The Five Pillars

Every Muslim has five duties to perform

1. Faith (Shahadah) Believing and declaring that there is one God, Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.
2. Prayer (Salah, sometimes spelt Salat) Performing prayers in a special way five times a day- at dawn, after midday, late afternoon, after sunset, at night. Prayers in the mosque are announced by the muezzin. (His voice is often recorded nowadays). People prepare mentally for prayer by reflection and physically by washing (wudu) in a set way. They face Makkah (Mecca) and often use a prayer mat with a compass to be able to face in the right direction. In the mosque the mihrab marks the correct direction. Prayers have set words and set positions in portions called rakat. Muslims also use strings of beads in private prayer with which to recite the 99 names of Allah.
3. Almsgiving (Zakah, sometimes spelt Zakat). Giving a set amount to charity.
4. Fasting (Sawm). Fasting from food and drink during the hours of daylight in the month of Ramadan. The “Night of Power” during Ramadan celebrates the first visit of the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) to Muhammad. All but the young, the sick, travellers and the elderly must fast as a sign of obedience to God. It helps everyone to understand the sufferings of the poor. The fast is broken at sunset with dates and a light meal.
5. Pilgrimage (Hajj). Making a pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in a lifetime. Makkah is the birthplace of Muhammad. The Ka’bah, a cube-shaped building in Makkah, is believed to be the first structure built for the worship of the One God by Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Isma’il (Ishmael). Anyone taking part in the Hajj must be in good health, free from debts and have provided for family at home. All hajjis wear simple white sheets as they perform the various rituals and devotions in and around Makkah including walking seven times around the Ka’bah together with thousands of others.

***My Rules of Life***

Everyone has a set of rules or standards by which they live. The “Five Pillars” are most important in the lives of followers of Islam. Think about what guides your life. Choose five rules or standards which you feel are most important in living your life and write a reflective paragraph in which you explain the significance for each.