

FOREWORD



It was completely on a whim that I registered the domain name “CatholicMom.com” so many years ago. As the mom of two young sons and married to the love of my life (then a non-Catholic), I recall feeling completely overwhelmed not only by my motherly duties, but especially by the responsibility of raising our children in the faith. My motivations for buying a “dummies” computer book and starting a small website were largely selfish: I was desperate for support, encouragement, and information about my vocation to motherhood, and specifically to Catholic motherhood.

Our desire to connect—to be in communion with one another—never ceases to amaze me. I now count many of the women I connected with back in those early days as dear friends. Many of them have gone on to become contributors to a resource that now welcomes hundreds of thousands of women from close to two hundred countries around the world into a daily dialogue about the things that matter most in our lives. Together we have watched our babies be born and our children grow; we have prayed with and for one another and we’ve done our very best to

mentor the new moms who have come into our ever blossoming fold.

These many years later, I still wake up each day and head anxiously to my desk with a joy for the mission that has become my life's work. While the ways in which our Church reaches out to us have developed and diversified over the past several years, her message remains as timeless as always. And while Catholic parents may now have new trials and possibilities to face that are born of an ever advancing technological culture, many of the fears, questions, delights, and joys we hold in our hearts are the same ones our parents and grandparents before us grappled with and celebrated as we grew up.

As women, as wives and singles, as stay-at-home moms and nine-to-fivers, as mothers and grandmothers, and especially as Catholics and women of faith, we are on a mission: to know, love, and serve God, to share his loving care with our family and friends, and to enjoy life with him forever in heaven. Lofty goals, and ones that require a daily recommitment! This mission demands of us our very best. And to be at our best, we need all the help, support, and encouragement we can find.

That is why I am thrilled beyond measure to have partnered with my friends and colleagues at Ave Maria Press to create a series of resources that will support you in your life's mission. With this series of books as a compliment to our resources at

CatholicMom.com, we aim to educate, to inspire, and to uplift you with resources that are engaging and authentically Catholic. It's our great hope that these books will nurture your heart, mind, body, and soul—that they will go beyond the mainstream books you find about parenting and touch upon the cares that make our mothering not simply a status, but rather a vocation.

As a wife, mom, and woman constantly in search of both a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and a way to manage all that's on my plate, I couldn't be more excited about the release of *Small Steps for Catholic Moms* by my dear friends Danielle Bean and Elizabeth Foss. This volume may look simple on the surface, but don't let that *Small Steps* title fool you. As any mom knows, baby steps—taken so tentatively at first and yet greeted with such profound exaltation by parents—lead toward a lifelong journey for our precious children. Indeed, our own vocational path has taken us from our own first steps as children, to the altar to be joined with our husbands, into the delivery room as we gave birth to our precious babies, and beyond. Our days are filled with running and busyness as we aim to serve and to give the best of ourselves to the competing demands in our lives.

Elizabeth and Danielle recognize both the frantic pace of the average Catholic Mom's life, as well as the great need for each of us to find time to nurture our spiritual selves. In the absence of God's presence, we

lack the fuel so necessary to run the race that unfolds in our homes, workplaces, and communities each day. By giving us a simple formula for daily prayer, packed with insight, saintly role models, and inspiration to act upon our beliefs, the authors deliver the tools we need not only to run life's race, but to win its ultimate prize—an eternity spent in God's presence, surrounded by our loved ones.

As Paul's words in Hebrews remind us:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us.

I pray that as you join Danielle, Elizabeth, and me in starting or ending your days with *Small Steps for Catholic Moms*, you will feel nurtured and uplifted in your vocation and encouraged along your own spiritual journey towards heaven. May this book accompany your baby steps, your daily hikes, your sprints, and your strong finishes in your own life's race, and may you and your family be profoundly blessed as you journey life's path!

Lisa M. Hendey

INTRODUCTION



Before you begin to read this book, we want to be clear about one thing: There are no rules. This book is not an obligation. If you begin to use it daily and then wind up setting it aside for a while, you will not have failed.

We hope that *Small Steps* will be a tool for moms to use as it suits them. Some will prefer to follow this program “by the book,” using just one page each day. Others will enjoy browsing through the entire book for inspiration—or following the book diligently when they feel the need for discipline and casually when they don’t. Still others might choose a particular virtue to work on and focus on that month’s pages, regardless of what the calendar says.

Many mothers struggle with finding the balance between accomplishing daily duties and maintaining an active spiritual life. During our busiest mothering years, some of us might become frustrated with our inability to establish sophisticated prayer lives, while others of us might neglect our spiritual lives altogether. Neither of these is a healthy approach.

In this little volume, we offer daily prompts and suggestions—small steps—to encourage you and help you attain that elusive balance between an active life

and a contemplative one. We share three items each day:

Think—Each day’s entry features words from saints or Scripture. We hope that you will find in these small offerings what we did—wisdom that points you in the right direction and prompts you to further intimate conversation with our Lord.

Pray—We also offer daily words of prayer. These personal prayers were composed in the quiet of our own homes before we heard little feet on the stairs to greet the day and after we kissed sleepy children good-night. We’ve kept our readers close to our hearts while writing and done our best to bring all mothers’ cares to God. We hope that these prayers will be just the beginning of your own fruitful prayer times.

Act—Finally, every day, we’ve given you a little something to do—a chance to bring your thoughts and prayers to action. By considering just one virtue a month, we focus on specific ideals that incline our hearts toward God. We pray that these prompts toward action will bless you, your family, and your community.

It is our hope that this little book will help you take small steps in the right direction—toward real spiritual growth and the fulfillment of your vocation through everyday work. The process of gathering

and sharing these thoughts with you has certainly blessed us.

Big changes happen with small steps. So let's take a few . . . together.

J A N U A R Y



J o y

JANUARY 1



SOLEMNITY OF MARY,
MOTHER OF GOD

Think

“And Mary said: ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.’”

~LUKE 1:46–49

Pray

Mary, I want strength of faith like yours. I want to glorify God in my soul. I want to count all things joy. Give me grace to become more and more like you.

Act

Gather with your family and share resolutions for the New Year. How will you grow closer to God in the next 365 days?

JANUARY 2



Think

“From silly devotions and sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us.”

~ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Pray

Thank you, God, for this new year—for the chance to begin again, for the opportunity to be a cheerful witness to the abundant joy of life in you!

Act

Are you on the road to becoming a sour-faced saint? Do you offer your devotions and go about your duties with a grim face and a resigned sigh? Lighten up! God’s glory is shining around you and—if you let him—he will fill you with joy.

JANUARY 3



Think

“The condition of union seems to be nothing else than dying, so as to speak, entirely to all the things of the world, and living in the enjoyment of God.”

~ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Pray

I want to enjoy you, God. Draw my heart and mind ever closer to you so that I might find all joy and all happiness in you.

Act

It’s still Christmas! Invite some friends for tea or coffee. Don’t fuss about fancy table settings or decorations. Just rejoice together in the Good News of Christ’s birth.

JANUARY 4



Think

“It is requisite for the relaxation of the mind that we make use, from time to time, of playful deeds and jokes.”

~ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Pray

God, help me to always hear your glad voice in the laughter of the ones I love.

Act

Pop some popcorn this afternoon and share jokes as a family. If you don't know any good ones, borrow some children's joke and riddle books from the library. Laugh together!

JANUARY 5



Think

“Let us be truly sons of Divine Providence and trust wholly in God. We are not among those doom-sayers who think that the world will end tomorrow. Corruption and evil are indeed rampant, but I still maintain that God will triumph in the end.”

~ST. ALOYSIUS ORIONE

Pray

When all seems to be falling apart around me, Lord, help me to see things as you do. I do trust in you. Bolster my faltering faith.

Act

Plan a simple activity with your kids today. Make cocoa, make a snowman, or make a craft. As you work and play together, pay attention to the pure enjoyment your children find in small pleasures. Aim to do likewise.

JANUARY 6



Think

“Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls. A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love.”

~BL. TERESA OF CALCUTTA

Pray

Baby Jesus, how the hearts of the Magi must have swelled with the joy of seeing you! Be ever present to me and help me to bring your joy to those at home here and to those who live a great distance from me.

Act

Use gold or silver paper to wrap a small gift (perhaps a book) for each member of your family. Enjoy the Feast of the Epiphany!

JANUARY 7



Think

“Prayer reveals to souls the vanity of earthly goods and pleasures. It fills them with light, strength, and consolation; and gives them a foretaste of the calm bliss of our heavenly home.”

~ST. ROSE OF VITERBO

Pray

God, sometimes I am tempted to think I will never have peace or calm in my home or my heart. When life gets noisy and wild, remind me of the peaceful bliss that awaits us all in heaven.

Act

Sing! Even if you lack vocal talents, gather your family, put on some beautiful music, and make a joyful noise unto the Lord.