
A RULE OF LIFE

St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, Doctor of the Church

THE DAY

ON RISING

My God, I adore You, I love You with all my heart, and I thank You for all Your benefits, and especially for having preserved me this night. I offer You all that I shall do and suffer this day, in union with the actions and sufferings of Jesus and Mary. I resolve, O Lord, to flee today from every offense against You; but do You keep Your hand over me, that I may not betray You. Most Holy Mary, guard me beneath your mantle. My Guardian Angel and my holy Advocates, assist me.

Then one *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and *Creed*; and three *Hail Marys* in honor of the purity of Mary.

MENTAL PRAYER — HALF AN HOUR

Morally necessary to persevere. *Whoever practices mental prayer will not remain long in sin: he will either leave sin, or leave prayer.*

The preparation. Three acts. *Of the presence of God:* “My God, I believe You to be present with me, and I adore You.” *Of humility:* “At this moment I ought to be in Hell; Lord, I repent of having offended You.” *Of petition for light:* “Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus and Mary, give me light in this meditation.” Then a *Hail Mary*, and a *Glory be* to the Guardian Angel.

The meditation. Read the point, and meditate often on the Passion. Pause where you feel the most devotion. The fruit consists not so much in thinking as in stirring up affections — humility, confidence, love, sorrow, resignation — in asking above all for perseverance and the divine love, and in making one resolution.

The conclusion. “I thank You, my God, for the light You have given me. I resolve to keep the resolutions I have made. I ask You for the grace to fulfill them.” Never omit to commend the holy souls in Purgatory and poor sinners.

Do not abandon your meditation for coldness or weariness.

MASS

Daily if you can, offered for the four ends:

Eternal Father, in this Mass I offer You Jesus Christ, with all the merits of his Passion: to honor Your majesty; to thank You for the benefits You have granted me; in satisfaction for my sins, and for all the living and the dead in Your grace; and to obtain the graces necessary for salvation.

At the elevation of the Host: “My God, for love of Jesus, grant me pardon and holy perseverance.”

At the Chalice: “By the blood of Jesus Christ, grant that I may always love You in this life and in the next.”

At the priest’s communion, make a spiritual communion: “My Jesus, I love You and desire You in my soul; I embrace You, and I do not wish ever again to be separated from You.”

SPIRITUAL READING

Half an hour each day, or at least a quarter; best of all from the lives of the saints.

VISIT TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Each day; then a visit to our Lady before some devout image, asking the same graces.

Lord, I thank You for having left Yourself for our love in this Sacrament. I love You with all my heart, O sovereign Good above every good; and because I love You, I repent of all the displeasures I have given You, great and small. I ask You for perseverance in Your grace, and for Your holy love.

THROUGH THE DAY

Said often, these keep the soul in his presence.

- *Beginning any work:* “Lord, I offer You this labor.”
- *Going to table:* “My God, may all be for Your glory; bless me, that I may commit no fault against You.”
- *After the meal:* “I thank You, Lord, for having done good to one who is Your enemy.”
- *When the hour strikes:* “My Jesus, I love You; do not permit me ever to offend You again.”
- *In adverse things:* “Lord, thus You have willed; thus I will.”
- *In temptations:* the names of Jesus and Mary, often.
- *On committing a fault:* “My God, I am sorry for having offended You, infinite Goodness; I will not do it again.”
- *Rising and going to bed:* three *Hail Marys* — “By your pure and immaculate conception, O Mary, make pure and holy my body and my soul.”

IN THE EVENING — THE THREE ACTS

After the examination of conscience:

FAITH

My God, infallible Truth, because You have revealed them to the holy Church, I believe all the things that the holy Church proposes for me to believe. I believe that You are my God, Creator of all things; that for all eternity You reward the just with Paradise, and punish sinners with Hell. I believe that You are one in essence and three in Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe in the Incarnation and death of Jesus Christ. I thank You for having made me a Christian, and I profess that in this holy faith I wish to live and die.

HOPE

My God, trusting in Your promises, because You are powerful, faithful, and merciful, I hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of my sins, final perseverance, and the glory of Paradise.

CHARITY AND CONTRITION

My God, because You are infinite goodness, worthy of infinite love, I love You with all my heart above all things. And for all my sins, because I have offended You, infinite goodness, I repent of them with all my heart, and am deeply sorry for them. I resolve to die rather than ever displease You again, with Your grace, which I seek from You now and always. And I further resolve to receive the holy sacraments in life and in death.

A RULE OF LIFE

Drawn from his Rule of Life, the Christian Acts, the Brief Practice for Perfection, and his Sermons

THE WEEK, THE YEAR, AND HOW TO LIVE

EACH WEEK

Confess and communicate at least once, and more often if you can. After Communion remain half an hour in devout acts. Before confession:

I thank You, my God, for having waited for me until now. I hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of all the offenses I have committed against You; for which, since I have deserved Hell and have lost Paradise, I am sorry and repent with all my heart; but above all, because I have offended You, infinite Goodness. I resolve for the future to die rather than offend You again.

EACH MONTH, EACH YEAR

One day of retreat each month, with confession and Communion. Each year, eight days given to prayer and spiritual reading, withdrawn from distracting conversation. Hear sermons whenever you can. Try also, if your state permits, to enter some pious confraternity where the sacraments are frequented.

CHOOSE A CONFESSOR

Choose a good one, let him direct you in your spiritual exercises and in temporal matters of importance, and do not leave him without grave cause. If you have never made a general confession, make one, as a most efficacious means of setting your life in order.

FLEE THE OCCASIONS

Flee idleness, bad companions, immodest conversations, and above all the dangerous occasions. Be very careful with your eyes. Whoever does not flee the occasion in which he is accustomed to fall will find it morally impossible to keep himself in the grace of God. *He that loves danger shall perish in it (Ecclus. 3:27).*

IN TEMPTATION

Do not trust in yourself, nor in any resolution you have made, but solely in the divine help. Do not argue with the temptation. Renew the resolve to die rather than lose God; then at once, without reasoning, make the sign of the Cross and call on the names of Jesus and Mary, and do not cease until it ceases. We have no strength of our own here; God gives it readily to whoever prays, and whoever does not pray almost always falls.

WHEN YOU FALL

If the fault is venial: an act of love and of sorrow, a resolve to amend, and *regain your peace at once*. To be disturbed over the fault committed is the greatest fault one can commit, for a disturbed soul can do no good. If the fault has been grave: an act of contrition at once, and confession as soon as you can.

OF YOUR NEIGHBOR

Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbor? let it die with thee (Ecclus. 19:10); never report it to the one spoken against. When you hear someone speak ill

of another, rebuke him, change the subject, or withdraw; at least show that the talk displeases you, by keeping silent and putting on a sorrowful look.

THE WILL OF GOD

In every adversity — sickness, loss, persecution — conform yourself to the divine will and quiet yourself, saying: *Thus God wills; thus I will*. Whoever does not resign himself doubles his evils: he must suffer them either way, and then suffer besides the punishment his impatience earned.

OUR LADY

Never omit the three *Hail Marys* morning and night. Read each day some small part of a book that treats of her. Pray the Litany and the Rosary, with meditation on the mysteries. Ask her blessing on leaving and entering the house, and greet her before every image you meet. Fast on Saturdays, and on the vigils of her seven feasts, as your confessor shall direct; and make the novenas of those feasts, of Christmas, of Pentecost, and of your holy patron.

THE TWO THINGS

“All perfection consists in putting into practice two things: detachment from creatures, and union with God.” All of it is in the one teaching of Jesus Christ: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Matt. 16:24).*

Every imperfection is born of three disordered loves, and each has its answering virtue:

- **Pleasures** — **mortification**: never acting out of self-love, vanity, or mood, but only to please God. Speak with a low voice and a serene countenance; bear the faults of others in peace; never speak or act when the heart is troubled.
- **Possessions** — **poverty**: keeping the necessary, and removing attachment to the rest.
- **Your own esteem** — **humility**: giving all the glory to God; not excusing yourself even when wrongly accused, *except in case of scandal, or hindrance to the greater glory of God*; and never a word of your own praise, without need of a greater good.

Union with God is had by loving Him above all and continually, offering Him every action; by mental prayer; by Communion and frequent spiritual communions; by prayer, since ordinarily God gives his help only to those who ask; and by the remembrance of his presence. *All the harm comes to us from not remembering that God is present.*

FROM ST. TERESA

- “Love of God does not consist in tender feelings, but in serving with fortitude and humility.”
- “He who on the path of prayer does not stop, though late, yet arrives.”
- “The Lord wants nothing more from us than our resolution, and then on His part He does all the rest.”
- “Let your desire be to see God; your fear to lose Him; your joy in that which can lead you to God.”

May Jesus, our Love, live forever, and Mary, our Hope.

From *A Rule of Life and The Christian Acts* (The Essential St. Alphonsus, Vol. I); the *Brief Practice for Perfection* and the sermon *Charity to our Neighbor* (Vol. II). The saint's own words, cut but not altered.

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