

ROAD MAP TO HEAVEN

ROAD MAP TO HEAVEN

A CATHOLIC PLAN OF LIFE

FR. ED BROOM, OMV

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

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Cover design by DavidFerrisDesign.com

ISBN: 978-1-5051-1530-7

Published in the United States by
TAN Books
PO Box 410487
Charlotte, NC 28241
www.TANBooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

PRAISE FOR THIS BOOK

“Be a Saint.” These words constantly echo in my heart through the many years of listening to Fr. Ed’s powerful teachings, inspiring homilies, and spiritual guidance. Fr. Ed has planted in my heart the truth that we are made by God, for God, to be with God for all eternity. Road Map to Heaven is the perfect GPS for the most important journey in our lives. This little book was lovingly written, with God’s grace, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the intercession of our Blessed Mother by a priest I consider a “living saint.” A must-read for all!

Toffee Jeturian

Couples for Christ USA National Director

In this wonderful little book, Fr. Ed Broom maps out a plan to deepen your spiritual life in pursuit of heaven. Fr. Ed is an outstanding guide to direct us on the path to heaven with practical insights to help you strive for sainthood. Read the book, and then . . . follow the plan!

Cathy Fitzpatrick

Associate Director of Adult & Child Faith Formation

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION

WHAT ON EARTH IS THIS PLAN OF LIFE?

BEFORE outlining a methodical, organized, systematic, cohesive, and practical plan of life, let us first try to explain this so-called plan of life. What on earth is a *plan of life*?

Order the Disordered

In the texts of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, we read that one of the primary purposes of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to *order the disordered* in our life so that we can discover God's will and carry it out.

As a result of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve (Gn 3), disorder entered into the world on all levels: natural disorder, social disorder, family disorder, physical disorder, mental disorder, emotional disorder, moral disorder, and spiritual disorder—all of these became part and parcel of our very existence through sin. Mankind was adrift and the doors of heaven were closed to us until the coming of the Messiah. In his incarnation, life, passion, death, and resurrection, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, came to restore order in the world and in our personal lives and,

thus, to open the gates of heaven once more to God's most glorious creation, man.

Before we embark on any project, it helps to have a plan. For some projects, it is essential. This, the reordering of our lives so that they become more God-centered, is one such project that requires a plan. That is the purpose and the proposal for composing one's plan of life—to put in order the disorder in our lives. A well-composed and practical plan of life that is lived out can have incredible value in our lives and put us on the right path to arrive safely at and through the heavenly gates.

The huge majority of people do not know where they are headed, have no concrete purpose in life, and float around like so many leaves blown by the wind. They live with constant stress, anxiety, nervous tension, and very often suffer from depression, be it mild or severe.

On the contrary, the person who has a plan of life to live by has a huge advantage! He knows where he has come from—God! He knows where he is heading—heaven. He knows how to get there—Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Finally, by composing and writing out a plan of life, he has given himself a spiritual road map so as to arrive at his final destiny—the kingdom of God! Therefore, we encourage you to compose and write out your own plan of life, your spiritual road map; in today's world, you may even call it your spiritual GPS! But no matter what you call it, its purpose will be to lead you to and keep you safely and securely on the highway to heaven.

It must be said from the start of this plan of life project that those who undertake this most noble enterprise of composing their personal plan of life must have the help of a spiritual director, some spiritual guide, some spiritual person to accompany them. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, as well as Saint Teresa of Avila, insisted on the dire need to have a director in one's spiritual life. The temptations, obstacles, and pitfalls in the spiritual life are far too numerous for anyone who seriously undertakes this spiritual journey to go along this way without some form of spiritual direction. Therefore, we warmly exhort all of those who plan to compose their own personal road map to heaven to secure some form of spiritual direction. We all have many blind-spots, and without the help of some qualified person outside our own experience, we can easily be deceived and tricked!

Forms of the Plan of Life

Chronological Plan of Life

There are several forms of the plan of life. However, in our short and humble work, we will be offering essentially two forms. You can do one or the other, or you can do both—the liberty of the sons and daughters of God! Each person should feel free to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. Of course, this free movement should be moderated, guided, and checked by a trained spiritual director. God speaks through many channels, one

of those being through the trustworthy guidance of a spiritual director.

The first form of the plan of life we would call or term a chronological plan of life. By chronological, we mean a plan of life in terms of a division in time brackets. This means that you want to step back and have an eagle's overview, an eagle's panoramic vision of the time that God has so generously given to you. Then, immersed in prayer, you want to humbly beg for the grace to make the very best use of the time that God has given to you. In other words, you do not want to be wasting time in this short life given to you by your Creator.

The time brackets can be divided into general and specific as defined in philosophical language. In each time bracket you want to discern and decide—with the help of the Holy Spirit and your spiritual director—what you would like to offer to the Lord. In other words, your plan of life is an offering, an oblation, a sacrifice that you want to give to God. If God has given you so much, should you not be ready and willing to give God something in return? Call to mind how much Jesus gave for you as he hung on the cross that first Good Friday, shedding every drop of his precious blood for the eternal salvation of your immortal soul. His love demands a response of love on your part. This is the spiritual motivation of the plan of life—to give yourself—your time, your efforts, your energy, your mind, heart, will, and whole being to God as an acceptable holocaust of love, thanksgiving, and praise!

Therefore, you want to look at the year and what you can offer to the Lord. Then scroll down to the month bracket and what your generous offering to the Lord can be. Following the month, of course, is the week. Much can be done in the course of the week. What are you willing to give to the Lord? Then move to the twenty-four hours in each day. A well-ordered and well-organized plan of life can offer to the Lord many golden nuggets in the course of these twenty-four hours! Now what about the hourly basis? Read and pray carefully over the text and see what you can give to the Lord during some hours in the course of the day. How about minutes and even seconds? In a word, God has given us all—we belong to God, and we want to give all that we have to our loving and almighty heavenly Father. We want to be generous with God. It is true that God cannot be outdone in generosity, but he is waiting patiently for our generous response.

Thus, we come to the conclusion of our chronological plan of life. It is a good practice to correct, modify, reform, and improve your plan of life at least on a yearly basis with the help of a good spiritual director.

Professional and Vocational Plan of Life

The second form of the plan of life is what we call the professional and vocational plan of life. We all have a universal vocation—to become saints! The plan of life can help us to pursue true sanctity of life. However, all of us have a particular and specific vocation in life. By vocation, we mean

from the Latin *vocare*—calling! What might be specific vocations? Quick and to the point, the response would be the following: married, single, religious, priesthood. These are distinct and different vocations in life. The chapters included herein on the professional and vocational plan of life can best be applied to lay people engaged in the activities of the world. The faithful laity in the Church, the lay persons, are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 5:13–16).

How then, you might ask, is this professional and vocational plan of life written out or organized? We have written several chapters on certain specific categories or areas in which you are invited to look at your life so as to analyze and examine with great sincerity and honesty how you are actually living out your call to holiness in each one. The first public preaching of Jesus was the following: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). The essential message is one word: *conversion*! The word transcribed from the Greek is *metanoia*, which basically means that we are all imperfect in many ways; we all have many disorders that come from original sin and personal sin, and we must change—leave the wrong, the disordered, the sinful, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, the new man!

Therefore, specific chapters that we have outlined and explained are the following, with the earnest hope that you will sincerely look into these areas in your life and humbly admit that there is a real and urgent need to make some

changes. Only God is perfect; the rest of us, each in our own way, are definitely *works in progress*.

Here is the list of specific categories or areas that will be addressed with regard to the professional and vocational plan of life:

- **Purity of Intention.** In your profession and vocation, learning to *do the ordinary with extraordinary love*.
- **Marriage.** 1) *As a spouse.* How can you improve and upgrade your relationship with your spouse, whom you are called to love until death do you part? 2) *As a father/mother.* If God has given you the great gift of having children, how can you improve your relationship with your children? How can you bring them closer to God?
- **Work.** God calls us to work. God said to Adam: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Gn 3:19). We are all called to work, but we can easily become lazy, negligent, cut corners, even fall into dishonesty. Part of the professional and vocational plan of life is to step back so as to view your work and see how you can make improvements. Never forget: the Lord is truly our Master. He will “pay us” according to our work; sometimes our labor will be less rewarded on earth, but that reward pales in comparison to what awaits the faithful servant of the Lord in heaven. What we sow is what we will reap!
- **Social Life/Network.** Maybe God is calling you to change a social or family relationship? Maybe God is asking you establish a new one? Be open to change!

- **Permanent Intellectual Formation.** As in all professions, how can you keep growing in the knowledge of your faith? What do you need to study to grow in your knowledge and love of God?
- **Apostolic Life.** If you love God, then you should love what God loves: the salvation of immortal souls! How can you be a better fisher of men?
- **Penitential Life.** Prayer and penance are the two wings on which you can fly high to God and to heaven! What penitential practices should you undertake? Jesus said, “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish!” (Lk 13:3).
- **Prayer Life.** What changes can you make in your prayer life to draw you closer to Jesus, draw you into deeper union with Jesus, your best friend?
- **Sacramental Life.** How is your reception of the sacraments? How can you be more fervent and faithful in your reception of the sacraments, especially confession and the most Holy Eucharist, the two celebrated most frequently and the “lynchpins” of the spiritual life?
- **Marian Element.** If we really do love Jesus, then we must love the one he loved most on earth, and that is his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. How can you establish a more filial and loving relationship with Mary who is our life, our sweetness, and our hope?

Hence, you are being called through prayer and spiritual direction, with utmost sincerity, to look into different categories in your professional and vocational life, to examine

and analyze them, and to honestly admit that there is still much to be changed, not with sadness but with great gratitude! God is calling you to become a saint, and therefore, he is calling you into a deeper conversion of life. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the writing out of this plan of life or road map to heaven, with the help of a good spiritual director, is one of the most efficacious tools to arrive at *ordering the disordered* in our unruly, confused, disoriented, and chaotic lives. This practice is highly recommended by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the context of the *Spiritual Exercises*. If done well, you will never regret it; rather, you will be eternally grateful to God as you travel with speed and graceful ease on the highway to heaven!