

**The Gift of Life: A Call to Protect Human
Dignity and the Sacredness of Life**

By

Sr. MartinAgnes Ibewuike

© 2024

Sr. Martin Agnes Ibewuike

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to those who protect, defend, and promote life, honour the dignity of the human person, and uphold the sacredness of life.

Foreword

In a world increasingly fraught with challenges to the sanctity of life, **The Gift of Life: A Call to Protect Human Dignity and the Sacredness of Life** emerges as a timely and profound reflection on the value of human existence. This book serves as both a call to action and a spiritual guide, reminding us of the divine origin of life and the responsibility we have to safeguard its sacredness in all its forms.

The author, Sr. MartinAgnes Ibewuiké, has worked with me for several years as Matron of the GAMB Orphanage. She joined the CIDJAP Diploma Certificate Programme for Ethics and Theology for laypeople in 2017 and performed marvellously well.

With remarkable clarity and heartfelt passion, Sr. MartinAgnes delves into the theological, ethical, and practical dimensions of life's value. Through personal narratives, spiritual insights, and practical recommendations, the book addresses the urgent need to protect the unborn, care for the vulnerable, and uphold the dignity of every individual. It speaks to the heart, urging readers to recognise life as a precious gift from God that deserves our utmost respect and care.

As an advocate for human dignity, I am particularly moved by the emphasis on the interconnectedness of humanity and the moral responsibility we bear for one another. The reflections presented here resonate deeply with my own commitment to promoting justice, peace, and human rights.

This reflection stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration in an age where life is too often undervalued or commodified. It challenges us to live with purpose, nurture love and compassion

in our relationships, and strive to leave the world better than we found it.

I commend Sr. Martin Agnes for her dedication and courage in addressing these profound themes and for offering a resource that will enrich the lives of its readers. I invite everyone to read it with an open heart and a willingness to act in defence of life's sacredness.

May ***The Gift of Life*** inspire us all to cherish the divine gift of existence and to work tirelessly for a world where every life is celebrated and protected.

Msgr. Prof. Obiora Ike

Preface

This book begins with the story of a good man and his wife who lost their lives while trying to help a visitor in need and how their only virgin daughter became a victim of rape. The debate that follows encourages us to choose life in any situation or circumstance, no matter the challenges.

Globally, humanity is losing sight of the sacredness of life, respect for human dignity, and the sanctity of existence. In Nigeria, the high rate of violations against life—through ritual killings, kidnapping, abortion, assassination, terrorism, and more—has become a daily occurrence. It seems that life is no longer valued or regarded as precious. Many have forgotten that life is a deep longing cherished by every generation.

The essence of life is inherently linked to sharing—giving and receiving—which fosters happiness and joy. It is no wonder that life is celebrated in Igbo land (*Ndubuisi, Ndukaku*). However, life should be lived in a balance of fear and faith. In other words, the plans we make for life may either succeed or fail.

The author seeks to remind us that life is precious—a gift from God, a wonder and a mystery beyond description deserving of care and nurture. This book examines what life is and is not, its purpose and how to maintain, sustain, and balance it. It explores various aspects and provides practical tips to help maintain, preserve, protect, and promote life for its longevity and eternal significance.

Therefore, we must encourage one another to strive for a better and more abundant life.

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The book concludes with admonitions and prayers to inspire hope and reflection.

Sr. Martin Agnes Ibewuiké

Congregation of the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I give thanks to God, the Author of Life, for the gift of inspiration and strength to complete this book. Without His grace and guidance, this work would not have been possible.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my religious community, the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy, for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this journey. Your prayers and love have been a constant source of strength.

I am deeply indebted to **Msgr. Prof. Obiora Ike** for graciously writing the foreword to this book and for his lifelong commitment to promoting human dignity and the sanctity of life. His insights and examples have been a great inspiration to me.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to my Superior General, **Rev. Mother Trinitas Obianika**, for reading through the book and providing valuable corrections and suggestions. My deep appreciation also goes to my religious community, the **Congregation of the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy**, for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this journey. Your prayers and love have been a constant source of strength.

To my friends, colleagues, and all who contributed their knowledge, prayers, and moral support, I say thank you. Your encouragement and belief in the importance of this work have kept me motivated.

I also acknowledge the countless individuals and organisations who work tirelessly to protect and promote life in all its sacredness. Your courage and dedication have inspired many, including myself, to take a stand for the dignity of every human being.

I want to acknowledge Miss Ogechi Esther Chidozie, who dedicated her time to arranging and typing the manuscript, and all of you who contributed to editing and compiling the book.

Lastly, I am grateful to the readers of this book. My prayer is that it touches your heart, inspires reflection, and motivates action to protect and cherish the gift of life.

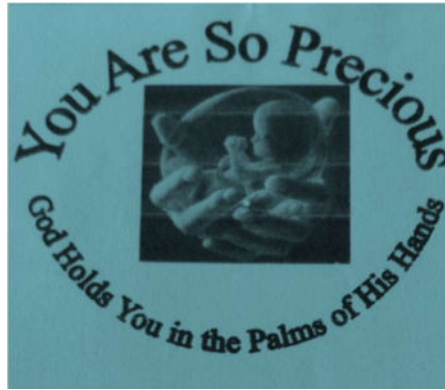
May God bless you all abundantly.

Sr. MartinAgnes Ibewuike

Congregation of the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy

Chapter 1

The Sanctity of Life: A Debate on Choice, Responsibility and Ethics



There is a good man, a Chief, who is kind and generous. Every night, he sits in his parlour with his family, watching television and cracking jokes. On this fateful night, after their usual family routines and finishing their night prayers at about 9:45 pm, there was a knock at the door of their house. A voice called out anxiously, 'E-woo! Chief! Chief!' The Chief asked, 'Who is it?'

The visitor: It's me, Chief. My wife is in labour, and I need your help.

A feeling of compassion and pity fell upon him and his family. In his eagerness to help, he asked his daughter to open the door. The girl rushed to open the door. Lo and behold, four hefty armed men pushed her back, subdued the family, and robbed them of their valuables and money. As if that was not enough, the leader of the gang approached their daughter to satisfy his desires.

The parents shouted and pleaded with him, 'Please don't! She is our only daughter and a virgin. But the others shouted them down, telling them to be quiet. When they would not be silent and tried to stop him, they were shot to death.

The girl screamed repeatedly, and right there, in her parents' pool of blood, she was raped and brutally assaulted. She was not killed but left unconscious. Later, the neighbours discovered what had happened and rushed her to the hospital. Due to shock, fear, and trauma, she remained unconscious for months. When she regained consciousness, she could not stop crying over the horrific events. While under the care of doctors and psychologists for rehabilitation, it was discovered that she was pregnant.

The question now is: should she keep the pregnancy or terminate it? A doctor, a psychologist, a freethinker, and a pro-lifer debated the question.

Freethinker: Why should she keep the child after such an experience? The presence of the child will be an everlasting sorrow.

Psychologist: I agree with you. This is a tragic experience for this teenage girl. This will remind her for nine long months of the violence inflicted on her and her parents. This will be very devastating to her. Besides, who will be the father of this child, the murderer, a rapist? I don't think it is just to let this teenage girl go through another trauma and pain, raising the child.

Pro-lifer: Now, I understand where you are going. What is within her is life, a gift from God, and a precious

one at that. Will you allow another killing for her psychological treatments?

Doctor: But it's only an embryo

Pro-lifer: What is that supposed to mean?

Doctor: It means that it's an insignificant thing that can be removed, especially at this stage, without causing any harm to the girl. It is just a bunch of clustered cells.

Pro-lifer: So you think it is not yet human?

Doctor: In a way, yes, because the cells are not significant. They can even die in a few days, even when not touched.

Pro-lifer: Why are you calling that potential human being cells? I think, if I am not mistaken, everything that it takes to form a full human being is contained in those cells and tempering or terminating such cells (pregnancy) is an act of killing an innocent and unborn child, which is injustice.

Freethinker: That is debatable because, here in Nigeria, abortion has no legal backing. However, some other countries give the mother the right to choose if she wants the baby or not.

Psychologist: But you know that the great value of the mental health of the woman who becomes pregnant as a result of rape or incest can be safely guarded by an abortion.

Freethinker: It is also said that a pregnancy caused by rape or incest is a result of a grave injustice and that the victim should not be obliged to carry the pregnancy to term.

Pro-lifer: Would that now make abortion no longer killing of an innocent and voiceless child?

Freethinker: Whose life is more important here, the mother or the baby?

Psychologist: From the psychological point of view, the value of the mother's mental health is more important than the value of the baby.

Freethinker: Yes, because the baby is still nothing but a neophyte who knows nothing about what we are talking about and whose chances/fate to live depends upon so many factors, and so, it is just a being in a state of chance.

Pro-lifer: So your birth is by chance?

Doctor: Somewhat yes, because not all sexual intercourse results in pregnancy. Also, during intercourse, many cells are released, but only one succeeds in fertilising one single egg (ovum). However, gender selection is by chance. Even an abortion can occur spontaneously, that is, by natural miscarriage.

Pro-lifer: Would that mean that the issue of chance overrides the fact of existence or life?

Freethinker: No, chance and life are two different things. Whether fertilisation occurs by chance or not, once there is fertilisation, and those cells come to be, life begins.

Pro-lifer: Then are we morally bound to terminate life?

Psychologist: Look, if the child is considered an aggressor against the woman's integrity and personal life, it is not only just but also morally defensible to repel the aggressor, even by ending their life, if that is the only way to defend personal and human values.

Pro-lifer: Oh! Who is the aggressor here, the child or the rapist? Even if the child is terminated, will that remove or erase the experience or the thought and memory of the incident? Remember my friends; experience has shown that most unfortunate pregnant rape victims, when well supported, counselled, encouraged and rehabilitated, change their attitudes about their unborn child from someone repulsive to someone who is innocent and uniquely worthwhile. Why do you think it is ok to kill an innocent and defenceless human being?

Doctor: When the girl recovered full consciousness, she was asked whether to carry the pregnancy or terminate it.

Victim: I want to carry the pregnancy.

Pro-lifer: See how the issue of the right to life and save the unborn child has generated inexhaustible debate. So then, what is the ethical implication of this?

This shows that life is precious. It is a gift from God and proceeds from God (Gen. 1: 27-28). We are all created in the image and likeness of God (Imago Dei). Thus, human beings share the nature of God and should be given the opportunity to live. Life is sacred and should be treated as such.

Thus, protecting human life should be everyone's responsibility. So, why should a child conceived through rape not be given the equal right to live as everyone else? They, too, are created in the image and likeness of God. Life is a free gift from God to humanity, precious in His eyes.

Every human person is created for a purpose, and this purpose of God for each one of his creations cannot be fulfilled by anyone else. Every human being has a God-given, inalienable right to life and to live. The right to live, therefore, cannot be legitimately usurped by anyone. No individual or government has the authority to deprive another of life or liberty, as affirmed in the scriptures, universal law, and Section 33(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN), 1999. This right applies regardless of age, stage of development, level of dependence on others for survival, or place of residence.

Abortion results in the death of a defenceless and voiceless human being. It is immoral and unjust when evaluated/viewed in the light of the law and, of course, the divine law. The sixth commandment forbids killing; thou shall not kill (Exodus 20: 13). It is good to be reminded at this juncture that life proceeds from God, and it is only God who can take it (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

We all have the right and freedom to live, but possessing certain freedoms does not equate to absolute freedom. Such freedoms are limited by the environment in which they are permitted and upheld by the laws that promote them. While a child at conception or birth may not yet possess ethical or moral responsibility, they still hold an equal right to live, just like everyone else.

Thus, a French philosopher once said, "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, June 28, 1712). Of course, freedom comes with responsibility, meaning that while one is free, they are also morally, legally, and psychologically responsible for the choices they make.

Thanks be to God, the girl in question made an ethical and responsible choice by carrying the pregnancy to term. The child grew up to become a source of joy, happiness, comfort, support, friendship, and companionship to her, being the sole survivor of the tragic incident that claimed both her parents in the blink of an eye. The victim accepted her circumstances and moved forward with life.

Do not give up easily, no matter the situation you find yourself in. God is not finished with you.

Therefore, since you cannot give life, you should not take life. No one can give what they do not possess (*Nemo dat quod non habet*). Children are gifts from God; they are true blessings (Psalm 127).

Chapter 2

Belonging to God: Embracing Divine Ownership and Dignity

Do I realise that I also belong to the Lord? I do not belong to myself; God owns me because:

1. He created me.
2. He sustains and preserves me at every moment of my existence.
3. He gives me the power to act and works with me in every action. God enables me to direct every action for which I am responsible.
4. He also has dominion over me because of my consecration as a child of God.

Since God has the right of ownership over me by virtue of creation, preservation, and collaboration, I cannot do with my life as I please. I belong to God.

What joy! If I belonged to a man, I would feel enslaved, but I belong to God. As an adopted child of God and a member of His family, I must live up to my dignity.

○ Lord, lead me from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality.

Moral Lessons

- Be patient.
- Be courageous.
- Forgive.
- Do not give up easily.

- Accept every situation in good faith.
- Trust in God, and everything will work out in time.

Chapter 3

What Is Life: Reflections on Its Meaning and Purpose

What Is Life

Definition: Life is the period between birth and death, or the state and experience of being alive.



- Life is a wonder—a mystery beyond definition and description.
- Life is a gift from God.
- Life is incredibly precious; see how God holds you in His hands.
- Life is valuable; cherish it with care and love.
- Life is a precious gift; guard it wisely. Before you were born, He knew you completely (Jeremiah 1:5).
- Life is fundamental to every living creature (*Ndu bu isi*).
- Life is God's gift passed down through human generations.
- Life is God's project for you and me; it demands responsibility and growth.
- Life is a project; invest your very best into it.
- Life is a duty; fulfil it.
- Life is a struggle; embrace it.
- Life is a challenge; face it.

- Life is an adventure; dare to live it.
- Life is a dream; make it a reality.
- Life is a song; sing it joyfully.
- Life is an opportunity; seize it.
- Life is a game; play it wisely.
- Life is a goal; achieve it.
- Life is a promise; honour it.
- Life is a journey; complete it with purpose.
- Life is pleasant; enjoy it wisely.
- Life is priceless; never cheapen its value.
- Life is a book; every day is a new page, every month a new chapter, and every year a new series.
- Life is a stage; play your part with love and sincerity.
- Life is at its best with prayer; pray always, without ceasing.
- Life can be painstaking; your endurance will lead to victory.
- Life is meant to be fulfilling and successful.
- Life is not a having and getting but a being and becoming.
- Life itself can be one's greatest teacher and the ultimate source of wisdom.
- Life must be built on a solid foundation and lived with confidence.
- Life is not complex; it is we humans who complicate it.
- Life is too short to be petty-minded, so devote it to worthwhile actions, great thoughts, and understandings that endure. The great end of life is positive action; therefore, our value is not determined by our size.
- In our life's journey, we proceed like small birds whose flight is in loops. They always seem about to drop, but the drop in their flight urges them forward. (Gerald W. Hughes)
- Life isn't a race; it is a journey with fulfilment as the ultimate destination. Enjoy the sights and sounds along the way.
- Life is like a mosaic of many colours. (Erwin Albrecht)



- Life is an echo: when you bring out the best in others, you bring out the best in yourself.

Chapter 4

Life's Journey: Balancing Fear, Faith, and Purpose

Life is a journey that must be lived in a balance of fear and faith—fear in the sense that tragedy may disrupt life's plans and faith in the hope that all dreams and aspirations will come to fruition. Life requires faith in every moment that calls for help, assurance, and strength.

Without faith, life can feel threatening and frightening because it unfolds along uncertain paths filled with ups and downs—joy, sadness, and disappointment.

The joy of life is a treasure that lies deep within our hearts. In Igbo land, life is a cherished longing shared by all. On many occasions, life is celebrated because where there is life, there is both hope and worry. Therefore, life must be protected, promoted, nurtured, nourished, preserved, and respected.

Life is a battlefield. We need courage, patience, and persistence to fight our battles.

We can choose to make meaningful use of our lives or waste them. We can create something grand and beautiful or reduce them to insignificance.

We can achieve our goals by living with love wherever Almighty God has placed us. (*Just a Moment, Please* — J. Maurus; Kanshi Ram Chawla)

Chapter 5

What Life Is Not

From time to time, we must pause and reflect on who we are, where we are, and what we are doing. Failing to do this regularly risks trapping us in a small, self-contained world—a dangerous place to be.

This narrow perspective distorts how we view the world at large, and the way we perceive the world shapes how we live our lives.

Life is not about what you have:

- Your family
- Social class
- Educational qualifications
- Affluence
- Your position in life

Rather, it is about who you are!

Chapter 6

The Purpose of Life



- The purpose of life is to serve others. However, when doing so, you should not expect anything in return; your intention should be to lessen other people's misery. "Service to others should be sincere and from the heart; only then will it be fruitful." Does any tree eat its own fruit? No. This teaches us that human beings should not only use their minds, bodies, and skills for themselves but also to serve others. When you do this, nature, in turn, will reward you. Your constant inner intention should be to help others. If you are unable to do so for any reason, you should ensure that you do not hurt anyone. This is an indirect way of helping those around you.
- Any good you need to do, do it now, as you will only pass this way once.
- The wayfarer needs to examine life with a simple map to determine whether they have used their years wisely, how far

they have journeyed, and where they will go next. This is the main purpose of life. (Erwin Albrecht)

- This is why it is good, from time to time, to step back and view your life from a distance. In doing so, you gain a new perspective.
- Be passionate throughout your life! When you are passionate, there is a deep desire, a fire within, and the will to approach daily situations realistically—in ways that benefit both yourself and others.
- Embrace a life of true meaning and purpose. Take a moment out of your busy day to reflect on what you are doing with your life as an individual.
- Life is filled with ups and downs. Close your eyes and ears to negativity, focus on the positive, and communicate calmly.
- People who have a sense of meaning and purpose in life tend to excel in school and work, feel more content, and even live longer. (Viktor Frankl)

Chapter 7

How to Live a Meaningful Life

We do not need to do something extraordinary or epic to lead a meaningful life. Meaning can be found all around us.

Life is meaningful as long as, in each situation, you ask yourself, "What is the most loving thing to do?" Then, make an effort to do it.

Life is a stage, and each of us plays our part. Every one of us has a role assigned by God Himself. The way you play your role, whether significant or minor, will determine the happiness of others as well as your own, both now and for eternity.

Life can be good or bad, depending on what you contribute to it and your attitude. Ultimately, it is about living joyfully and bringing happiness to others.

The Four Pillars of Living a Meaningful Life

- Purpose
- Belonging
- Transcendence
- Storytelling

Purpose

Purpose is a significant goal that organises our life and involves contributing to others. It gives us a reason to push through the good, the bad, and the mundane aspects of life to accomplish greater objectives.

Our purpose can evolve over time, and some people may have more than one purpose. If you're unsure of your purpose, don't

worry—part of growing up is figuring it out. Pay attention to what you enjoy studying and doing, work hard, and reflect on the ways you'd like to make your mark in the world, whether big or small.

Belonging

Belonging is about being in meaningful relationships. Such relationships are essential for fulfillment, where you are valued for who you are and where you value others for who they are. However, some relationships are marked by false belonging, where you are valued only for how you look or what you do rather than for who you truly are. True belonging requires mutual acceptance and unconditional support.

In the age of technology, it can be easy to get distracted by our phones and neglect the people around us. While online connections can foster some sense of belonging, true belonging requires actual interaction—whether meeting face-to-face or speaking over the phone.

Transcendence

Transcendent experiences are moments when you feel completely absorbed in something greater than yourself. This can happen during sports or playing a musical instrument while being deeply focused on schoolwork, getting lost in a song, or feeling awe and wonder in nature or during a spiritual service. These experiences allow you to forget yourself and feel connected to something much larger.

After such experiences, people often feel renewed and gain a deeper perspective on themselves and the world.

Storytelling

Storytelling is the narrative you tell about yourself—what kind of person you believe you are, how you became that way, and where

your life is heading. Unfortunately, many people tell negative stories about themselves, such as "*I'll never fit in,*" "*I'm not good enough,*" or "*I'll never succeed.*" These stories are rarely true.

Psychologists explain this tendency with the concept of negativity bias. When something bad happens, like receiving a poor grade, it affects us more deeply than positive experiences, giving negative events disproportionate power to shape our self-narratives.

If you find yourself telling a negative story—which is common—ask yourself: *What is the evidence for this story?* Then, look for contrary evidence. For instance, if you feel left out and think, "*No one likes me,*" try to recall moments when you connected with others and had fun. Another helpful strategy is to imagine you're comforting a friend. If your friend said, "*No one likes me,*" you would reassure them and highlight evidence to the contrary. Be as kind to yourself as you would be to a friend.

Building the Pillars

Regardless of which pillar you value most, there are concrete steps you can take to strengthen each one. For example, to build belonging, spend time getting to know a friend better during lunch or start a meaningful conversation with a teacher or colleague in your workplace.

How to Build Each of These Pillars

- **Purpose:** Reflect on how you want to make the world a better place and work hard to accomplish that goal.
- **Storytelling:** Start keeping a journal to document your experiences and shape your narrative.

- **Transcendence:** Take a walk in nature or listen to a beautiful piece of music to connect with something greater than yourself.
- **Belonging:** Engage in meaningful relationships, show friendliness, and communicate effectively to build deeper connections.

Chapter 8

Your Life's Motto

- Life often becomes so busy that we forget to take time to connect with people and nature.
- Life is meant to be fun. Take ample opportunities to laugh at yourself and the world around you. Free yourself.
- Life is meant to have meaning and purpose.
- Life is like a river: we are constantly changing while remaining the same individuals. The river symbolises a psychological awakening to life's abundance, offering a place for self-reflection and finding peace.
- Appreciate life.
- Enjoy every good thing that comes your way.
- Delight in the smiles of children.
- Do not waste a minute in boredom.
- Gaze upon the brightness of the sky.
- Pay attention to those around you.
- Smell the fragrance of flowers.
- Marvel at the colours of a field.
- Contemplate the beauty of nature.
- Revel in the joy of living.
- Wisdom is the daily sustenance of life. Though full of setbacks, life need not be dull or uninspiring. There must always be continuous growth. The best way to overcome setbacks is to embrace the natural flow of life.

Chapter 9

The Art of Maintaining Balance: Keys to a Healthy and Fulfilled Life

How to Maintain Life

1. Build healthy self-esteem. True self-esteem goes beyond simply recognising your good qualities; it involves embracing your worth as a person.
2. Learn to both give and receive.
3. Foster positive parenting and nurture strong family relationships.
4. Cultivate meaningful and lasting friendships.
5. Identify and focus on your priorities.
6. Get actively involved in your community or interests.
7. Develop effective strategies to manage stress.
8. Adapt to changes that affect your life with resilience.

9 Simple Ways to Find Balance and Get Your Life Back (Royale Scuderi)

Recent research supports the idea that maintaining a healthy life balance is not only essential for health and happiness but also significantly boosts productivity and success in your career or business. When you take steps to find balance in your life, you gain a greater ability to focus your attention and energy on achieving your goals, taking productive actions, and moving forward in a meaningful way.

The question is: What does life balance really mean? How do you view a balanced life? And most importantly, how do you achieve it amidst your busy schedule?

Self-discipline is one of the most effective tools for regaining balance in life. Without it, time is wasted, procrastination occurs, and tasks are left incomplete.

Remember, you do not need to change everything at once. Small, gradual adjustments over time can help you determine what works best for you. Eventually, you will develop a whole new set of positive habits that will help you maintain balance in your life.

- Stop comparing yourself to others; doing so denies your uniqueness.
- You are unique, beautiful, and needed.
- You have unique gifts and talents.
- There is no one like you in the entire universe.
- You are here because you are needed.
- The world would not be the same without you.
- Becoming a copy of someone else will not help you, your loved ones, or the world.
- Practice self-love and surround yourself with people who appreciate you.
- Distance yourself from those who wish to change you into someone else—they are not your people! Remember that.

You can change what isn't working for you and regain balance in your life. Following these steps will help set you back on track and committed to living a well-balanced life where self-discipline is no longer an issue.

Seven Simple Ways to Achieve a Balanced Life

- **Turn It Off:**
Disconnect from digital devices during the weekends. Put your phone aside, turn off your computer, and give your work-focused mind a rest. It might sound challenging, but start small.

Try disconnecting for at least one day or even a few hours each night and notice the difference it makes.

- **Trim, Trim, Trim:**
Learning to say "no" is a crucial step toward creating balance in your life. Say no to anything that is not essential or does not add value to your life. Saying "yes" without resentment and "no" without regret will set you on the path to achieving balance.
- **Pay Attention to Your Health:**
Your health significantly affects the quality of your life and work. Higher productivity and happiness come from balancing enough sleep, healthy eating, and regular physical activity.
- **Cultivate a Peaceful Mental State:**
Strive to be at peace with God, yourself, nature, and others.
- **Get Enough Sleep and Meditate:**
Make it a habit to prioritise adequate sleep and daily meditation to rejuvenate your body and mind.
- **Start Journaling:**
Journaling is a simple practice that requires minimal commitment but has significant benefits. It clears mental clutter and creates space in your mind. Begin with just one sentence a day to get started.
- **Maintain a Balanced Diet:**
A healthy, balanced diet plays a vital role in sustaining your overall well-being.

Improving sleep, cultivating a calm mental state, maintaining a healthy diet, and incorporating regular exercise form the foundation of a well-balanced life. These essentials are summarised as the "4 Rs": Regular meals, recreation/rest, regular exercise, and regular check-ups.

Chapter 10

Tips to Make Progress in Life

- Man is a pilgrim, and life is a bittersweet adventure.
- Take time to reflect on who you are and acknowledge any uncertainties.
- Recognise that life involves both successes and failures.
- Anticipate temporary anxiety when taking risks, making decisions, and moving forward.
- Educate yourself before making decisions. Conduct thorough research to ease any anxiety.
- Start small. Once you master the initial steps, you can build on them.
- When you commit to a decision, stick with it. Avoid the temptation to waver.
- Acknowledge your courage. Taking on challenges is not easy, and your bravery is commendable.
- Assess whether your concerns are justified or if you are reacting prematurely.
- Develop an inner dialogue to calm and centre yourself.
- Understand that success often comes in small increments and may include occasional failures along the way. Embrace this process and accept yourself as you grow.
- Life is precious; do not waste it on pursuits that your heart does not respect or align with.
- Life is invaluable, and time is vital. Make every moment count, and extend help to those in greater need.
- Follow your heart. Time is precious; do not waste it living someone else's life.
- A holistic understanding of life's risks can serve as the foundation for developing new and alternative perspectives.

Chapter 11

Life Encouragement

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember the peace that can be found in silence. As far as possible, and without surrender, stay on good terms with everyone. Speak your truth quietly and clearly. Listen to others, even those who may seem dull or ignorant; they, too, have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive individuals; they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself to others, you may grow vain or bitter, for there will always be people both greater and lesser than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Stay interested in your career, however humble; it is a genuine possession amidst the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. However, do not let this blind you to the virtue that exists. Many strive for high ideals, and life is full of heroism.

Be yourself, and above all, do not feign affection. Do not be cynical about love; even amidst aridity and disenchantment, it remains as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield yourself during sudden misfortunes.

Do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. Whether or not it is clear to you, the universe undoubtedly unfolds as it should.

Therefore, be at peace with God, however you conceive Him. Amidst the noisy confusion of life, maintain peace within your soul.

Despite its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it remains a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy.

Chapter 12

Slow Me Down



Grant me, amidst the confusion of my day, the calmness of the everlasting hills. Break the tension in my nerves and muscles with the soothing music of singing streams that linger in my memory. Help me uncover the magical, restorative power of sleep.

Teach me the art of taking small moments of rest: slowing down to admire a flower, chat with a friend, pat a dog, or read a few lines from a good book.

Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values so that I may grow toward the stars of my destiny.

Chapter 13

Prayers for Life and Family: Honoring the Sacred Gift

Prayer to Protect Life

Loving God, I thank You for the gift of life, which You have given and continue to give to me and all of us. Merciful God, I ask for Your pardon and forgiveness for my own failures and the failures of all people to respect and foster all forms of life in our universe. Gracious God, I pray that, with Your grace, I and all people may reverence, protect, and promote all forms of life, especially the lives of the unborn, orphans, abandoned, neglected, disabled, abused, and elderly.

I also pray that all who make decisions about life in any form may do so with wisdom, love, and courage.

Loving God, I praise and glorify You as Father, the source of all life; as Your Son, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world; and as the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier of our lives. Amen!

Prayer for the Family

Lord God, from You, every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. Father, You are love and life. Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of a woman, and through the Holy Spirit, the fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become, for each successive generation, a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the well-being of their families and all families around the world. Grant that the young may find in their

families solid support for their human dignity and their growth in truth and love.

Grant also that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all weaknesses and trials that our families sometimes endure.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, we pray that the Church may faithfully carry out her worldwide mission in and through the family.

May Mary, Queen of the Family, make up for our shortcomings and extend her protection to every family.

We ask this of You, who are life, truth, and love, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!

Conclusion

Life is about whom you love and whom you hurt. It is about how you love yourself, how you hurt yourself, and how you love and hurt those around you. Though unseen, these aspects are powerful and real. Life involves saying "yes" to things that help you become a better and happier person and "no" to those that do not.

Your life is meaningful if, in each situation, you ask what the most loving thing to do is—and then try to do it. Life is a constant "come and go." Each of us plays a small part, with a role assigned by God Himself. Whether your role is leading or minor, the way you play it will determine both your happiness and that of others, now and for eternity.

Life can be good or bad depending on what you bring into it and your attitude toward it. It is about living joyfully and bringing joy to others. Life is defined and shaped by our relationship with God and with others. This relationship can be destroyed or distorted if we let life's events and circumstances control it.

Life, in fact, comes without an instruction manual. Most of us learn through experience and the method of trial and error, often making mistakes along the way. For example, when we are unaware of our call or fail to live up to it, life becomes meaningless and unsatisfying. Yet, unlike other beings, we have the ability to learn from the experiences of those who came before us, helping us better navigate life.

One of the most important keys to a better life is to keep yourself and others happy. Happiness is determined less by what life brings us and more by the attitude we bring to life. The course of life is

influenced not so much by what happens to us but by how we perceive it.

Happiness or unhappiness depends on the quality of our thoughts and the habits of our minds. Life is a school that teaches through triumphs, trials, and tragedies—each an opportunity to grow and become better. One important truth to realise is that your life is not entirely your own. Every decision you make affects others (*Dani Johnson*). You are responsible for your life and cannot keep blaming others for your dysfunction.

Life is about moving forward. As Oprah Winfrey says, "*Life is really about moving on.*" Albert Einstein adds, "*Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.*"

Whether life is going well for us or not, we all seek to be better and to find happiness. Life is beautiful when we walk forward, united as brothers and sisters, loving one another and encountering Jesus.

Life is a profound mystery and a sacred gift from God. The greatest artist is the one who lives the finest life. For Christians, the ultimate goal is to gaze upon the face of Jesus at the end of life's journey. This earthly life must one day be transformed into a new and better existence.

Thus, life is preparation for eternity, making every day important. Let us move forward bravely, striving to reach the end of life's journey without unnecessary interference or distraction.

We are all actors on the stage of life. Play your part well, but "*be careful not to lose yourself in the drama to the extent of forgetting the final curtain.*"

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About the Author

The author, **Sr. Martin Agnes Ibewuike**, is a dedicated prolifer and a deeply committed member of the **Congregation of the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy (DMMM)**. With her unwavering faith and profound sense of compassion, she has devoted her life to promoting the sanctity of life, respecting the dignity of every human being, and upholding the sacredness of existence.

A Reverend Sister with an exceptional commitment to service, Sr. Martin Agnes has spent decades championing causes that align with her mission to protect the vulnerable and uplift the disadvantaged. She believes that every life, regardless of circumstance, is a precious gift from God and deserves love, care, and opportunities for growth. Her tireless efforts have been instrumental in transforming Guardian Angels Motherless Babies Home into a haven of hope and care for abandoned and orphaned children.

Beyond her work at GAMB, Sr. Martin Agnes has been an advocate for family values, marriage enrichment, and youth development. She has established initiatives such as **Catholic African Family Life Care (CAFLiC)** and **Little Friends of Christ (LFC)**, which aim to nurture families and inspire young people to embrace their faith and values. Her ability to combine visionary leadership with practical action has earned her respect within and beyond her congregation.

In addition to her spiritual and pastoral work, Sr. Martin Agnes is an accomplished organiser and educator. She has trained countless individuals in caregiving, child development, and community engagement, always emphasising the importance of

integrity, discipline, and innovation. Her leadership has not only transformed institutions but also the lives of those she mentors. This book is a testament to her lifelong dedication to spreading love, compassion, and hope. Sr. Martin Agnes continues to inspire through her teachings and actions, reminding us all of the profound impact one individual can have when guided by faith and a commitment to serving others.