

□ Reading time: 3 min.

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## **10. Shall we plan?**

As a young student, Francis de Sales (he was 22 years old) realised that dangers to the soul and body threaten at every moment; with the help of his Confessor, Father Possevino, he sketched out a Life Programme or Spiritual Plan to know how he should behave each day and on every occasion. He wrote it down and read it frequently. It goes like this:

**1. Every morning make the Preview Examination:** which consists of thinking what work, what meetings, what conversations and special occasions may arise that day and planning how to behave at each of those times.

**2. At midday visit the Blessed Sacrament in some Church and make the Particular Examination** about my dominant defect, to see if I am fighting it and if I am trying to practise the virtue contrary to it.

*There is an interesting detail here: for 19 years his Particular Examination would be about the “bad spirit”, that very strong defect that is his inclination to get angry. When someone, already a bishop and wonderfully kind and good, asked him what he has done to arrive at such a high degree of self-mastery, he would reply: ‘For 19 years, day by day, I have carefully examined myself about my intention not to treat anyone harshly’. This Particular Examination was a practice supremely followed by St Ignatius of Loyola, with real spiritual success. It is like an echo of that teaching of Thomas a Kempis: ‘If every year you seriously attack one of your faults, you will arrive at holiness’.*

**3. No day without meditation.**

For half an hour I dedicate myself to thinking about the favours God has granted me, the greatness and goodness of Our Lord, the truths the Holy Bible teaches, or the examples and teachings of the saints. And at the end of the meditation I choose a few thoughts to turn them over in my mind during the day and make a short resolution on how I will behave during the next 12 hours.

**4. Every day pray the Holy Rosary**

Do not neglect to pray it any day of my life.

This is a Promise that he made to the Blessed Virgin at a time of great distress and throughout his life he fulfilled it exactly. But later he would tell his disciples never to make this kind of promise all their lives, because they can bring anguish. Make resolutions yes, but promises no.

**5. In my dealings with others be kind but moderate.**

Being more concerned with getting others to talk about what they are interested in than me talking. What I say I already know. But what they say can help me grow spiritually. By talking I learn nothing, by listening distinctly I can learn a lot.

**6. During the day think of God's presence.**

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. , (Cf. Psalm 138). "The Lord will pay to each one according to his works. Everyone will have to appear before the Court of God to give him an account of what he has done, of the good things and the bad things" (Cf. St Paul).

**7. Every night before going to bed I shall do the Examination of the Day: I**

shall remember whether I began my day by commending myself to God. If during my occupations I have remembered God many times to offer Him my actions, thoughts, words, and sufferings. Whether everything I have done today has been out of love for the good God. If I have treated people well. If I have not sought in my deeds and words to please my own self-love and pride, but to please God and do good to my neighbour. If I have been able to make some small sacrifice. If I have endeavoured to be fervent in speech. And I will ask the Lord's forgiveness for the offences I have caused him this day; I will make a resolution to become better from now on; and I will beg heaven to grant me strength to be ever faithful to God; and reciting my three Hail Marys, I will surrender myself peacefully to sleep.

*Office for Vocational Animation*