



REDEMPTORIST RENEWAL CENTER

AT PICTURE ROCKS

...a desert spiritual life center

## St. Alphonsus Liguori- A Rule For Life

### Introduction:

What can I do in order to live a holy life? What is necessary for a person to choose in order to gain salvation and strive to live a life of perfection? Many of the saints have attempted to answer this question and each of their answers contributes to the richness and the diversity of spiritual expression that is found in the Church. St. Ignatius of Loyola has left us with the *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Teresa of the Child Jesus with *The Little way*, St. Theresa of Avila with the *Interior Castle*, and St. Alphonsus with *The Way of Salvation and Perfection*. Each of these great saints have demonstrated, by their lives and their example, a particular path that we may follow that may also lead us to holiness.

Buried in the *Way of Salvation and Perfection* is a short *Rule of Life* proposed by St. Alphonsus. This short rule can serve as a very helpful reference for the spiritual journey. Because it is so short it can be easily followed and referenced. By no means should it be understood as the complete reflection of the saint, or as a substitute for the *Way of Salvation and Perfection*, it is nevertheless a helpful guide.

### I

The first thing in the morning, immediately upon waking up, the following prayer should be prayed: "O my God, I adore you. I love you with all my heart and I thank you for all your gifts, in particular for preserving me through the night. I offer you all that I shall do or suffer throughout this day, in union with the actions and the sufferings of Jesus and Mary. I intend to avoid every offence against you but I ask that you extend your protection to me so that I may continue to love you. Most Holy Mary, take me under your protection. My guardian angel and patron saints come to my aid. Amen."

### II

As soon as possible in the day make half an hour's meditation. Although meditation is not absolutely necessary, it is morally necessary in order to gain the grace of perseverance. Those who neglect meditation will find it very difficult to persevere in the grace of God. There are two reasons for this: the first is because the eyes of flesh can not see the eternal truths, but rather through the eyes of understanding, which is reflection. The person who does not meditate will be unable to appreciate the importance of salvation and of the necessary steps, which secure it, and the obstacles, which hinder it. The second reason is because the person who does not practice meditation will also not practice prayer. Prayer is necessary, not merely as a precept, but as a way to observe the commandments, since, as a general rule, God gives his grace

only to those whom ask for it. Without meditation a person has a very small understanding of their spiritual wants, is often unaware of the necessity of prayer in order to overcome temptation, and because of the absence of the practice of prayer is eventually lost. The eminent Bishop Palafox said, "How will the Lord give us perseverance unless we ask for it?" How shall we ask for it if we do not pray? St. Teresa of Avila declares that it is not possible for a person that prays to remain in sin; such a person will either give up prayer or give up sin because they are incompatible.

Mediation has three parts: preparation, consideration, and conclusion. In the preparation we remind ourselves of the presence of God, we pray for humility, and we pray for inspiration. We say, "My God, I believe that you are present, and I adore you. O my God, I am sorry for having offended you. Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus and Mary, grant me inspiration in this meditation, that I may profit by it." Then pray a Hail Mary to the Virgin Mother and a Glory Be to the Father, in honor of your guardian angel.

The second step is what St. Alphonsus calls the "consideration." This step includes reading a reflection for the day, such as something from scripture or a spiritual reading book and then some time spent recalling the Passion of Christ. It must be understood that the fruit of prayer does not consist in meditating but rather in producing A) affections (prayers of praise), for example, affections of humility, confidence, love, sorrow, offering, and resignation to the will of God; B) in making petitions, especially in imploring God to grant us perseverance and his holy love; C) in making resolution to avoid some particular sin and practicing some particular virtue.

Finally in the third step, the conclusion, we pray, "I thank you God, for the insight that you have given me. I intend to keep the resolutions that I have made and I ask for the necessary grace from you to fulfill them." Never forget to recommend to God the poor souls in purgatory and all poor sinners. Never, regardless of how you might feel, no matter how cold or how weary you may be, omit your daily meditation.

### III

Attend mass daily. We participate at mass to honor Almighty God, to thank God for his gifts, to make atonement for the punishment due to our sins, and to obtain divine grace. As we prepare to participate in the mass we should pray, "Eternal Father, in this mass I offer Jesus Christ, with all the merits of his passion. I honor your majesty. I thank you for all the gifts that you have given me. I attend this mass because of my sins and the sins of all the living and of those who have died in your grace. I pray for the graces necessary for salvation." At the elevation of the sacred host pray, "By the blood of Jesus Christ, grant me the grace to love you in this life and in the next." When the priest communicates pray, "My Jesus, I love you, and I long for you in my soul. I embrace you and pray that I will never be separated from you."

### IV

Read a spiritual book for half an hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, each day. It is best to read the lives of the saints.

## V

Every day, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. In the presence of the Lord pray, “O Lord, I thank you for your love in leaving yourself to me in this sacrament. With my whole heart I love you, O God, above all else. Because I love you I am sorry for all of my offenses against you, whether great or small. I beg you to give me the grace of perseverance in your grace and in your holy love.” At the same time make a visit to our Blessed Mother, before one of her images, and beg of her the same graces of perseverance and the love of God.

## VI

In the evening make an examination of conscience and then pray a prayer of faith, hope, and charity. (Suggested prayers that you may use or adapt follow:)

**FAITH:** My God, I believe in you and I hope in you. I love you above all things, with all my soul, with all my heart and with all my strength. I love you because you are infinitely good and worthy of being loved. Because I love you, I repent with all my heart of having offended you, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.

**HOPE:** My God, I believe in you and I hope in you. Because of your infinite goodness and kindness I hope for everlasting life, patience in my sufferings, and, above all, your gentle and guiding hand, leading me to everlasting peace and joy. Amen.

**CHARITY:** O my Jesus, you who are love, enkindle in my heart that divine fire which consumes the saints and transforms them. Fill up that which is lacking in me and form me each day more and more into your divine image. Help me to love and serve my brothers and sisters and to recognize in them your loving presence. Amen.

## VII

Frequent reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist is recommended. Before confession pray, “I thank you, O my God, for having waited for me until now. I hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of all of my sins. I am sorry for them, and repent of them with my whole heart. By my sins I have lost heaven and have deserved hell. Above all I am grieved, to the depths of my being, and hate and detest my sins more than all evils, because they have offended your infinite goodness. I would rather die than offend you any more.”

## VIII

It is wise to choose a good confessor and to follow his direction in all spiritual matters, and even in temporal matters of importance. The relationship should not be ended without a good reason. St. Philip Neri teaches: “Let those who desire to advance in the way of God put themselves under the direction of an enlightened confessor, and let them obey their director as they would the voice of God. Whoever does this may feel assured that they will never have to render an account to God of what they choose.” This teaching conforms to the words of Jesus Christ, “Whoever listens to you, listens to me.” (Lk 10:16)

## IX

When you are tempted do not trust yourself, and do not trust all the good resolutions and promises that you have made, but rely completely on divine assistance; have immediate recourse to God and the Blessed Virgin. In temptations against purity, the greatest care must be taken. The best plan to adopt on these occasions is to renew the firm purpose “rather to die than to offend God” (Rule VII) and to make the sign of the cross, calling on God and the Blessed Mother. It is also helpful to make frequent invocations of the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, which have a wonderful efficacy against filthy temptations, and should be invoked continually until the temptations pass. It should be remembered that we do not have the personal strength to overcome the attacks of the flesh, our most cruel enemy. God readily supplies the strength that we need to all that ask; the person who fails to ask will fall prey to the enemy. The same process is to be followed in combating temptations against the virtue of faith. On the occasion of such temptations it is advised to make acts of love, contrition, and hope.

## X

If you commit a venial sin, make an act of love and of contrition, renew your firm purpose of amendment, and continue on in peace. To remain troubled after a fault compounds the fault, for a troubled soul is incapable of doing even the smallest good. If you commit a more serious sin, immediately make an act of contrition, resolve never to be guilty of the same sin again.

## XI

In all the sufferings of life, such as illnesses, losses, and persecutions, always be aware of the necessity of resigning yourself to the will of God and reflect on these words: “God wills it, and so I will it also.” Or in other words, “God wills that it be this way, so it shall be done.” The person that behaves in this manner stores up immense treasure in heaven, and always lives in peace. On the contrary, the person that resists the will of God doubles their afflictions. A person has to endure suffering, whether they accept it or not, and if they resist it, by their impatience they suffer even more.

## XIV

Be very careful to observe a tender and obvious devotion to most holy Mary, by performing each day some exercise of piety in her honor. Never omit- the first thing in the morning and the last at night- to pray three Hail Mary’s in honor of her purity, imploring her to keep you from all sin. Read something every day, even if it is only a few lines, about the Blessed Virgin. Pray her litanies, pray her rosary, and meditate on the mysteries. When you leave or enter your house, ask her blessing with a Hail Mary and on passing by any of her images, pray in the same way. When the clock strikes the hour pray a Hail Mary and then, “Jesus and Mary, I love you! Do not permit me to offend you!” With the advice of your confessor, fast on Saturday, on the vigils of the feasts of Mary, and make the novenas for these feasts (also remember to pray in a special way at Christmas, Pentecost, and on the feast of your patron saint.)

## XV

### A daily prayer to Jesus Christ, to obtain his holy love

My crucified love, my dear Jesus. I believe in you, and confess you to be the true Son of God and the Redeemer. I adore you from the abyss of my nothingness, and I thank you for the death you suffered for me, so that I might obtain the life of divine grace. My beloved Redeemer, to you I owe all of my salvation. Through you I have escaped hell and received pardon for my sins. But I am so ungrateful that, instead of loving you, I have repeated my offences against you. I deserve to be condemned, so as not to be able to love you any more; but no, my Jesus, punish me in any other way, but not in this. If I have not loved you in times past, I love you now, and I desire nothing but to love you with all my heart. Without your help I can do nothing. Since you have commanded me to love you, give me also that strength to fulfill this sweet and loving commandment.

My Lord Jesus, you have promised to grant all that we ask of you. I ask, first of all, pardon for all of my sins and I repent, above all things, because I have offended you, O infinite goodness. I ask for holy perseverance in your grace until my death. But above all, I ask for the gift of your holy love. Ah, my Jesus, my hope, my love, my all, inflame me with that love with which you came upon this earth to light! For this end, make me always live in conformity with your holy will. Enlighten me, so that I may understand more and more how worthy you are of love, and that I may know the immense love you have for me, especially in giving your life for me. Grant then, that I may love you with all my heart, and may love you always, and never cease to beg of you the grace to love you in this life so that I may one day come to love you in all eternity.

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