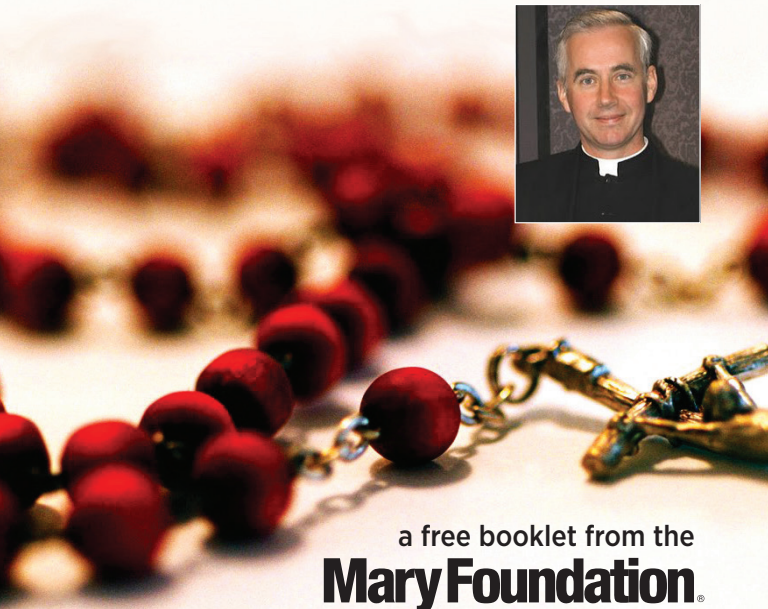
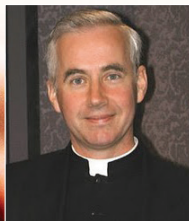


# Seven Daily Habits

for Faithful  
Catholics

**Father John McCloskey**



a free booklet from the

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## What Real People are Saying About Our Catholic Booklets, Novels, and Talks...

Every Catholic in America needs to read this booklet. I really didn't expect something as simple and easy as examining my conscience every night to have such a dramatic impact on improving my actions the following day, but it did. Never underestimate the power of Father McCloskey's "Seven Habits" to help change the lives of people that you know.

**- Fran Noble, Catholic Convert**


"Seven Habits" really changed my life when a friend gave it to me several years ago. I was already doing a few of the habits, but after I read the booklet, I decided to add fifteen minutes of silent prayer every day. It made me a better husband, father, and friend, and I feel closer to Jesus, and much more in tune with His will for me. I'm giving out hundreds of copies everywhere I can.

**- Joseph Wood, Executive**

Your novel Pierced by a Sword has changed my life in ways that I cannot explain. I have delved deeper into my faith with such complete joy. I also play Mary Foundation talks over and over because each time I learn something new. They touch my soul. I share them with all. My spirit rejoices in knowing that your novels, talks, and booklets helped me become a better Catholic and better human being. Thank you! God Bless you and all who help you in your good works.

**- Sandy Smith, Mom**

# A Realistic Approach to Changing Your Life

ave you ever wondered why you have not yet become a saint? If you're like most people, the answer is simple: you need to spend more time with Jesus. You are reading this because you are interested in taking your relationship with Christ more seriously from this point forward. You already know that Jesus is the one way to holiness: "I am the way, the truth and the life." The secret of holiness is constant prayer which could be defined as continual contact with the Holy Trinity: "Pray always and do not lose heart." (Luke 18:1)

## The Only True Happiness

There are various ways to come to know Jesus. We are going to speak briefly about some of them in this little booklet. You want to come to know, love, and serve Jesus the same way you learn to love and stay in love with anybody (your spouse, family members, and close friends), namely, *by spending a considerable amount of time with Him on a daily basis*. The payoff, if you will, is true contentment in this life and eternal happiness with God in the next. There are no easy substitutes. Sanctification is a work of a lifetime and it requires our determined effort to cooperate with God's sanctifying grace through the sacraments.

## What Are the Seven Habits?

The seven daily habits are the Morning Offering, Spiritual Reading, the Rosary, Holy Communion, Mental Prayer, the Angelus, and Examination of Conscience.

These are essential means for achieving holiness. If you are a person who wants to bring Christ to others through your friendships, these are the instruments

by which you store up the spiritual energy that will enable you to do so. Attempting to evangelize others without having the sacraments and a solid interior life will be ineffective in the long run. You can be sure that all the saints incorporated, in one way or another, all of these habits into their daily routine. Your goal is to be like them—that is, a prayerful contemplative in the midst of the world.

### More Important than Meals, Sleep, or Work

I want to stress a few points before going over the habits themselves. First, remember that growing in these daily habits, just like taking on a diet or a physical exercise program, is a gradual work in progress. Do not expect to insert all seven (or even two or three) of these into your daily schedule immediately. You would not attempt a marathon without training beforehand or try to play Mozart after your third piano lesson. Haste *will* invite failure and God wants you to succeed at both your pace and His. You should work closely with your spiritual advisor (for more on finding a spiritual advisor, a quick Internet search is a good place to start).

Gradually incorporate the habits into your life over a period of time in a way that fits your particular situation. For example, you may not be able to adjust your schedule right away to be able to attend Mass every day due to geographical or professional limitations.

Next, with the help of the Holy Spirit and your favorite saints, you must make a firm commitment to make the seven habits the priority of your life—*more important than meals, sleep, work, and recreation*.

I want to make it clear that these habits cannot be accomplished without effort and planning. They must be incorporated into your day when you are alert, as a regular part of your schedule, and in places that are without distractions.

Lastly, you are not losing time out of your day but

rather, in reality, you will gain time. I have never met a person who lived the seven habits on a daily basis who became a less productive worker, a worse spouse, who had less time for his friends, or could no longer grow in his cultural life. Quite the contrary, God always rewards those who put him first. Our Lord will multiply your time as he did with those few loaves and fishes that fed the multitude. You can be sure supremely productive married saints such as Saint Gianna Molla and Saint Thomas More prayed much more than the time you will require for the seven daily habits.

## 1. The Morning Offering

The first habit is the morning offering. This is when you offer the day ahead for God's glory using your own words or a memorized prayer. But what has to happen *before your offering is crucial*. As Saint Josemaria Escriva put it: "Conquer yourself each day from the very first moment, getting up on the dot, at a set time, without granting a single minute to laziness. If with the help of God, you conquer yourself in the moment, you have accomplished a great deal for the rest of the day. It's so discouraging to find yourself beaten in the first skirmish."

In my pastoral experience, those who get a full night's rest and conquer the "heroic minute" in the morning—the very first moment when we wake up—will have both the physical and spiritual wherewithal throughout the day to incorporate the seven habits into their daily routine.

## 2. Fifteen Minutes of Silent Prayer

The second habit is to pray for at least fifteen minutes in silence. Eventually you may wish to augment this with an additional fifteen minutes, perhaps at another time during the day. After all, who will not desire even more time with such excellent company? Prayer is simply a conversation with Jesus, ideally before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. This is your "face time" or "quality time" with Our Lord when you

can open up about whatever is on your mind and in your heart.

At the same time you will be able to acquire the habit of listening carefully and prayerfully to discover what Jesus is asking of you and what He wants to give you. Your soul is not unlike an answering machine; Jesus can leave you profound messages even if you do not hear Him directly during your prayer time. It is through silent prayer that we come to understand his saying: “Without Me, you can do nothing.”

### 3. Receiving Holy Communion

The third daily habit is participating in Holy Mass and receiving Holy Communion in the state of grace (that is being free from serious sin and having gone to Confession). This is the most important of the seven habits. As Jesus taught:

*I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”* (John 6:22-65)

The Holy Eucharist has to be at the very center of our interior life, and consequently, of our day. This is the most intimate act possible for a human being.

For a more in-depth treatment of this crucial subject, I recommend two free talks from the Mary Foundation, “Seven Secrets of the Eucharist” and “The Mass Explained.” You can listen to them for free at CatholiCity Podcasts on the major streaming services, or listen directly at CatholiCity.com.

### 4. Fifteen Minutes of Spiritual Reading

The fourth daily habit is fifteen minutes of spiritual reading. This normally should consist of a few minutes of systematic reading of the New Testament

to identify ourselves with the words and actions of our Savior, followed by time spent on a classic book on Catholic spirituality. As Saint Josemaria advised: “Don’t neglect your spiritual reading. Reading has made many saints.”

In a way, spiritual reading is the most practical daily habit. Over the years we will review the Life of Christ many times over while acquiring the wisdom of the Church through dozens of books. Only by enlightening our intellect can we apply spiritual truths to our actions. As Saint Josemaria wrote: “For the modern apostle, an hour of study is equal to an hour of prayer.” As for which books to read, I recommend anything from Ignatius Press, Tan Books, or Scepter Publishers.

## 5. Pray the Angelus

The fifth daily habit takes but a few minutes. It consists of pausing in the midst of our daily activities at noontime to pray the Angelus to our Blessed Mother. This Catholic custom goes back many centuries. If you are not familiar with this prayer you can find it online at [CatholiCity.com](http://CatholiCity.com). It is a wonderful way to address our Blessed Mother every day (just as any good child remembers his mother) while meditating on the Incarnation and Resurrection of our Lord.

## 6. Pray the Holy Rosary

The sixth habit also focuses on Our Lady. It consists of praying the Holy Rosary each day while meditating on its mysteries, which in essence provide a survey of the life of Our Lord and Our Lady. The benefits of the Rosary are life-changing and defy description. Here is what Saint Louis de Montfort, the greatest apostle of the Rosary, taught:

*If you say the Rosary faithfully until death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory. Even if you are on the brink of damnation, even if you have*



*one foot in hell, even if you have sold your soul to the devil, and even if you are a heretic as obstinate as a devil, sooner or later you will be converted and will amend your life and will save your soul, if—and mark well what I say—if you say the Holy Rosary devoutly every day until death for the purpose of knowing the truth and obtaining contrition and pardon for your sins.*

The Rosary is a habit that, once acquired, is difficult to break. By repeating words of love to Mary and offering up each Rosary for our intentions, we take a shortcut to Jesus by passing through the heart of his mother.

Nowadays many Christians find it helpful to pray along with audio. Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet recordings are available from the Mary Foundation at [CatholiCity.com](http://CatholiCity.com).

## 7. Examine Your Conscience

The seventh habit is to make a brief examination of your conscience before bedtime. Find a quiet place, then call upon the Holy Spirit for insight. Take a few minutes to go over your day in God's presence. Ask if you behaved as a true child of God at home, at work, and with your friends.

You should also review the one particular area you have identified (perhaps with the help of your spiritual adviser) which must be improved in order to become a saint.

Next, ask yourself if you have been faithful to the seven daily habits described in this booklet. Conclude with an act of gratitude for all the good you have done and an act of contrition for those areas in which you have willfully failed. Then, take your well-deserved rest, drifting off to sleep while conversing with Jesus and your mother Mary.

Virtually everyone that develops this habit finds it enjoyable, relaxing, and liberating. With God, you are clearing your mind and cleaning the slate for the following morning. Although it is deceptively simple

and only takes a few minutes, the power of this habit to produce immediate, tangible results will be dramatic and pleasing.

### The Time Is Already There

If you take an honest account of your day, no matter how busy you are, you will usually find that you have wasted time. Consider skipping that extra cup of coffee so you can visit the Blessed Sacrament for ten minutes before work. Perhaps you can forego an hour or more wasted on watching television, fiddling around on the Internet, or playing video games.

Most of us can pray a Rosary during our commute and still have plenty of time left over to listen to something or call friends. We can all substitute spiritual reading for some of our online or other reading. Can you sacrifice some of your lunch hour to have time for noon Mass? The point is, if you make loving God your highest priority, the time *is already there* during your typical day.

### Do Not Be Discouraged

Once again, as you gradually incorporate the Seven Habits into your day, you will suffer temporary setbacks if you move too hastily. Measure your progress in terms of weeks and months as you add each new habit. Most people can add all the habits within six months to a year. A few years from now, your life and the lives of those you love will be dramatically transformed because Jesus will be able to form you more powerfully several times a day, every day, month after month, year after year.

# Helpful Prayers

## Morning Offering

Dear Lord, I do not know what will happen to me today—I only know that nothing will happen that was not foreseen by you and directed to my greater good from all eternity. I adore your holy and unfathomable plans and submit to them with all my heart for love of you, the pope, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Amen.

## The Angelus

*Prayed daily at Noon. In a group, responses are in italics.*

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary. *And she conceived of the Holy Spirit. Recite the Hail Mary*

Behold the handmaid of the Lord. *Be it done unto me according to thy word. Recite the Hail Mary*

And the Word was made flesh. *And dwelt among us. Recite the Hail Mary*

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, *that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech thee O Lord, thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ, thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by his passion and cross be brought to the glory of his resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Prayer Before Study by Saint Thomas Aquinas

Ineffable Creator, pour forth a ray of your light into the darkened places of my mind and banish from my soul the twofold darkness of sin and ignorance into which I was born. You who make eloquent the tongues of infants, refine my speech and pour upon my lips the goodness of your blessing. Grant to me keenness of mind, capacity to remember, skill in learning, subtlety to interpret, and eloquence in speech. May you guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to completion. Amen.

# How to Pray the Rosary

Rosary beads are recommended but not required. Begin by making the Sign of the Cross, then pray the Apostles Creed, followed by one Our Father, three Hail Marys, and the Glory Be. Using the chart below, call to mind the first Mystery (event in the life of Christ or Mary) for the day, then pray one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, then one Glory Be and the Fatima Prayer, all while meditating on the Mystery. In the same manner, pray while meditating on the second, third, fourth, and fifth Mysteries. Conclude with the Hail Holy Queen and this optional prayer:

O God, whose only begotten son, by his life, death, and resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant we beseech thee, that by meditating on these mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Joyful Mysteries

Mon & Sat, Sundays during Advent

The Annunciation

The Visitation

The Nativity

The Presentation

The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

## Glorious Mysteries

Wednesdays & Sundays

The Resurrection

The Ascension

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

The Assumption of Mary

The Coronation of Mary

## Sorrowful Mysteries

Tue & Fri, Sundays during Lent

The Agony in the Garden

The Scourging at the Pillar

The Crowning with Thorns

The Carrying of the Cross

The Crucifixion

## Luminous Mysteries

Thursdays

The Baptism in the Jordan

The Wedding at Cana

The Proclamation of the Kingdom

The Transfiguration

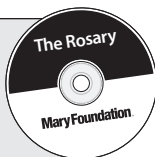
The Institution of the Eucharist

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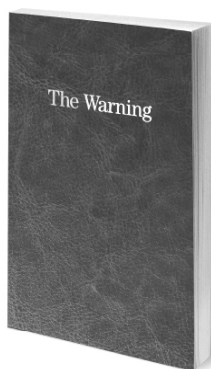
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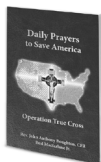


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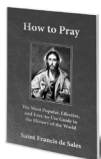


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