

# PLAN OF LIFE

This first element involved in establishing a Plan of Life is to realize one very important fact: holiness is for me! It is possible in my state of life! Sanctity is not just for the priest, nun, or monk living in some cloister somewhere. It is for me as well, and I must take advantage of the means available to me if I am to achieve the marvelous destiny.

The next element of a plan of life is to establish a spiritual routine. When practicing an instrument or learning a language, a pupil must establish healthy work habits which, once achieved, enables him or her to perform at the level of excellence. So, too, when gaining holiness. This spiritual routine will enable us to become excellent. The rigors of establishing the discipline which seems to cumbersome and restrictive at first, later frees us to become the artists we were created to be!

There are constitutive elements to this routine. Obviously, the most necessary and primary element is the grace of Christ offered through the sacraments. Spiritual growth is not possible without His grace. By baptism, we are first re-created and transformed into His image. Then, via other the sacraments, we are empowered to act like Him. **Thus, we first need to establish in our life a means of frequenting the sacraments. We need to make frequent Mass attendance outside of Sundays and regular use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (as in once a month, bare minimum!)**

Secondly, we must practice daily meditation and spiritual reading, the means of which we covered in previous lectures. It is in our daily meditation that our hearts and minds become like Christ's because we spend time with Him. (cf. Mt 6:6) In fact, meditation is nothing other than a discovery of God's indwelling in our souls. He is already in us, we need only remove the obstacles in our wills and intellects to let Him flood us with His sanctity (cf Jn 14:12.)

After our meditation is completed, we need to thank God and then ask Him to show us something that we need to change in our life if this has not already been revealed during the meditation. This is what is known as the **resolution**. We should also follow up at the end of the day with a particular examination of conscience in order to determine how well we kept our resolution. Vague and very general aspirations or even grandiose ones make determining results and gaining virtue all but impossible. Our resolutions must thus be very specific and concrete so that we can more easily examine our efforts.

Devotion to our Blessed Mother is so central to our spiritual growth that it deserves its own place in our plan. The Eternal Son Himself chose no other means by which to become Christ the Divine Redeemer then by the Virgin Mary. She in fact formed Him not only in her womb, but also in His youth. (Lk 2:51-52.) If our goal is to become "no longer I but Christ who lives in me," (Gal 2:20) then there is no better way to achieve this end than through her. She is the Mother of all of living, (Rev 12:17) we must give ourselves to her motherly care. This is why Jesus entrusts

John, His beloved disciple, into Mary's care. If we are to become His beloved disciples, we must also entrust ourselves into Mary's care. (Jn 19:27.)

Because our physical life is a good as stated above, another aspect of our plan of life should be exercise. 30 minutes of brisk exercise at least three times a week is a feasible goal. We must also combine this with a healthy diet and proper sleep. God gave us the night to rest and the light to work. Staying up late and sleeping in late are often signs of imbalance and disorder in our life.

We should cultivate friendships with people who share our goal of holiness whenever and wherever possible. We are social creatures by nature. God often works for our good through others. He has not created us in isolation. Social networks of family and friends provide the proper context for practicing virtues like charity, patience, and generosity, and motivate us to be more conscientious when putting effort into our resolutions.

This is also why it is so important to find a suitable spiritual director. Spiritual direction is designed to provide for us a voice of objectivity in our goal of holiness. He or she holds us accountable to our spiritual goals, as well as helps us enact them in a healthy manner. They also assist us in seeking these goods in a balanced way. Therefore, a suitable spiritual director is someone who should be practicing daily meditation, knowledgeable in the doctrines of the Church and unflinchingly obedient to them, frequents the sacraments, exhibits a hunger for holiness, and is receiving direction already.

Finally, never get discouraged. In the early pages of the Introduction to the Devout Life, St. Francis De Sales put it this way: we should not get discouraged at our failings since holiness consists in fighting against them; and, we are guaranteed victory provided we do not give up the fight! In two different places in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus himself connects the virtue of perseverance with salvation (Mt 10:22; 24:13.)

On this note, this list is overwhelming to someone who has just begun serving Christ more vigorously. Thus, it would not be prudent to try and enact a plan of life this detailed right away. Rather, start simply. Begin with daily meditation, and pray for the Lord to lead you to a competent spiritual director. We should not be anxious about our spiritual life, just vigilant. Once we have committed ourselves to following Jesus and word and in deed, He will do the rest.