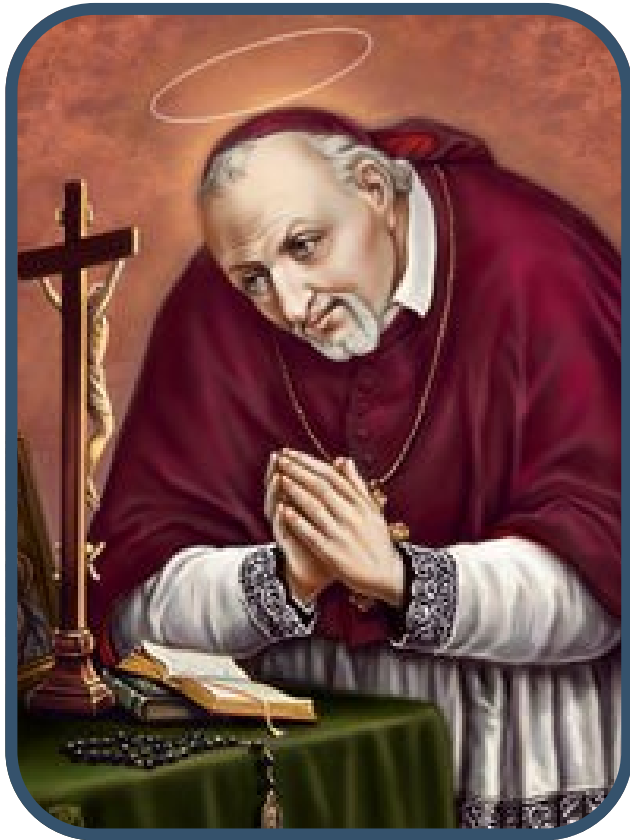


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J.M.J.

RULE OF LIFE

—Abridged by
Saint Alphonsus Liguori,
Doctor of the Church,
*Way of Salvation and of
Perfection*, pp. 504—510.



I.

On rising in the morning
make the following acts:

1. "O my God! I adore Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart, and thank Thee for all Thy benefits, particularly for having preserved me this night."
2. "I offer to Thee all that I shall do or suffer throughout the day, in union with the actions and sufferings of Jesus and Mary, intending to gain all the indulgences in my power."
3. "I purpose, O Lord! to avoid this day every offence against Thee; but do Thou extend Thy protecting hand over me, that I may not betray Thee. Most Holy Mary, take me under thy protection. My angel guardian and patron saints, assist me."

Then say one *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, and the Creed; with the *Hail Mary* three times in honor of the purity of the Blessed Virgin.

II.

Take care to make half an hour's meditation as soon as possible in the day. For though meditation is not absolutely necessary, it is morally necessary, in order to obtain the grace of perseverance. Those who neglect it will find it very difficult to persevere in the grace of God. The reasons for this are twofold: the first is, because the eternal truths cannot be seen by the eyes of the flesh, but by the eye of the understanding, which is reflection. Hence he does not perceive them who does not meditate; and for want of perceiving them he will hardly arrive at a due appreciation of

the importance of salvation, of the means which secure it, and of the obstacles which hinder it; so that his salvation will be placed in imminent risk.

The second reason is, because the soul that does not practise meditation will also be backward to practise prayer. Now, prayer is necessary, not merely as a precept, but as a means to observe the commandments, since, as a general rule, and speaking of adults, God only gives His grace to those who ask for it. But without meditation a person has a very faint notion of his own spiritual wants, and he is moreover but slightly impressed with the necessity of praying, in order to overcome temptations and to save his soul: thus he is led to pray but little or nothing, and for want of prayer is eventually lost. The eminent Bishop Palafox said,

"How will the Lord give us perseverance, unless we ask Him for it? And how shall we ask Him for it without prayer?" On the other hand, St. Teresa declares that it is hardly possible for a man that prays to remain long in sin; he will either forsake prayer or forsake sin: prayer and sin are incompatible.

With regard to practice, meditation has three parts: preparation, consideration, and conclusion. In the preparation must be made three acts:

1. Of the presence of God;
2. Of humility;
3. Of petition for light.

We say,

1. "My God, I believe Thou art here present, and I adore Thee;"
2. "I deserve at this moment to be burning in hell. O my God, I am sorry for having offended Thee!"
3. "Eternal Father, for the love

O Mother of beautiful love,
my advocate and refuge,
Mary, who art of all creatures
the most beautiful,
the most loving,
and the most beloved of God,
and whose only desire it is to
see him loved! ah, by the love
thou bearest to Jesus Christ,
pray for me, and obtain for me
the grace to love Him always,
and with all my heart! This I
ask and hope for from thee.
Amen.



Thy grace till my death. But, above all, I ask for the gift of Thy holy love.

Ah, my Jesus, my Hope, my Love, my All, inflame me with that love which Thou didst come on earth to enkindle! "*Tui amoris me ignem accende.*"

For this end, make me always live in conformity with Thy holy will. Enlighten me, that I may understand more and more how worthy Thou art of our love, and that I may know the immense love Thou hast borne me, especially in giving Thy life for me. Grant, then, that I may love Thee with all my heart, and may love Thee always, and never cease to beg of Thee the grace to love Thee in this life; that, living always and dying in Thy love, I may come one day to love Thee with all my strength in heaven, never to leave off loving Thee for all eternity.

of Jesus and Mary, grant me light in this meditation, that I may profit by it."

Then say a *Hail Mary* to the divine Mother, and a *Glory be to the Father, etc.*, in honor of our angel guardian.

Then read the point of meditation, and be sure to meditate, at least occasionally, on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

It must also be understood that the fruit of prayer does not so much consist in meditating, but rather —

1. In producing affections — or instance, of humility, confidence, love, sorrow, offering, resignation, and the like;
2. In making petitions, and especially imploring God to grant us perseverance and His holy love;
3. In making the resolution to avoid some particular sin, and of practising some particular

virtue.

Finally, the conclusion is made thus:

1. "I thank Thee, O God, for the lights Thou hast given me;"
2. "I purpose to keep the resolutions I have made;"
3. "and I beg Thy grace to fulfil them."

Nor must we ever forget to recommend to God the holy souls in purgatory, and all poor sinners.

We must never omit our accustomed meditation, whatever coldness and weariness we may feel over it; for St. Teresa says, "To do so would be to cast ourselves into hell with our own hands." Moreover, let all bear in mind that Benedict XIV granted a plenary indulgence to every one who makes a meditation of half an hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, every day for a month, with confession,

Communion, and prayers to the intention of the Church, and partial indulgences are also granted every day to those who meditate. This indulgence is applicable to the souls in purgatory.

III.

Do not omit to hear Mass daily. But what is of the greatest importance is that those who hear Mass should make a special application to their own souls of the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Mass should be heard for the same ends for which it was instituted; namely,

1. To honor Almighty God;
2. To thank Him for His benefits;
3. To make atonement for the punishment due to our sins;
4. To obtain divine grace.

So that we ought then to pray as follows:

"Eternal Father, in this Mass I offer Thee Jesus Christ, with all the merits of His Passion:

1. To honor Thy Majesty;
2. To thank Thee for all Thy benefits towards me;
3. In satisfaction for my sins, and for those of all the living, and of those who died in Thy grace;
4. To obtain all the graces necessary for salvation."

At the elevation of the Host, we may say, "By the Blood of Jesus Christ, grant me to love Thee in this life and in the next." When the priest communicates, make the spiritual Communion thus: "My Jesus, I love Thee, and I long for Thee in my soul; I embrace Thee, and wish nevermore to be separated from Thee."

that, instead of loving Thee, I have repeated my offences against Thee. I deserve to be condemned, so as not to be able to love Thee any more: but no, my Jesus, punish me in any other way, but not in this.

If I have not loved Thee in time past, I love Thee now; and I desire nothing but to love Thee with all my heart. But without Thy help I can do nothing.

Since Thou dost command me to love Thee, give me also the strength to fulfil this Thy sweet and loving precept. Thou hast promised to grant all that we ask of Thee: You shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you.

Confiding, then, in this promise, my dear Jesus, I ask, first of all, pardon of all my sins; and I repent, above all things, because I have offended Thee, O Infinite Goodness!

I ask for holy perseverance in

advice of your confessor, fast on Saturdays, on the vigils of the seven festivals of our Blessed Lady, and make the novenas for the said feasts, as also for Christmas, Pentecost, and for the feast of your patron saint.

Prayer to Jesus Christ, to obtain His Holy Love.

My crucified Love, my dear Jesus! I believe in Thee, and confess Thee to be the true Son of God and my Saviour. I adore Thee from the abyss of my own nothingness, and I thank Thee for the death Thou didst suffer for me, that I might obtain the Life of divine grace.

My beloved Redeemer, to Thee I owe all my salvation. Through Thee I have hitherto escaped hell; through Thee have I received the pardon of my sins. But I am so ungrateful,

IV.

In addition to this, read some spiritual book for half an hour, or at least a quarter; and it will be best to make use of the lives of the saints.

V.

Moreover, do not fail to pay every day a visit to the Most Holy Sacrament, when you should make at least the following acts:

1. "O Lord, I thank Thee for Thy love in leaving Thyself to me in this holy Sacrament;"
2. "With my whole heart I love Thee, O God! above all other good; and because I love Thee I am sorry for all my offences against Thee, whether great or small;"
3. "I beseech Thee to grant me perseverance in Thy grace and Thy holy love."

At the same time make a visit to our Blessed Lady, before one

of her images, and beg of her also the same graces of perseverance and the love of God.

VI.

In the evening make the examination of conscience, and then add the Christian acts.

VII.

Frequent the holy sacraments of confession and Communion at least once a week, and oftener if possible. With regard to confession, say beforehand: "I thank Thee O my God! for having waited for me until now! I hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of all my offences against Thee! I am sorry for them, and repent of them with my whole heart, because by them I have lost Heaven and have deserved hell;

but, above all, I am grieved to my inmost soul, and hate and detest my sins more than all evils, because they have offended Thy infinite Goodness. I purpose in future rather to die than offend Thee any more."

After confession, thank Almighty God for the pardon which you hope to have received, and renew your good resolution never more to offend Him, and to avoid all occasions of sin; and pray to Jesus and Mary for perseverance.

As to the Holy Communion, we must know that it is the grand medicine, as the Council of Trent terms it, which purifies us from our daily venial faults, and preserves us from mortal ones. He who communicates most frequently will be freest from sin, and will make farthest progress in divine love; only let

him communicate with a good desire. But, in order to derive more abundant fruits from Communion, he should manage to spend half an hour after receiving in producing devout acts, or at least in praying out of some spiritual book; however, let no one make this more frequent Communion without the counsel of his spiritual director, and on this account.

VIII.

It is well to make choice of a good confessor, and to follow his direction in all spiritual matters, and even in temporal matters of importance; nor should he be left without a good reason. St. Philip Neri spoke thus: "Let those who are desirous of advancing in the way of God put themselves under an enlightened confessor; and let them obey him, as occupying the place of God.

punishment.

XIV.

Be especially careful to preserve a tender and marked devotion to most holy Mary, by performing daily in her honor some exercise of piety. Never omit — the first thing in the morning and the last at night — to say three times the *Hail Mary* in honor of her purity, imploring her to keep you from all sin. Read every day something, be it only a few lines, on the Blessed Virgin. Say her Litanies, and the Rosary, meditating on the mysteries. When you leave or enter the house, ask her blessing with a *Hail Mary*; and on passing by any of her images, salute her in the same way. When the clock strikes, say the *Hail Mary*; and then, "Jesus and Mary, I love you! Do not permit me to offend you." With the

managing, directing, or out of party spirit, will derive more harm than good from it. If a person would really profit by it, he must enter it solely with a view to his spiritual interests.

XIII.

In all the vicissitudes of life, such as illnesses, losses, and persecutions, be ever mindful to bow with resignation to the will of God, and repose on these words: "God wills it so, and so I will it likewise." Or thus: "God will have it so; so be it done." He that behaves in this manner stores up immense rewards for heaven, and always lives in peace. On the contrary, he that refuses to bow to the will of God only redoubles his afflictions; for he must endure them whether he will or not; and, more over, by his impatience he lays up for himself an additional

Who-ever does this may feel assured that he will never have to render an account to God of what he does." And this is only conformable to the words of Jesus Christ, that whosoever hears His ministers hears Himself: He that heareth you heareth Me. ("*Qui vos audit, me audit.*" — Luke, x. 16.)

A general confession should be made, if it has not hitherto been made, for it is a most excellent means of, bringing one's life into good order; and it is advisable to make it to the director himself, that he may be the better able to guide us.

IX.

Avoid idleness, dissipated companions, immodest conversations, and, more than all, evil occasions, especially where there is danger of incontinency; and for this reason one cannot be too

cautious in keeping one's eyes from dwelling on any dangerous objects. For a person that does not avoid the voluntary occasions of sin, especially those which have frequently proved fatal to his innocence, it is morally impossible to persevere in the grace of God: He that loves the danger shall perish in it. ("*Qui amat periculum, in illo peribit.*" — Eccles. iii 27.)

X.

In temptations trust not to yourself, nor to all the good resolutions and promises which you have made, but rely solely on the divine assistance; and for this reason have immediate recourse to God and the Blessed Virgin. Especially in temptations against purity, the greatest care must be taken not to remain to dispute with the temptation. In such moments

some are accustomed to set their will to make acts of the contrary virtue; but they run considerable risk. The best plan to adopt on these occasions is to renew the firm purpose rather to die than to offend God, and forthwith to make the sign of the cross without remonstrance, and to call on God and the divine Mother, making frequent invocations of the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, which have a wonderful efficacy against filthy suggestions, and should therefore be invoked continually till the temptations are over.

Of ourselves we have not strength to overcome the attacks of the flesh, our most cruel enemy; but God readily supplies the strength to all who ask him; but he that fails to do so, almost invariably falls a prey to the enemy. The same is

to be observed in combating temptations against faith, protesting at such times, without remaining in dispute, that we are ready to die for the holy faith; and instead of then eliciting acts of faith, it is better to elicit other acts, as of love, contrition, and hope.

XI.

If you commit a venial fault, make an act of the love of God and of contrition, purpose of amendment, and forthwith resume your wonted, tranquillity. To remain troubled after a fault is the greatest fault that a person can commit, for a troubled soul is incapable of doing the least good. If, by mischance, the fault has been grievous, then immediately make an act of contrition (which is sufficient to recover the divine grace), resolve never to be guilty of the same again,

and take the first opportunity of going to confession.

XII.

Endeavor to hear all the sermons in your power. And it would be most advisable to make a spiritual retreat once a year in some religious house; or if that be impracticable, at least in your own house, by applying yourself for eight days to prayer and spiritual reading. During this time all company and conversation on secular matters should be avoided. In like manner make a retreat of one day every month, with confession and Communion. If your state of life allow it, become a member of some confraternity in which the Sacraments are frequented, and there make your eternal salvation the grand and sole aim. Whoever enters a confraternity for the sake of