

## Starting the Day with Stillness and Prayer

What's popping, people? It's Dante, getting my morning started here in Fairmont Park, Philadelphia. Just go slow—let life flow, you know? The bus was late today, but shoutout to Adriana, the bus driver. She's super cool and let me know she was running five minutes late. I told her, "*No rush.*"

We get so caught up in this rat race of going, going, going—everything's so fast-paced. I kind of want to go in slow-mo, like Neo in *The Matrix* dodging bullets. That's how I feel: just trying to take it day by day.

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### Embracing Stillness

There's no rush. I've found that by slowing down, shutting off my mind, and embracing stillness, you enter a *meditative state*.

I'll be real—I've always been apprehensive about meditation. I'm an active person; I like to move, do things, stay engaged. Even on the bus, I usually stand and journal, write, or research stuff (shoutout to ChatGPT for teaching me things). But for the past week, I've been experimenting. I've been **sitting down**—wearing noise-canceling headphones, listening to Gregorian chants, and praying the rosary.

This is something I remember doing back in Catholic school as a boy, but now it's different. These days, I'm using prayer as a form of meditation. When I was in Rome for a two-month journey, I spent every single day visiting a church and praying. That's when I started seeing prayer differently—it's not just words; it's a moment of profound stillness.

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## **The Power of Prayer**

When I'm still, not thinking, and listening to uplifting hymns or chants while praying, I find myself disconnected from my embodied reality. It's like being in another world. Repeating the same prayer over and over, I let go of my thoughts, my body, my tension.

***"This to me is where you become Godlike, dare I say—where you find yourself so still, so receptive, in moments of peace, solitude, and quietness that uplift your spirit and make you feel good."***

When I pray the rosary, I keep my eyes closed, and when I open them, I smile. The sunrise looks like a cotton candy sky—the red hues blending into blue, so uplifting.

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## **A Routine of Prayer, Nature, and Journaling**

Starting the day with prayer and meditation, especially in nature, feels grounding. Then some journaling—modern journaling, where I might use a GoPro and speak out loud about my journey or whatever comes to mind. Treating a video like a *public meditation* is an interesting way to engage with journaling.

I carry a simple olive wood rosary from the Vatican as a reminder to disconnect from technology. Most people on the bus are glued to their phones, but what if we used technology symbiotically, in harmony with nature? For me, using headphones to pray and meditate helps shut down the world around me and embrace stillness.

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## **Designing a Life of Simplicity**

***"Perhaps we can design a lifestyle where we subtract distractions in order to become pure—pure of mind, body, heart, and soul."***

In modern life, distractions overwhelm us. What if we didn't rely on technology to keep us entertained? Instead, embrace the peace and stillness of prayer. That perfect 15 to 20 minutes during a bus ride could set the tone for the whole day.

I always loved starting the day in prayer as a child. It's something I lost over the past decade, but bringing it back has filled a void in my life.

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### Faith as Meditation

I'm not here to be an evangelist or push a particular religion. I'm just sharing why I enjoy this and what it means to me. During my time in Jericho, I was gifted prayer beads while staying in a mosque for two weeks. Sleeping on the floors of mosques and praying with the brothers there was deeply meditative. Repeating phrases like:

- "Allahu Akbar"
- "Alhamdulillah"

...over and over brought me into a meditative state through stillness and repetition.

Now, by embracing the mysteries of faith in the Catholic tradition, I feel I'm reconnecting with my personal faith in a meaningful way.

***"The rosary is powerful. It's a great way to embrace stillness—something I think we lack in modern life. Just finding yourself still, open, and listening—not thinking, not doing, just being."***

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### Here Comes the Sun

As I'm writing this, the sun is rising.

***"Here comes the sun, and I say, it's all right."***

The clouds, the colors—it's beautiful. Maybe that's what all this is about: finding beauty in stillness, in simplicity, and in those small, quiet moments that make life feel so full.

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