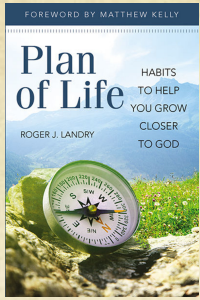


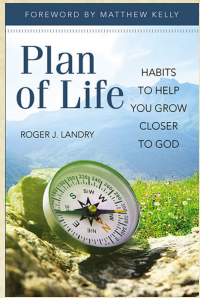
# Lent and The Importance of a Plan of Life

Fr. Roger J. Landry  
Frassati Fellowship of Young Adults  
Women's Book Study  
March 22, 2021



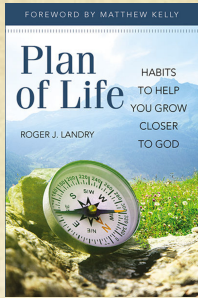
# The Importance of a Plan

- In almost every sphere of life, those who take something seriously come up with a plan:
  - Championship sports teams
  - Flourishing businesses
  - Triumphant political campaigns
  - Successful individuals in almost any sphere of life
- Those who get results are generally the ones with better plans implemented with perseverance.
- It's true, too, of the spiritual life, which is way too important to wing.



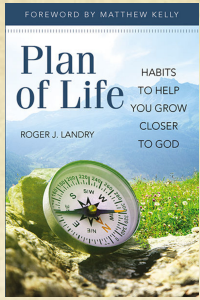
# The Simple Plan of Life Jesus Gives in Lent

- Jesus gives us on Ash Wednesday a simple Plan of Life:
  - Prayer – which reorders our relationship with God, to ensure he’s truly God in our life.
  - Almsgiving – which reorders our relationship with others, placing their needs about our pleasures.
  - Fasting – which reorders the relationship between our soul and body, helping us toward self-mastery so that we can genuinely give ourselves to God and others with love.
- He calls us to conversion, to “repent and believe” in view of death and eternal life, reminding us that we are “dust” and “unto dust” we shall return.
- Conversion doesn’t mean just a small course correction or the elimination of a bad habit; it means a death and resurrection, a new life of faith in God, hope and love. A plan of life helps us to live that new existence with perseverance.



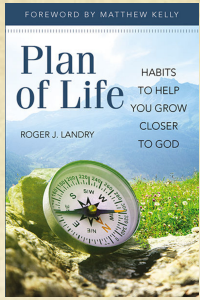
# The Importance of a Spiritual Plan

- Jesus spoke about how we need a training regimen, or plan, to grow in the spiritual life: “No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when *fully trained*, every disciple will be like his teacher.” (Lk 6:40)
- Saint Paul specialized in providing training in the Christian life. His letters are full of advice from an expert coach in the spiritual life.
  - Paul exhorted parents to raise their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” and he provided the same training for his spiritual children (Eph 6:4).
  - He urged the young Saint Timothy, “Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” (1 Tim 4:7-8).
  - He followed his own advice, telling the Corinthians, “I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.” (1 Cor 9:26-27).



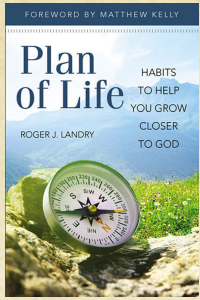
# The Two Elements of a Spiritual Plan

- A plan involves two essential elements:
  - The goal
  - The adequate means to obtain that goal
- In the spiritual life, what is the **goal**?
  - It's holiness!
    - To become holy as God is holy.
    - To become like God, growing fully in his image and likeness.
    - Since God is love: to receive God's love and to love as he loves.
- A spiritual plan of life without this goal of holiness is to embark on a journey to the wrong destination!



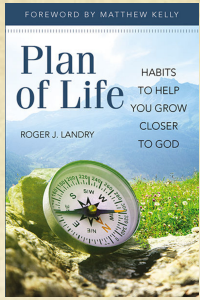
# The Goal of Holiness

- St. John Paul II wrote about this goal in 2001 in his pastoral plan for the third Christian millennium (*Novo millennio ineunte*):
  - “I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness.”
  - “Stressing holiness remains more than ever an urgent pastoral task.”
  - “It is necessary to rediscover the full practical significance of ... the universal call to holiness.”
  - “All the Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”
  - “It would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity.”
  - “The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living.”



## The Means: Training in Holiness

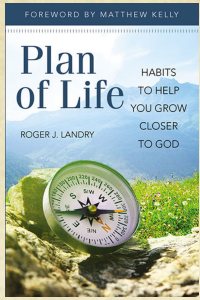
- St. John Paul II likewise stressed the means:
  - “The paths to holiness are personal and call for a **genuine training in holiness** adapted to people’s needs.”
- He underlines six pillars of holiness:
  - The primacy of grace (God’s free action)
  - Prayer – “This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the *art of prayer*.”
  - The Sunday Eucharist
  - The Sacrament of Reconciliation
  - Listening to the Word of God
  - Proclaiming the Word of God



# What is a Plan of Life?

- Integrating those pillars into one's life and receiving all of the help God wants to give us by means of them requires effort!
- A Plan of Life is a unified series of commitments we make to grow in holiness.
  - It's a “game plan” for our spiritual life to help us achieve the goal.
  - It involves various spiritual exercises given to us by saints and spiritual directors to help us translate our desire to grow closer to God from vague wish to reality
  - It helps us to keep a full-time awareness of God – and how he is trying to help us – throughout the day.
  - It is a means by which we seek to live in God's kingdom, to follow Jesus, and to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

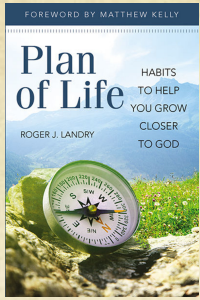




## Elements of a Broader Plan of Life

- In *Plan of Life*, I describe and develop a series of different practices to help one keep an awareness of God throughout the day, to abide in him and allow him to abide in us (Jn 15:4)
- The book is divided into two parts: the “basics” and “beyond the basics.”
- I list the following 12 fundamental practices:

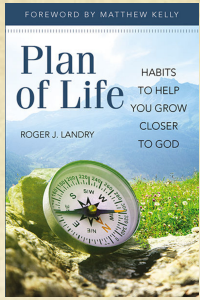
The Holy Spirit	Heroic moment	Morning Offering	General Exam
Regular Prayer	Sacred Scripture	Keeping Holy the Lord's Day	Frequent Confession
Adoration	Charity	Holy Week	Rosary



# Elements of a Plan of Life

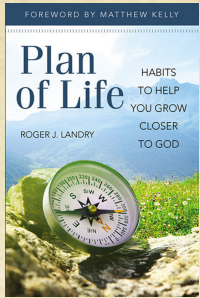
- Then I focused on the following 16 practices in “Beyond the Basics”:

Daily Mass	Spiritual Communion	<i>Angelus</i> or <i>Regina Caeli</i>	<i>Memorare</i>
Saturday devotions to Mary	Virtue of Penance	Fasting	Order and Organization
Particular Exam	Work	Study	Spiritual Reading
Retreats and Days of Recollection	Acts of the Heart: Faith, Hope, Love, Presence of God, Divine Filiation, Thanksgiving, Atonement	Aspirations	Christian Joy



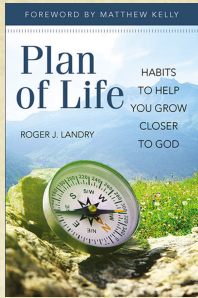
# The Importance of Holy Week

- One of the “Basic Practices” is really to live Holy Week well.
- My experience of having so many good people say to me on Palm Sunday, “See you next Sunday.”
- Holy Week is supposed to be the holiest seven days of our year.
- It’s supposed to help make us holy, *if we enter deeply into the mysteries.*
- Many Catholics sadly skip some, most or all of the Holy Triduum of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil. It’s like a baseball fan nonchalantly deciding not to use his tickets to go to the ALDS, the ALCS and the World Series with his team playing.
- The three days of the Triduum are not holy days of obligation for the same reason there are no laws mandating the celebration of a loved one’s birthday: it’s unfathomable that a “law” would be needed!



# The Importance of Holy Week

- What are the three events of the Triduum?
  - **Holy Thursday** – “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” We celebrate the institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood that makes it possible. If you love your priests, come to rejoice with them over the priesthood and the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist!
  - **Good Friday** – Most of us would be at the bedside of a dying family member. Do we love Jesus enough to be present with him as he dies for us on Calvary?
  - **Easter Vigil** – By far the most important and beautiful Mass of the year, in which we enter with faith into the central events of salvation history, meditate on how they’re fulfilled in Christ, rejoice at the new life God gives us, and welcome new Catholics as our brothers and sisters. It pushes us to the liturgical limit in expressing our love and gratitude to God for the gift of our salvation.
- There are also, obviously, Palm Sunday, the daily Masses, the devotional practices (like the Stations of the Cross and the Divine Mercy Devotion), and Easter Sunday celebrations. The more we can do the better. But the Triduum is essential. Not celebrating it, or at least desiring to be there, is generally a sign of lukewarmness.
- For those looking to grow in holiness, however, this week should be circled months in advance and lived with prayerful intensity and profound joy.



## Final Tips and Thoughts

- What I've given is not an exhaustive list of helpful spiritual practices and exercises, but they cover the essential elements.
- Knowing and listing them is easy; putting them into practice is what is the challenge.
- No one can do everything at once. Choose one or a few of these practices and begin to form new habits. Once they become part of your “second nature,” move on to others. Be patient and persevere.
- Jesus said, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (Jn 13:17).



## Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.  
Believe what you read,  
Teach what you believe,  
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,  
Fr. Roger J. Landry



### Most Recent Homilies

God's Comfort and the Conversion Required to Receive It, Second Sunday of Advent (B), December 6, 2020

Accepting, Following and Announcing Jesus without Offense, Second Sunday of Advent (EF), December 6, 2020

Walking the Way of the Kingdom Jesus Indicates, First Saturday of Advent, December 5, 2020

Running to Meet Our Light, Strength and Salvation, First Friday of Advent, December 4, 2020

Listening to and Acting on the Long Awaited One's Words, First Thursday of Advent, December 3, 2020

Going Hungry to Meet Christ in a Three-Fold Banquet, First Wednesday of Advent, December 2, 2020

Childlike Eyes to See, First Tuesday of Advent, December 1, 2020

Singing the Song of the Lamb, 34th Wednesday (II), November 25, 2020

Turning to the Lord Who Comes to Judge the Earth, 34th Tuesday (II), November 24, 2020

Following the King and Lamb Wherever He Goes, 34th Monday (II), November 23, 2020

### Most Recent Articles

Our Duty and Salvation, The Anchor, November 27, 2020

Living the Reality of the Kingdom of Christ, National Catholic Register, November 19, 2020

The Knights Our Age Needs, The Anchor, November 13, 2020

Remembering Andrew Walther, November 7, 2020

Just a Parish Priest, The Anchor, October 30, 2020

Coming to Know the Original Three-Dimensional Carlo Acutis, The Anchor, October 16, 2020

A Good Shepherd Full of Christian and Priestly Virtues, The Pilot, October 5, 2020

Returning to the Sacrament of Divine Love, The Anchor, September 18, 2020

The Pastoral Malpractice of Liturgical Abuse, The Anchor, September 4, 2020

The Chosen, The Anchor, August 21, 2020

### Most Recent Talks

Receiving the Lord Jesus as Mary and Joseph, Advent Day of Recollection for the Leonine Forum, December 5, 2020

Novena in Preparation for the Immaculate Conception, Leonine Forum, November 28 to December 8, 2020

Blessed Michael McGivney and the Call to Holiness, McGivney Festival Young Adult Prayer Vigil, October 31, 2020

Apprenticeship in the Art of Living, Duc in Altum Virtual Schools Summit, October 28-30, 2020

Preaching on Marital Love and Accompanying Couples toward the Full Embrace of the Church's Teaching, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Divorced and Remarried, Challenges and Triumphs in Pastoral Care, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Heart of the New Evangelization: Meeting, Knowing and Loving Jesus Back, New Zealand Evangelion's in his Name Virtual Conference, October 10-11, 2020

Christian Anthropology: The Human Person in the Modern World, Leonine Forum Opening Lecture, October 8, 2020

Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching, UNSRC Catholic Club, August 27, 2020

Making Better Confessions, Catholic Information Conference, July 24, 2020

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[www.catholicpreaching.com](http://www.catholicpreaching.com)

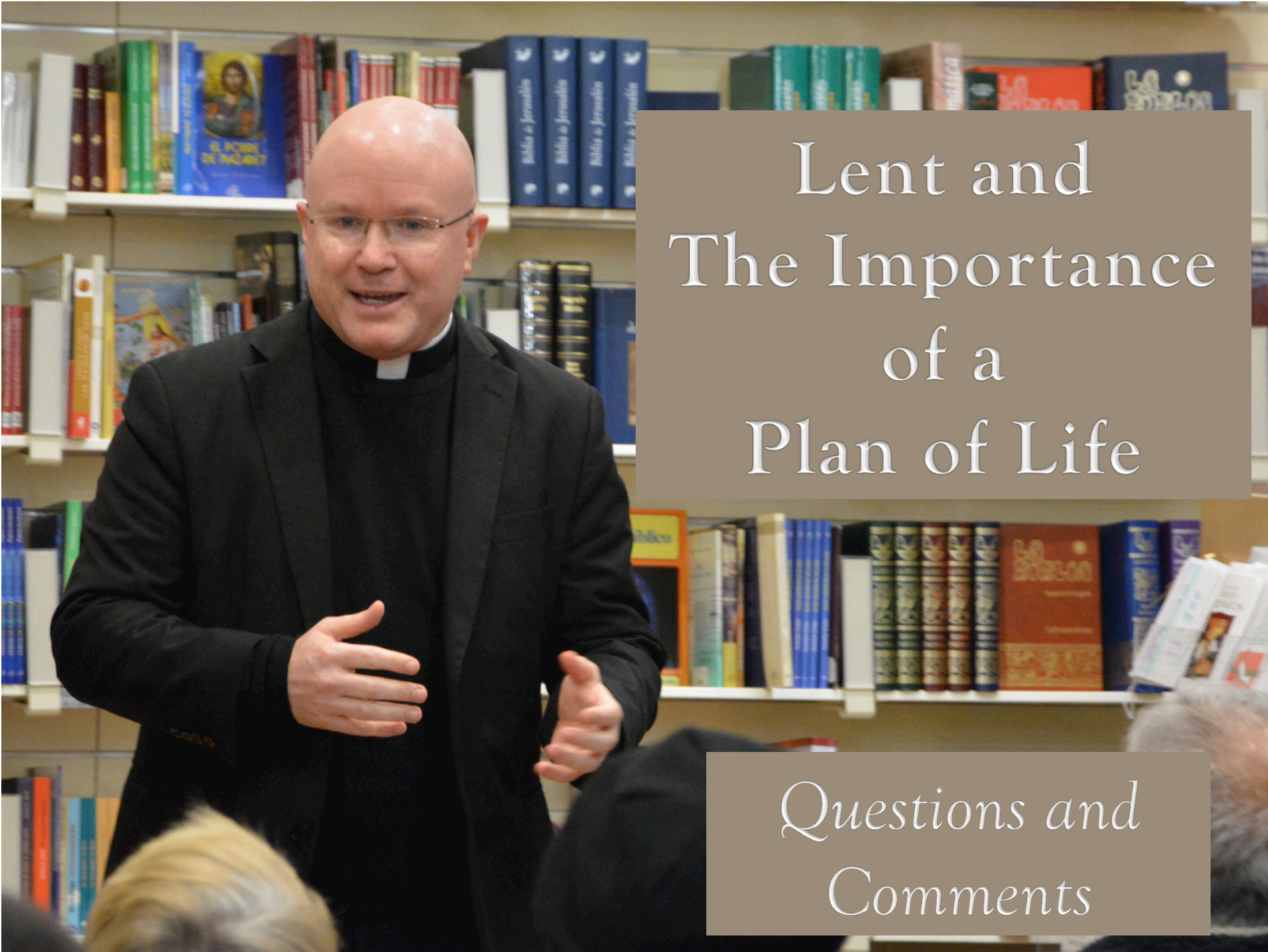
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A photograph of a bald priest with glasses, wearing a black suit and a white clerical collar, speaking to a group of people. He is standing in front of a bookshelf filled with books. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the speaker. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent grey box on the right side of the image.

Lent and  
The Importance  
of a  
Plan of Life

*Questions and  
Comments*