



ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

195 W. 13TH STREET  
HOLLAND, MI 49423

# INDIVIDUAL FORMATION PLAN

*Worship | Grow | Evangelize | Love*



# Individual Formation Plan

St. Francis de Sales  
Holland, MI

## Discipleship

*“The way of Christ leads to life...”*

Discipleship is all about following Jesus and growing in closeness to Him. Our lives are meant to be an apprenticeship under Jesus where we learn to follow Him, imitate Him and fall deeply in love with Him. This, like any other discipline, requires training and practice.

This formation plan is designed to function as a tool that helps you take stock of ways in which you are already living as a disciple of Jesus Christ, but also to assist you in the formation of new habits that will aid you in becoming more and more like Him.

The intention of this plan is to help you advance at your own pace by making reasonable ‘next step’ commitments for yourself. The goal is holiness, that is, to be like Jesus, and ultimately, to spend eternity with Him in Heaven, where we will experience the fullness of joy in God’s presence.

The hope is that this formation plan will serve as a genuine training in holiness, and instill in our hearts a burning desire to share the Good News of Jesus Christ - His life, death, and resurrection - with the whole world.

### **Discipleship at St. Francis de Sales**

Here at St. Francis de Sales, we desire to see a Church alive with passionate disciples who know, love and serve the Lord with gladness and joy. We believe this passionate discipleship is made manifest in the four primary values of our parish - to worship, grow, evangelize, and love.

## A passionate disciple is someone who...

- **Worships** the Triune God, seeking God's grace through a vibrant sacramental life focused on the Eucharist.
- **Grows** in faith as an individual and as a member of the body of Christ, in fidelity to the Church
- **Evangelizes** through the Holy Spirit, living and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to bring others into a relationship with Him.
- **Loves** people of all nations, opening their arms to everyone in their community with the love of Jesus Christ.



Not only are these actions the primary values of our parish, but they are also the primary actions of every Christian.

Take some time in prayer to look at each of these areas. It may be helpful to:

1. Assess where you are now,
2. Think of where you want to be, and
3. Commit to a specific next step which will help you get there.

## Worship

*“Prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit” (CCC 2565)*

Although each of the four values are significant to the Christian life, there is one value that far surpasses the others in importance. It is from the encounter with God in prayer that the whole of the Christian life proceeds.

Prayer and worship are essential habits of a disciple. There are particular ways in which the Lord has commanded us to worship him. We observe these commandments faithfully by:

- Attending Mass every Sunday and every Holy Day of Obligation
- Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once per year, and as needed (and ideally during penitential seasons like Advent and Lent as well)

This however, is not enough if “prayer is the *living* relationship of the children of God with their Father.” If this relationship is to be truly alive, daily prayer is necessary to feed our life in Christ. Commitment to a regular time and place is essential to developing a regular habit of personal prayer and growing in love for God. Find what works, and stick with it!

It is also helpful to be committed to a regular way of praying, for example, slowly reading through one of the gospels or another book of the Bible, praying the Rosary and meditating on its mysteries, going to Adoration, etc.

### Things to Think About

1. When and how do I already pray daily? Do I have a set time I pray and a game plan for what that time of prayer will look like?
2. If I’m not already praying daily, what do I need to do to make prayer a daily priority? Do I need to block out time on my calendar that’s non-negotiable? Do I need to stop doing something else that takes time that I could be spending in prayer (e.g. TV, Social Media, etc.)
3. When and how do I worship in community, and with my family? How do I keep the Lord’s day holy?

## Grow

*“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8)*

As students of the Master Teacher, we need to be growing in knowledge of God and His Church, as well as making efforts to grow in virtue. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses it: “A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. . . . The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God” (CCC 1803).

To do the good, we must first “be transformed by the renewal of [our minds]” (Romans 12:2). We come to know the good by forming our hearts and minds around what God has revealed through His Church. Concrete ways to do this could involve the reading of scripture, another spiritual book, writings from one of the saints, or some other kind of media (e.g. talks, podcasts, etc.)

It may also involve fasting from food, or from other media that cause us to become distracted or don’t necessarily draw us closer to God (e.g. television, movies, video games, social media, etc.)

Furthermore, growth in Christ is not possible on our own. We need the love and support of others, and they need to experience the love of God through us. Being a part of a regular small group, or regularly getting together with another disciple one-on-one are great ways to do this.

### Things to Think About

1. How am I already working on growing in knowledge of God? What am I doing to grow in virtue?
2. Is there something I need to give up or start doing to grow in knowledge of God and in virtue?
3. How will I maintain a connection with other people who are supporting me in growing in faith? How regularly will we touch base with one another?

## **Evangelize**

*“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Peter 3:15)*

Evangelization is the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to those around us.

It is the proclamation that: (1) God had a loving plan for the human race (2) Sin had devastating consequences, especially separation from God (3) God had an answer to our predicament in the sending of His Son for our salvation (4) The response to this gift calls for every person to: repent of our sins, believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized so we can be filled with His Holy Spirit and live a new life in his family, the Church.

Telling the world of the Good News of Jesus Christ is the mission of the Church and it is essential that this mission is lived out in both word and deed. “If we share the good news of Christ’s love in words only, not demonstrably living what we preach, people will rightly suspect us of hypocrisy, and we may even give Christianity a bad name. On the other hand, if we share the good news in deeds only, people will not learn of the One who is the source of the joy and divine love we carry with us” (Unleash the Gospel 9).

### **Things to Think About**

1. How am I living and sharing the Gospel in order to help others to know the love of God? What can I start doing to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those around me?
2. Who are a few friends or family members that I am intentionally praying for and reaching out to, inviting to church, or otherwise helping support in their relationship with God? Is there anyone in particular the Lord might be calling me to reach out to?
3. Is there anything that prevents me from sharing this Good News? What am I doing, or what can I do to change that?
4. How do I support the work of the parish and other ministries that do the work of the Kingdom of God? Am I generous with both my time and my financial resources?

## Love

*“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12)*

Love is the beginning and end of the Christian life. Having received and grown in the love of God, we cannot but share what we have received. St. John of the Cross says: “At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.”

One of the primary ways we express the love of God to others is through living the works of mercy. The corporal works of mercy call us to help provide for the material necessities of others. In doing so, we show our love for Jesus who is present in the poor: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Or as St. Rose of Lima says: “When we serve the poor and the sick, we serve Jesus. We must not fail to help our neighbors, because in them we serve Jesus.”

By living the spiritual works of mercy, we teach, console, and forgive as Jesus has taught, consoled, and forgiven us. We are called to show love by intentionally investing in others and helping them to know the love of God through our words, actions, and through regular prayer for them.

### Things to Think About

1. How am I sharing the love of God by serving both inside and outside the parish community? Are there new ways the Lord might be calling me to serve?
2. How am I already living out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy? Is there a new work of mercy that God might want me to start living out?

## Action Items

I, \_\_\_\_\_, commit to:

- Faithfully attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days
- Going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once per year, and as needed
- And the following:

**Worship** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grow** \_\_\_\_\_

**Evangelize** \_\_\_\_\_

**Love** \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

You may want to share these commitments with another person who can help keep you accountable: a spouse, family member, or friend, who can walk with you along the path of discipleship.

Dietrich von Hildebrand says that: “Unlimited readiness to change is necessary for transformation in Christ.” We should take time every few months, perhaps each year during Advent and Lent, to reflect on what God has done in us, and consider what new next steps He might be inviting us to take, so that His work of transformation might continue in us.

*I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6)*

More resources: <https://www.stfrancisholland.org/ifp>