

# The Order of the Mustard Seed

The contemporary Order of the Mustard Seed is being catalyzed and nurtured by 24-7 Prayer ([www.24-7prayer.com](http://www.24-7prayer.com)), an international, interdenominational community of prayer, mission and justice, inspired in part by the Moravian renewal of the 18th century.

The call to consider Zinzendorf's Mustard Seed vow as a "Rule of Life" for the 21st century is made in *"The Vision and The Vow"*, a book written by Pete Greig. Another great author, Phil Anderson, wrote *"The Lord of the Ring"*, a contemporary biography of Zinzendorf which examines the history of the original Mustard Seed Order in more detail.

A website ([www.mustardseedorder.com](http://www.mustardseedorder.com)) exists to provide encouragement, resources, and a community of fellowship for those who are interested in taking Zinzendorf's vow as a "Rule of Life".

Throughout history, men and women from Saint Francis of Assisi to Mother Teresa have discovered the power of a "Rule of Life" in helping them to live out their Christian faith. A "Rule" is a solemn, personal commitment to live in a way that is faithful to the decision to love and serve Christ. It is a means of engaging the Biblical paradox: action without faith is useless, but faith without action is dead.

Members of the Order of the Mustard Seed throughout history have made a vow to be True to Christ, Kind to People, and to take the Gospel to the Nations. Today, there is a generation that is reviving the old Order for the modern age. They are once again taking up the call to live wholly abandoned to the cause of Christ.



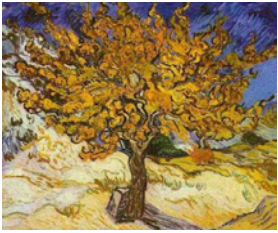
## The History of the Order of the Mustard Seed

Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf was born in Germany in 1700. In 1715, he was part of a spiritual revival at his school. He and four friends who were the main ring-leaders of the revival formed a prayer and accountability group which would become known as the Order of the Mustard Seed.

Their society was conceived as a secret order of spiritual knighthood. The emblem of the Order was a medallion bearing a picture of a mustard tree, and a motto in Latin which means *"That which was formerly nothing"*. Every member wore a ring carrying a Greek inscription meaning *"None of us lives for himself"*.

Count Zinzendorf is known to history as the founder and leader of the renewed Moravian church. The community became pioneers of prayer, mission, and church unity.





## Why A Mustard Seed?

Jesus told his followers that the Kingdom of God would be like a mustard seed, starting invisibly small but growing to become a great tree (Mt 13:31-32, Mk 4:30-32, Lk 13:18-19). He

also challenged them that if they had faith “even as big as a mustard seed”, they could tell a mountain to go jump in the sea and it would obey them! (Mt 17:20, Lk 17:6).

The mustard seed was chosen to represent all that the Order stood for. The Count believed that with just a tiny amount of faith, much could be accomplished for the Kingdom. Each member of the Order wore a hidden medallion under their clothing that was inscribed with the words “Quad Fuitan Ante Nihil”, meaning “That which was formerly nothing”

Zinzendorf stated, “Even if we never see wonders with our own eyes or hear of them with our ears, we are planting the Kingdom of Heaven into the nations and will look for the fruit which grows from it.”



## Vows – The Power Of Agreement

Each member of the Mustard Seed Order makes a lifelong vow to be:

Authentic (TRUE to Christ)  
Relational (KIND to people)  
Missional (GOSPEL to the nations)

The Mustard Seed vow does not add anything new to the Gospel or the commands of Jesus. It is a consecration of the existing heart decision to follow Christ. In fact, it's three elements simply reflect Jesus' most fundamental instructions:

The aim of the Order is to remain a loose-knit movement of mini-movements; an organic community of groups gathered around the story of Zinzendorf and the values of his Mustard Seed Order.

## A RULE FOR LIFE: GROWING UP & GROWING OLD BY PETE GREIG

*“I don’t know what ecstasies and agonies the future may bring, but I do know that the dream for the rest of my days, whatever may come, is to be consistently true to my Savior, kind to my neighbor, and committed to the nations of the world.*”

*I am launching out on this journey with friends who are more than friends. Together we will find ways of exploring the meaning of these three simple vows year by year for the rest of our lives, going deeper in understanding, growing simpler in knowledge, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to us about each one in new ways at different times.*

*Perhaps there will be times when He will speak to us about allegiance to Christ, and it will mean withdrawing in prayer and worship for a season of intimacy and contemplation. At other times, He will command us to immerse ourselves again in His world. Sometimes, Christ’s call to kindness may require of us a radical response to global injustice, but at others, it may mean shrinking the horizon on such grand concerns to eat ice cream with kids. The call to the nations will cause us all to live as pilgrims, moving with the pillars of cloud and fire; for some, it may well mean passports and visas, while for others, it will mean personal witness on the home-front and in the world of work.*

*Now, next year and in 50 years time, by the grace of God, we are believing and dreaming that this may become a global gathering, a hidden seed movement of God’s Spirit. With God, a little grass-roots movement can grow into great things to glorify Him. Grass really can grow through concrete. Together, we will choose life.”*

*We invite you to partner, to promise, to agree and ask in His name.  
We invite you to take a vow.  
We invite you to choose life...*

Where did that outrageous courage come from? Surely from the conviction that *“whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s”*.

The witness of our lives – the evidence that we live not for ourselves but for the Lord, and in Him for one another – that’s the truth we are living for. Most of the time, it won’t be outrageous courage we need. It will be qualities with far less glamour about them: patience, humility, attentiveness, determination, dependability, deep peace, and infectious joy. These qualities grow out of a death: the death of ego. *“None of us lives for himself”*. THIS IS A LIFE WELL LIVED.



### The Cymbrogi

The ancient Celts had a term, *cymbrogi*, which means, *“companions of the heart.”* The Order has adopted this term to describe a group of friends who choose to support one another in taking the Mustard Seed Vow together. The group is designed as one in which a depth and genuineness of relationship exists appropriate to the level of commitment made with one another.

The Order of the Mustard Seed is not an alternative to the local church. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Throughout history such groups, cells and orders have been agents of renewal to the established church.

### Becoming A Member

If, after prayerful reflection, you sense that the Spirit of God is challenging you to go deeper in your walk of discipleship, then the Mustard Seed vow might be an appropriate response to that challenge. Remember the warning of Proverbs 20:25, which says, *“It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.”*

*The Great Commandment:* to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (*Matt.22:27*)

*The Great Commission:* To go and make disciples of all nations (*Matt.28:18-20*)

The Mustard Seed vow embodies an acceptance of the Lordship and saving work of Jesus Christ in the life of the individual. This acknowledgement is at the heart of all declarations of Christian faith. In every Christian denomination and tradition there are those who have responded to Christ’s life, death and resurrection by accepting His free gift of salvation and who have thus pledged themselves for life to His Lordship, His people and His mission to all the earth.

Vows are simply part of the natural laws of life. Vows and covenants are all part of the power of agreement at work in the universe, spoken and unspoken, known and unknown, between partners and friends. God loves to make friends, just like you and I. The story of Scripture unfolds this great truth and the incredible fact that this amazing three in one God doesn’t work alone. The Trinity loves teamwork.

What does Jesus say about the power of agreement? In Matthew 18:18-19, Jesus talks about the power of agreement. He encourages and commands us to ask for anything *“in His name”*. He then drives it home by saying, *“I tell you the truth...if two or more of you agree about anything it will be done for you...”*

When we take this vow, we are forming a covenant with God, a partnership. He says to us in Genesis 31:44, *“Come now, let’s make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us.”*



## The Rule of Life

If creeds are *what* we believe and Christ is *why* we believe, a Rule is *how* we seek to live out that faith, day-to-day as a disciple in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The word “rule” conjures up images of school and dreary regulations, but when we describe a Rule of Life, the word also carries its other meaning of a straight edge for measuring and drawing lines. In this sense, a Rule of Life is an instrument that enables us to keep boundaries and to measure our spiritual progress. Rules do not have to be legalistic. In fact, they can express and encourage a deepening relationship with God. A Rule is a plumb line measuring everything we say, think, and do against the example of Jesus.

*“Perhaps somewhere in the subterranean chambers of your life,”* writes Richard Foster, *“you have heard the call to deeper, fuller living. You have become weary of frothy experiences and shallow teaching. Every now and then you have caught glimpses, hints of something more than you have known. Inwardly you long to launch out into the deep.”*

For those longing to launch out into the deep waters of God, Rules of Life have always provided the way ahead.

A Rule enables us to develop a faith that is authentic and consistent with our convictions. Mountain-top experiences will never transform our character without daily discipline, covenant community, and a set of personal values.

A Rule enables us to develop a balanced, sustainable, and enjoyable rhythm of life. By mapping out the different dimensions of our faith in a few simple principles and

practices, we are better able to balance the multiple demands of our diaries, in a life that is well lived and not driven by inner insecurity and outer expectation.

A Rule enables us to center our lives on Christ. It calls us back continually to the place of prayer and worship as the life-giving spring from which everything else flows. A Rule can cut across the self-complicating tendency of Christianity, keeping us grounded in Christ’s simple presence.

**Making a vow is only the start... The challenge is to live the vow in the daily reality of relationships!**



## “None Of Us Lives For Himself”

This is the inscription written on the rings worn by the members of the Order of the Mustard Seed. There are profound implications of this short phrase for any of us who choose to embrace it and wear it, and that is exactly why Count Zinzendorf and his companions chose it.

Romans 14:7-8 says, *“We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”*

A modern retelling of this passage would be the words of Frodo from the Lord of the Rings when he said, *“I will take the ring, though I do not know the way”*.

The first wave of those in the Order of the Mustard Seed took the Gospel to the nations. Many died as a consequence of their mission, while others lost everything, abandoning their lives into poverty and uncertainty far from the familiarity of home, all for the sake of the Kingdom.