

LIVING UNDER THE BLESSING OF THE CHURCH

How Our Faith Accompanies Us from Birth to Death

The Church does not merely provide sacraments at major milestones. She teaches the faithful how to live in grace every day – through prayer, counsel, discipline, blessings, sacramentals, devotions, customs, works of mercy, and practical Christian habits. The sacraments remain the foundation, but they are not the whole visible texture of Catholic life.

1. Christianity as a Way of Life

- The Church accompanies the whole person, not only the explicitly “religious” part of life.
- Christian life includes everything: prayer, work, meals, family life, recreation, suffering, moral decisions, sickness, and death.

2. The Daily Spiritual Rule

- Morning offering and night prayers; examination of conscience.
- Angelus, Rosary, short aspirations or ejaculatory prayers.
- Scripture reading and spiritual reading.
- Prayer before work, travel, danger, important decisions, and meals.
- How repeated small practices train the mind to remember God throughout the day.

3. Sacramentals and Blessings in Ordinary Life

- Holy water, blessed candles, ashes, palms, medals, scapulars, rosaries, and other sacramentals.
- Blessings of homes, food, travelers, vehicles, fields, animals, expectant mothers, workplaces, and the sick.
- What sacramentals do: they dispose us to receive grace and place ordinary things under prayer.
- What they do not do: they are not magic, charms, or substitutes for faith and conversion.

4. Guidance, Counsel, and Spiritual Direction

- Going to a priest not only for Confession but also for counsel.
- Formation of conscience; dealing with habitual sin and recurring temptation.
- Guidance in vocation, marriage difficulties, grief, family conflict, and major decisions.

5. Christian Conduct in Everyday Life

- Honesty, speech, modesty, dress, work, money, charity, hospitality, and neighborliness.
- Works of mercy; care for the poor, sick, lonely, elderly, and dying.
- Christian judgment in entertainment, media, and use of time.
- Practical church etiquette and reverence: behavior that teaches the body as well as the mind.

6. Teaching our Children to Live as Christians

- Family that prays together, stays together.
- Learning Scripture and catechism; learning to ask forgiveness and examine one's conscience.
- Family customs that make faith concrete rather than abstract.

7. Sickness, Aging, and Preparation for Death

- Calling the priest early rather than waiting for the final minutes.
- Keeping a crucifix, holy water, and familiar prayers near the sickbed.
- Prayer for the sick; accepting help; offering suffering in union with Christ.

8. Conclusion: A Life Surrounded by Grace

- The Christian life is not a sequence of isolated religious moments.
- It is a life lived under prayer, discipline, blessing, counsel, memory, and hope.

Daily Examination of Conscience

1. Come into the presence of God, seek to experience His nearness, and ask Him to help you examine your conscience, especially to give you light to recognize your sins and the strength to repent of them and amend your life.

For example:

Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy love. Enlighten my mind, that I may recognize my transgressions and sins. Strengthen my will, that I may repent of them with all my heart and be ready to do everything necessary to amend my life and make reparation for my sins.

2. Reflect on your day from three perspectives:

I thank Thee! – Thank God for the blessings of the day.

I am sorry! – Acknowledge your faults clearly, honestly, and in detail.

Help me! – Ask God for His help for the coming day and make concrete resolutions to amend your life.

3. Make an Act of Contrition.

For example:

O Lord, it grieves my soul that I have once again saddened Thee by my transgressions and sins and have been ungrateful to Thee. I repent of my sloth and wickedness, for which I have deserved Thy just punishment. I have a share in Thy sufferings and death upon the Cross, for I have offended Thy infinite goodness. O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me, a sinner. I detest all my sins and will strive to avoid transgressing Thy commandments. With the help of Thy grace, I desire to amend my life, to avoid sloth and wickedness, and to shun those circumstances and companions that may lead me into temptation. Thou, O Lord, knowest my weakness and inconstancy. Come to my aid, especially when my own strength fails me. I beseech Thee, for the sake of Thy great mercy and the love of Thy Most Sacred Heart, grant me the grace to amend my life not only in words, but also in deeds. Amen.

4. Conclude by praying the **Our Father** and the **Hail Mary**.

It is advisable to spend two or three minutes on the examination of conscience, or no more than one minute on each of its three aspects. This will help you remain focused, especially when you are tired after a long day.