

# A Guide to Daily Prayer

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Our Blessed Lord promises us that the road to sanctity and eternal happiness is hard. However, even though it is hard, your desire is all God needs from you so that He can give you the strength to get on and stay on that road which leads to the greatest amount of peace, happiness and contentment which this life can offer.

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St. Charles Borromeo

**Our Lord calls us to begin** by simply sanctifying our lives in the little things we do every day, in our relationships with our parents, brothers and sisters, teachers and friends. Our struggle for holiness requires growth in prayer and love of the sacraments, to deepen our relationship with him.

There are well defined steps that we take toward holiness. We have to start out on our spiritual journey slowly with simple prayers and devotions, step by step. As we become stronger and more sure of ourselves and confident of God's loving affection, we can increase our steps gradually until we can run toward Him. Just as an architect has a design for his building, we have to have a design to help us reach God, our final goal. We could call it our "plan of life."

## A Plan of Life

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**Begin each day by making the Morning Offering:**

Here's the one I use: "O my Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer You my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Your Most Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of all my relatives and friends, and in particular for the intentions of our most Holy Father, the Pope. Take my body, Jesus, my eyes, my ears, my tongue. Never let them, Jesus, help to do You wrong. Take my heart and mind and fill them with love for You. All I have I give to You. I give my very self to You. Amen.

**Take a couple of minutes around the middle of the day to stop and talk to God.**

**Each night before you go to bed make an examination of conscience, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten you as to how you have loved today. Then pray the Act of Contrition:**

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered

and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

**Find some time during the day to pray at least one decade of the Rosary (even if it is while you are driving).**

**Never miss Sunday Mass and go to Daily Mass whenever you can.**

**Make a good confession once a month.**

**Try to make a holy hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament each week.**

**Set aside 10-15 minutes for Spiritual or Scriptural reading and meditation doing *Lectio Divina*.**

*Lectio divina* means literally "divine reading." It is a monastic designation for the meditative reading of the Scriptures. The practice could be described as dwelling on a scriptural text in the divine presence for the sake of radical change in Christ. We could say that *lectio* is making one's own a small selection, phrase, or word of the Bible, in pursuit of greater faith, hope, and charity. In any event, *lectio divina* is prayer over the Scriptures. The monks of the early and medieval church developed this into a fine art.

**Reading.** Reading in the monastic tradition involved placing the divine word on the lips. It was a focusing and centering device. One would gently read a selection from the Bible, and when a thought, line, or word stood out and captured the reader's attention, he or she would stop there and dwell on that text, carefully repeating it over and over. At each distraction one would simply return to this repetition. He or she would stay with that same text until it dried up, and would then move on with the reading until finding another engaging text.

**Meditation.** Once the word of God is on the lips and in the mouth, one begins to bite and chew it; one begins to meditate on it. To meditate means to ruminate, to chew the word, dwelling at leisure on a morsel to extract the meaning of the text. Every word of Scripture was seen as intended for oneself. Every text spoke of Christ and His relationship to the one praying. One does not work hard at this prayer, but simply keeps listening to the words being repeated, letting them suggest their own images, reflections, intuitive thoughts. One ponders and perceives the hidden lessons in the word of God in such a way that wisdom for life is learned. Meditation seeks to acquire the mind of Christ. One slowly begins to see what the scriptures are saying.

**Prayer.** "Oration" or prayer is the response of the heart to the word of God we have heard addressing us through the Scriptures. It is petition, it is affective conversation with sentiments of love, it is resolution to grow in the virtues of Christ, it is compunction of heart for one's sins, it is silent company-keeping, it is the loving gaze.

**Contemplation.** Here God slakes the soul's thirst and feeds its hunger. God lifts the one praying above the normal meditative self into the sphere of experienced transcendence. Here the Spirit prays in the human spirit. The love of God is no longer abstract, but concretely poured into the receiving self. One can see oneself being loved and loving in return. We are speaking of pure gift at this point.

# Practice the Presence of God

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## **The Practice of the Presence of God**

by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

The holiest and most necessary practice in the spiritual life is that of the presence of God. It consists in taking delight in and becoming accustomed to His divine company, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly with Him all the time, at every moment, without rule or measure; especially in times of temptation, suffering, aridity, weariness, even infidelity and sin. We must continually apply ourselves so that all our actions, without exception, become a kind of brief conversation with God, not in a contrived manner but coming from the purity and simplicity of our hearts.

During our work and other activities, even during our reading and writing, no matter how spiritual - and, I emphasize, even during our religious exercises and vocal prayers - we must stop for a moment, as often as possible, to adore God in the depths of our hearts, to savor him, even though in passing and stealthily. Since you are aware that God is present to you during your actions, that he is in the depths and center of your heart, stop your activities and even your vocal prayers, at least from time to time, to adore him within, to praise him, to ask his help, to offer him your heart, and to thank him. Nothing is more pleasing to God than to turn away from all creatures many times throughout the day to withdraw and adore him present within. Moreover, this turning inward imperceptibly destroys the self-love found only among creatures. In the end, we can offer God no greater evidence of our fidelity than by frequently renouncing and scorning creatures in order to enjoy their Creator for a moment. This exercise gradually destroys the self-love only found among creatures. Turning to God frequently rids us of self-love without our even realizing it.

This presence of God is the soul's life and nourishment, which can be acquired by the Lord's grace. Here are the means: a great fidelity to the practice of his presence and to the fostering of this awareness of God within, which must always be carried out gently, humbly, and lovingly, without giving in to any disturbance. We must take special care that this inner awareness precedes our activities somewhat, that it accompanies them from time to time. We must not get discouraged when we forget this holy practice, for all that is needed is to calmly take it up again; once the habit is formed we will find contentment in everything.

This practice of the presence of God is very helpful for mental prayer, for it will be easier to remain calm during mental prayer when the mind, not allowed to take flight during the day, is kept faithfully in God's presence.

Since all of life is full of dangers and hazards, it is impossible to avoid them without God's constant help. We cannot ask him for this help if we are not with him. We cannot be with him unless we think of him often. We cannot think of him often except by a holy habit of keeping ourselves in his presence, asking him for the graces we need at every moment.

Nothing can comfort us more in life's trials and sufferings than this intimate conversation with God. Practiced faithfully, all physical illnesses will be easy to bear. God often permits us to suffer in order to purify our souls and to make us remain with him. If we are with God, and want him alone, we are incapable of suffering. We must therefore adore him in our infirmities, offering him our sufferings from time to time, asking him lovingly, as a child does his father, to be conformed to his holy will, and for the help of his grace. These short prayers are very appropriate for the sick and are an excellent remedy for pain.

We do not always have to be in church to be with God. We can make of our hearts an oratory where we can withdraw from time to time to converse with him there. Everyone is capable of these familiar conversations with God. A brief lifting up of the heart is enough, a brief remembrance of God, an act of inner adoration, even though on the run. These prayers, short as they may be, are very pleasing to God.