Theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen, Ted Peters, and Bo Holm (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 178. In the original language: “Also ist die welt vol von Gott. In allen gassen, fur deiner thur findest du Christum. Gaff nicht ynn himell!”

his congregation in the midst of the mundane and ordinary and outside the walls of the monastery. Luther's theology of everyday life, then, might be an untapped source for clergy spirituality in a context where clergy also lead ordinary family lives.

The kind of spirituality described in this essay partly resembles the spirituality which in Catholic circles is often termed *lay spirituality*.⁴² Yet, according to my interviewees, the spirituality lived in the private sphere of family life and the practice of parenting children also seem to be influencing *the spirituality and ministry of pastors* in significant ways. Among other things, this includes their theological outlook, their image of God, their view of the spiritual life, and the way they preach, etc. Based on my findings, then, I propose that since most pastors in the CofN now partake more actively in family life and the upbringing of children, spiritual practices undertaken in the private sphere of daily life also contribute to shaping the spirituality of the pastor. Moreover, I argue that this is a rarely noticed (at least in the literature of pastoral spirituality), yet significant source of spiritual nurture for clergy in the Lutheran tradition, and that more attention should be given to further explore it.

Making explicit and acknowledging spiritual practices embedded in daily life might contribute to bridging the divides of spiritual and mundane as well as professional and private in the lives of clergy. Further, by emphasizing the importance of ordinary human everyday experiences also for pastoral spirituality, the (often hierarchical) divide between cleric and lay may be partly overcome or at least reduced. The resonance of extant literature on lay spirituality in this study on clergy spirituality makes me question whether the pastor is as different as Manfred Josuttis insists.⁴³ Rather, a spirituality of everyday life portrays the pastor as being ordinary, almost—although

⁴² Dreyer, 23 ff.

⁴³ Manfred Josuttis, *Der Pfarrer Ist Anders: Aspekte Einer Zeitgenössischen Pastoraltheologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1982). The reference refers to the work as a whole.

not entirely—like the parishioner in the pew. If the pastor uses the ordinary experiences of her life as “raw material” for her sermons, though, this would most likely resonate with the experiences of those present in the service. Sermons that help interpret ordinary human experiences in light of the Gospel readings might even apply to spiritual seekers at the margins of institutionalized religious practice, as the preacher actually speaks about and to “their lives” as well. And yet, I do agree with Josuttis that the pastor is different too (see pp. 5-7), but I find it helpful to emphasize both aspects of pastoral spirituality.

Conclusion

In this paper I have identified three main locations for a pastoral spirituality. These are *everyday life*, *ministry*, and *intentional spiritual practices located at the margins of everyday life*. By employing the concepts of *embedded* and *intentional* spiritual practices, I have pointed out how spiritual practices embedded in daily life in the *private* and *professional* spheres are significant, though not sufficient, to the spirituality and ministry of religious leaders. Hence, spiritual sources and practices located at the margins of daily life are also important, and should be encouraged. The crux is to keep the three locations of spiritual nurture together. They should not be seen in opposition to each other, but rather as complementary sources. The main reason for distinguishing between them is that the analytical categories contribute to acknowledging, articulating, and appreciating the spirituality *actually lived and practiced* by the pastors. They help see practices that were previously invisible to some of the pastors. Further, albeit strongly emphasized by Luther himself, I make the case that a spirituality of everyday life is an important, yet a rarely noticed and acknowledged source for a viable pastoral spirituality in the Lutheran tradition, at least in the literature on pastoral theology and spirituality.