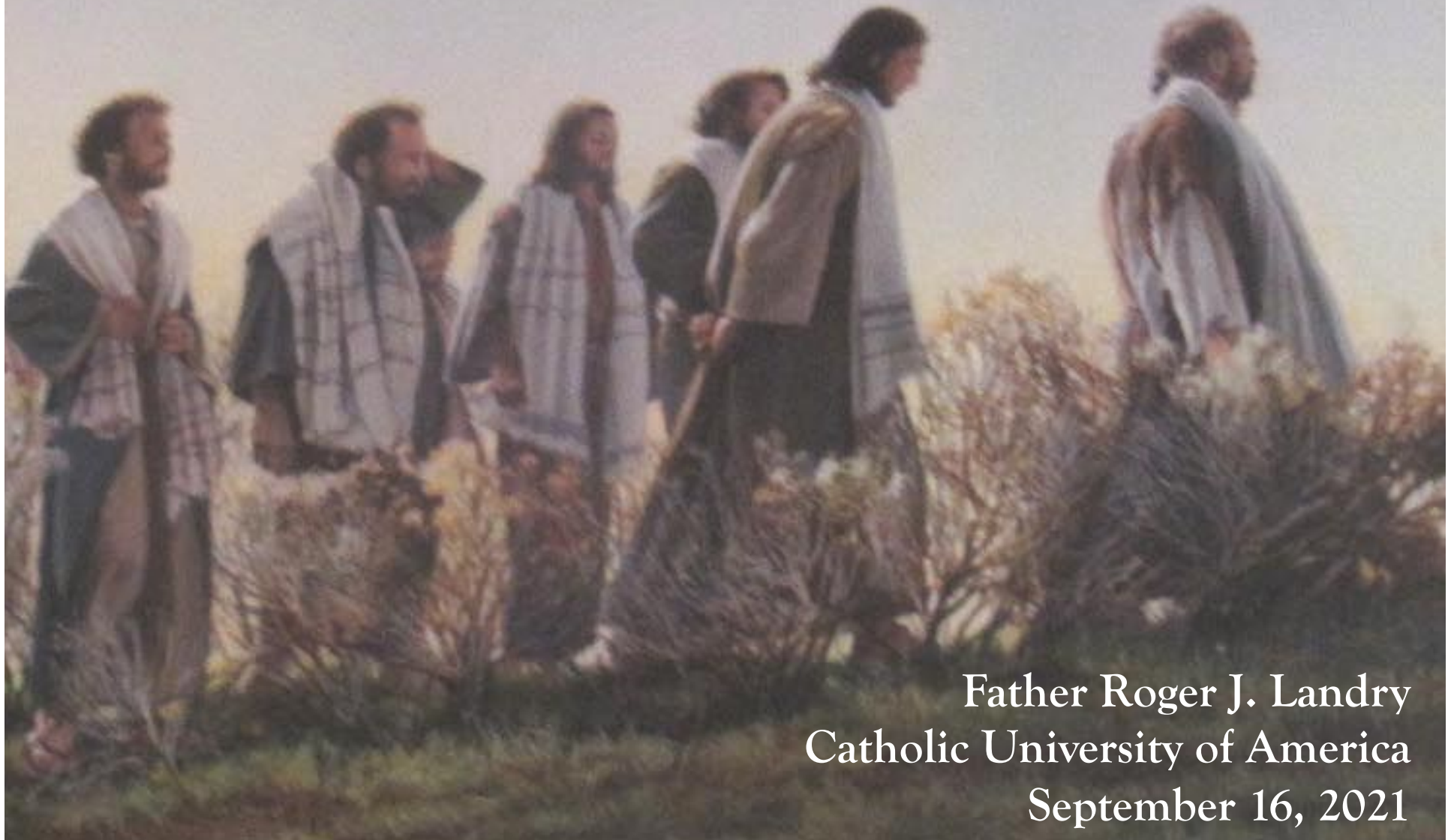
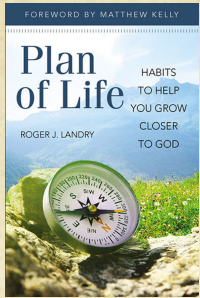


A Plan of Life for Catholic University Students: Habits to Help You Grow Closer to God

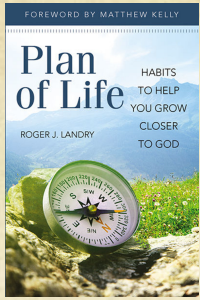


Father Roger J. Landry
Catholic University of America
September 16, 2021



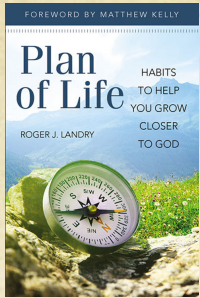
The Importance of a Plan

- 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.



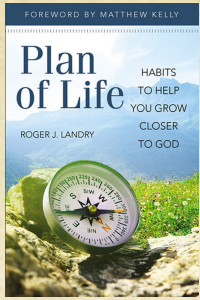
The Setting of University Life

- One of the most important settings for forming a Plan of Life is during college years.
- Most students are on their own for the first time, setting their priorities, without teachers giving them daily assignments and taking attendance, without parents making sure they're doing their homework and assignments, eating healthy, getting to bed at a good hour, praying and going to Mass, observing their friendships and relationships, use of social media, television-watching and gaming, etc.
- There are many more things vying for their time and attention: new and old friends, various organizations, groups, classes, activities. They need to choose and some of their choices are quite important.
- A Plan of Life starts with what type of person you want to become. We are human beings, not human doings.



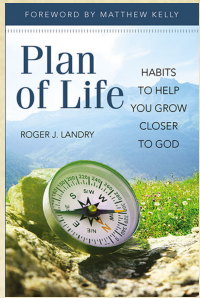
The Setting of University Life

- A quick internet survey shows scores of books, websites, articles and blogs all seeking to provide guidance to students to choose wisely.
- Among other pieces of advice with regard to **academics**, they suggest the importance of taking ownership over one's education; find the study method, place, time that works best for you; studying during daylight, researching and being intentional about one's classes, going to class every day, taking and reviewing notes, getting started early on assignments rather than procrastinating, working smarter, getting to know the library and reading good books.



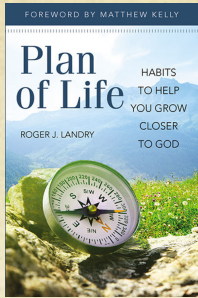
The Setting of University Life

- A quick internet survey shows scores of books, websites, articles and blogs all seeking to provide guidance to students to choose wisely (*continued*).
- Concerning **life overall**, they suggest, making a daily priority list, asking for help from professors, tutors and other university services, journaling so as to live an examined life, eating healthily and with others, keeping a balanced sleep schedule, getting regular exercise, finding an accountability partner, establishing virtuous friendships, and learning how to use effective social media and the internet.



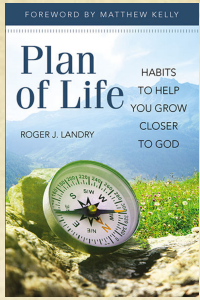
The Setting of University Life

- A quick internet survey shows scores of books, websites, articles and blogs all seeking to provide guidance to students to choose wisely (*continued*)
- On the **spiritual life**, they counsel learning the power of silence in an age of noise, praying each day, going regularly to confession, keeping holy the Lord's day and perhaps finding a Mass buddy, firming up your identity in Christ in the face of cultural pressure, knowing and living by one's deepest convictions, and growing through serving.



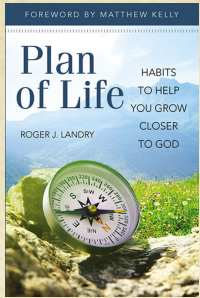
The Importance of a Spiritual Plan

- 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).



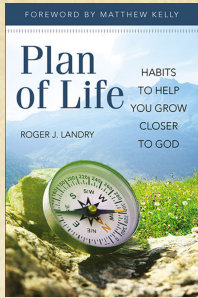
The Two Elements of a Spiritual Plan

- 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!



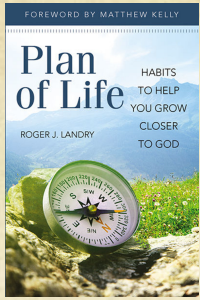
The Goal of Holiness

- 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.”



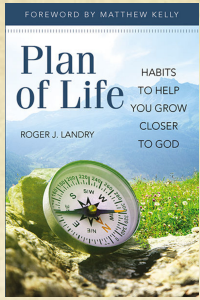
Pope Francis on Holiness

- “The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence.”
- “Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbors, those who, living in our midst, reflect God’s presence. We might call them the middle class of holiness.”
- “Holiness is the most attractive face of the Church.”
- “We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.”
- “In the Church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness. The Lord has bestowed on the Church the gifts of scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of the saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God’s love.”



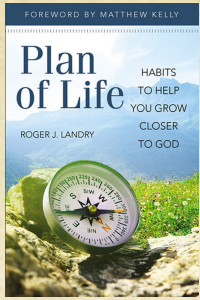
Pope Francis on Holiness

- “Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self.”
- “Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy when he gave us the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23). The Beatitudes are like a Christian’s identity card. In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives. The word ‘happy’ or ‘blessed’ thus becomes a synonym for ‘holy.’”
- In addition to being poor in spirit, empathetic, meek, hungry for holiness, merciful, pure of heart, peacemaking and faithful when persecuted, he also spoke about various “signs of holiness”: perseverance, patience, meekness, joy, a sense of humor, boldness and passion, a community spirit, prayerfulness, vigilant, ready to fight the good fight and discerning,
- “It is my hope that ... the whole Church [will] devote herself anew to promoting the desire for holiness. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us a fervent longing to be saints for God’s greater glory, and let us encourage one another in this effort. In this way, we will share a happiness that the world will not be able to take from us.”



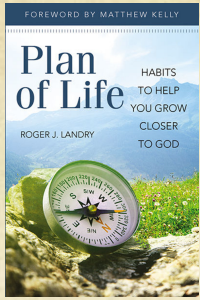
The Means: Training in Holiness

- 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?

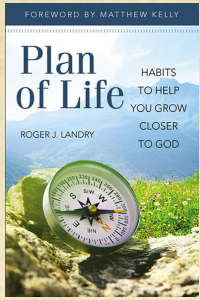
- Integrating those pillars into one's life and receiving all of the help God wants to give us by means of them requires effort!
- A Plan of Life is a unified series of commitments we make to grow in holiness.
 - It's a “game plan” for our spiritual life to help us achieve the goal.
 - It involves various 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:

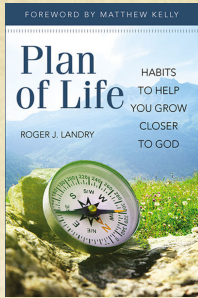
The Holy Spirit	Heroic moment	Morning Offering	General Exam
Regular Prayer	Sacred Scripture	Keeping Holy the Lord's Day	Frequent Confession
Adoration	Charity	Holy Week	Rosary



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



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.
- College is the wonderful time to start working on forming habits that will last one's entire adult life.
- 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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A group of men in traditional robes, possibly Jesus and his disciples, walking through a field of tall grasses. The scene is set outdoors with a bright, hazy sky. The men are dressed in simple, earth-toned clothing, including tunics and shawls. They are walking in a line, looking towards the right side of the frame. The overall atmosphere is serene and contemplative.

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Questions and Comments

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