

Planning on Faith this Fall

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If you are anything like me, fall signals another opportunity (like New Year's) to look afresh at routines, activities and habits. Perhaps it is because there is a crisp breeze in the air and leaves changing colors; or that a whole new cycle of events and activities inevitably begins as August comes to a close. Regardless, it is time to break out the wall calendar, day planner, electronic scheduler or Google calendar and start to plan and prioritize.

All sorts of events and activities make it onto our calendars. Work, school, exercise, Sunday Mass and volunteer activities make up the framework of our days and weeks. What

does not make the list immediately is prayer and spiritual practices. At first glance, this makes sense. After all, besides Mass or a religious education class we teach, we may not have a regularly scheduled spiritual activity. It is easier, we may say, to just commit to praying regularly whenever we can fit it in.



I know all too well, however, that when I do not plan for prayer to fit in my day, it often does not happen. And, naturally, when we are not rooted in prayer, we are not as prepared to care for others in our care. Of course, when someone is sick, we are having a rough day or something wonderful happens, we may remember to say "Please Lord, help me" or "Thank you, Jesus." What falls by the wayside, though, is recognizing Saints' Feast days, abstaining from meat or making some other penitential practice on Fridays, and remembering to dedicate time to God.

It may seem that we simply do not have time to fit these practices in. To some extent, this is true. Lay men and women in the world will not necessarily be able to commit to saying the Liturgy of the Hours seven times a day like some men and women religious! As a mother of small (read: rambunctious) children, daily Mass is not always plausible either. So, yes, the sorts of spiritual practices you adopt will depend somewhat on your vocation and particular circumstances.

Yet, we are all called to offer Christ the first fruits of our lives. Just like we should prioritize giving to the Church and those in need above our mocha lattes, we should value fitting our faith into our day above more superfluous activities.

What could the prioritization of faith this fall look like to you? The following are just a few ideas, which may or may not appeal to you. Feel free to add and adapt as necessary!

Celebrating Feast days. Take out your parish calendar or consult an online resource that details Feast days by month. Mark down Holy Days of Obligation first, and then any other feasts that might have significance to your family or the kids to whom you minister. If you have your spouse's patron saint on the calendar ahead of time, for example, you might consider going to Mass as a family or having an extra dessert to celebrate on that day.

Daily prayer. Consider your daily routine and what times you would particularly want to turn to God in prayer. Do you want to begin your day with a Morning Offering? Considering adding a reminder to pray to your alarm each morning. Want to say the Angelus? Set a calendar reminder at work so that it pops up on your computer each day at noon.

Carve out time for visits to Church. You may be particularly blessed to have the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at your parish. Whether you do or do not, however, the Lord is always waiting for you in the tabernacle. Consider scheduling 15 minutes on your way to work to stop in and spend time with Jesus. Or, taking a portion of a religious education class once a month for your students to make a short visit.

Confession. Depending on how often the Sacrament of Penance is offered, finding time for Confession can be tricky. Think about how often you would like to make it to Confession and put it on your calendar ahead of time. Remind those to whom you minister of the availability of the Sacrament and perhaps even schedule a time when you can all go together.

The Rosary and other devotionals. Almost everyone has 15 minutes to occasionally turn to the Rosary and ask the Blessed Mother for her assistance. Or, perhaps, another devotion like the Divine Mercy chaplet is more helpful to you. Think about when you can find time to pray; you may surprise yourself! I have friends who pray the Rosary on their commute, on their daily runs and before bed.

Of course, our faith life is more than just an event on a calendar or an item on a to-do list. Yet, taking the time to plan for prayer is one more way that we can honor the Lord by making Him the center of our lives.



Morning Offering

O Jesus,
through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer You my prayers, works,
joys and sufferings
of this day for all the intentions
of Your Sacred Heart,
in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
throughout the world,
in reparation for my sins,
for the intentions of all my relatives and friends,
and in particular
for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Amen.

The Morning Offering obtained from www.ewtn.com

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