



PERSONAL LIFE PROJECT



augustinian
recollects

PERSONAL L I F E P R O J E C T



*"Lord, make me remember you,
who understands you,
that I love you"*
(St. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 15,28,51).



1. A handy tool for projecting life

The Life Project or Life Plan is a **written document** that *summarizes the type of person you want to become, your goals, and central options* to make your existence worth living. *The Life Project* will also be a road map to walk towards your “north star” -the ideals- in every area of life, and thus, be much *more fulfilled* and *satisfied* with who you are and what you have achieved in life.

What would be the advantages of elaborating a Life Project?

- *Generate a better perspective of who you are and what you currently want.*
- *It puts you in front of the resources you have in the present moment to project yourself into the future.*
- *Increases self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-knowledge.*
- *Strengthens optimism and confidence in the future.*
- *It allows you to extract your maximum potential.*
- *Minimize the risk of making wrong decisions or taking steps with which you do not identify 100%.*
- *It facilitates the implementation of strategies to achieve your objectives more clearly and realistically.*





2. The human being is the author of himself...

A sculptor was contemplating a trunk of hardwood in front of him, and, squinting his eyes, he discovered in it, as if in the light, a perfect carving and then another and another, in an endless parade. They were not imaginary beings, no; they were real: they were in there. His job would be to rescue those creatures by freeing them from their wooden prison. But as he picked up the gouge, he felt paralyzed. Millions were raising their arms clamoring for their liberation from the heart of that trunk: to save one was to abandon many, but not to choose was to exclude all. And how could he give up saving that one possible creature for him? He felt a shudder because he suddenly sensed that the trunk was his own life, the hidden figures, the thousand possible ways of living it and that he had to choose a single destiny and carve it with his own hands.

(Ángel Sanz, *El alzar de las manos*, p. 16).

What does this brief reflection lead you to think about yourself?

3. The main objective of this tool for the elaboration of a Life Project

A Life Project is elaborated primarily to make room for the project of a new humanity in Christ in one's own heart, whatever the specific vocation to which the Christian feels called. Christ, the complete man, allows us to approach a new way of understanding human beings and living life as a service and self-giving. In reality, the mystery of man is only clarified in the mystery of the Incarnate Word. Adam, the first man, was a figure of the one who was to come, that is, Christ, the Lord. In the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, Christ, the new Adam fully manifests himself to humanity and reveals the sublimity of his vocation (Gaudium et Spes, 22). Have you ever thought about your project of becoming a whole person in the light of the way of being of Jesus Christ?





4. Augustinian Inspiration in the Elaboration of the Life Project

This tool of the *Life Project* represents a privileged aid that facilitates the desire that St. Augustine cultivated with all his heart: *"Lord, make me remember you, understand you, love you"* (*On the Trinity* 15:28,51). Remembering, understanding, and loving are three fundamental steps in a journey that leads to projecting new life in Christ. The verbs to remember, understand, and love will be considered concrete steps in elaborating the *Life Project*.

1. Lord, make me remember You

Awakening to the awareness of oneself and being in the presence of a Presence before which we stake the meaning of life constitutes the first and fundamental attitude to embark on the path of a Life Project. *"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you"* (*Ephesians* 5:14).

When people with restless hearts "wake up" to life and hope, they notice, first of all, the presence of Christ in their hearts, and, secondly, they contemplate the beauty of the Christian life and the various ways in which the fullness of love can be lived. Because love is at stake, there is no room for apathy: *"Let not the strong be lazy, whom God inspires to reach better goals. Fix your eyes on the one who guides you, and do not look back"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm* 75:16). The adventure is marvelous: to let oneself be fascinated by Christ and experience amazement at his invitation to be a missionary disciple of the joy of the Gospel.

2. Lord, make me understand you

Jesus, the Lord, calls upon our attention as disciples to make us understand what he wants from us: *"If anyone hears the word of the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart; it is like what is sown by the wayside"* (Matthew 13:19). It must be terrible to listen without understanding anything when one precisely listens to understand! What is the reason for the lack of understanding of the essential things in life? Listening, as an exercise of attention, is reduced to its minimum expression.

The inability to listen attentively carries with it the danger of remaining in the simple act of listening without interest, personal involvement, and involvement of the heart. As St. Augustine said: *"Do not be vain, my soul, and do not deafen the ear of your heart [...]. You also listen. The Word himself cries out for you to return, for you will find only a place of undisturbed rest where love is not abandoned if he does not abandon us"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 4:16).

3. Lord, make me love you

Love is the last and most crucial moment in elaborating on the Life Project. People define themselves, above all, by what they love. St. Augustine says, *"There is no one who does not love, but we must ask ourselves what it is that we love. Therefore, we are not invited not to love, but to choose well what we are going to love"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon* 34,2). However, learning true love is long, arduous, eventful, unpredictable, upsetting, and marvelous. The human being passes little by little from the *ego-centric tendency to the logic of gift*.

St. Augustine has a significant expression in his work, *The City of God*, concerning love. He says: *"Two loves founded two cities. The love of self to the point of contempt for God, the earthly city. And the love of God to the point of self-contempt, the city of God"* (St. Augustine, *City of God* 14:28). Without wishing to correct the restless-hearted saint, his expression could be reformulated by adding that there are three loves that founded three cities:

Love centered on self-interest to the point of enjoying things, and people without concern for anything or anyone gave rise to the *sensual city*. *The love of others for the benefit of self*, generated the *earthly city*. And *the love of God, denying one's interest and offering one's life to give it in service of others*, produced the *civilization of love*.



Eros, philia, and agape are the three great stages of human love, which are oriented towards the beauty of a great love, the love of God. Each stage assumes the previous one and incorporates it into its dynamism but transcends it in a different logic: the logic of gift. It is essential to remember this because the Christian vocation is essentially a question of love. One learns to respond to the divine call to the extent that one learns to love unselfishly.

The common Christian vocation in general, and the specific vocation in particular, wrest the person from selfish and possessive inertia and enlarge the heart to experience a great love, the love of God. In the words of St. Augustine: *"Give me to me, my God, and give me back to me. Behold, I love you, and if it is still little, may I love you more dearly. I cannot measure with certainty how much love I lack to be enough, so that my life may run in your embrace"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:9).

5. Methodology to elaborate the Life Project

Try to put every detail in writing.

1. *Analysis of your reality.* It is about evaluating your current situation in the areas that make up your life: human dimension, relationship with God, fraternal life, service and dedication to others, knowledge and experience of faith, and personal involvement in your discernment process. For those who are in the process of discernment and are undergoing personal and community accompaniment, this exercise will help them to synthesize their situation. For it to be a *realistic project*, it is very important to analyze your personal expectations and consider your needs. For the analysis of reality, you can use the table below, in point six.
2. *Illumination of what is the priority.* This exercise involves focusing on the essential, that is, the critical issue for this moment in your life. It involves identifying and defining that central issue, that axis theme. It corresponds to the central and vital point of the Personal Project. As a tool for projecting the new life in Christ, the project is open to focus attention on various vital themes of the Christian life. Therefore, the tool can be used to deepen one's own experience of the Christian life or to visualize more clearly *a very particular option of life in Christ*.
3. *Determination of the objectives.* This consists of asking yourself what you intend to achieve concerning this central theme, i.e., *what your north star would be*. Sometimes, a distinction is made between general and specific objectives; the latter makes the former explicit. If the general objective is clear and concrete, it is unnecessary to make it more explicit. Setting the goal and, if necessary, the objectives are central to the Life Project because they allow you to organize all your energies for a purpose and have the resources at hand in a very concrete direction.
4. *Mediations.* It is about defining the concrete, realistic, and evaluable means, actions, and resources you set out to walk *toward the North Star* with God's help. It is proposed as a starting point - the situation in which I find myself - and as a point of arrival - the goal I want to reach.
5. *Define times, places, and people.* It consists of specifying as clearly as possible aspects related to the mediations to have a better chance of achieving the goal. These mediations have to do with defining the concrete deadlines that allow a constant return to the objective of the Life Project, such as reviewing or evaluating. It would be good to specify any experience you want to resort to and when and how. And if you want to count on others to carry it forward, it would also be good to indicate them explicitly.



6. *Define the attitude that moves you forward with your project:* interest, confidence, loyalty, etc. Attitude is essential because it focuses on the underlying motivation without which you can neither walk nor persevere in facing difficulties.
7. *Rest the project on a biblical phrase that inspires and encourages, for example, "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders weary themselves in vain" (Psalm 126).*
8. *Measure the "progress" of the results.* Once you start taking the actions that will lead you to achieve your life goals and be faithful to the person you want to become, measure them! Compare your willingness to work on your goal to other times, and find out what aspects have been most positive and how you can improve. It can be helpful to revisit the overall and specific goals every three months as they concentrate on the essence of the *Life Project*.
9. *"Update" your life project periodically.* Remember that despite having made a Life Project, everyone changes and matures over time. Situations and contexts change, and your objectives may begin to move in a new direction. If this happens, instead of noticing warning signs, the best thing to do is return to your *Life Project* and modify what you no longer feel 100% identified with. There is nothing wrong with reinventing yourself! If, after reviewing the general objective and the specific objectives, you perceive that they could use some particular precision or clarification, do so.

10. "Evaluate" your Life Project over a considerable period. The Life Project is not a sentence about your existence but a tool on which you want to work on essential aspects of your life. Therefore, you can always modify aspects, reorient your aspirations, and draw new systems and plans to fulfill your goals that best fit the person you are today and want to be tomorrow. It would be desirable to evaluate the Life Project at least every six months; around three or four months would be the most convenient.

6. Table of issues to be considered in the Life Project and awareness of how they are experienced

Below is a table summarizing the key issues to work on in your *Life Project*. In this table are empty boxes in which you can organize and expand on the information you gathered in the previous exercise. This table suggests as a background inspiration the Augustinian spirituality around the three verbs "to remember," "to understand," and "to love." These three concrete actions mark the spirit in which you analyze, reflect, and discern the central aspects of your *Personal Life Project*.

The left column lists the main calls that humans receive, mainly in the first stages of life. As the content of the left column moves from top to bottom, the main objective becomes clear: to mature a particular option of life in Christ (the committed lay life, the ordained ministry or ministerial priesthood, and the consecrated religious life).

Christian spirituality is oriented to incarnate the specific vocation in the concrete reality of each person. In this sense, it is essential to take as much time as necessary to consider those human aspects indicated in the first boxes of the left column of the table since this is where the strong sense of the divine call lies, both in the common Christian vocation and in the specific vocation.

The items suggested to deepen each call do not exhaust all aspects at stake in the human response to the divine vocation. They are the only essential aspects to remember when reflecting and discerning what is at stake in the mystery of the call.

LIFE OPTION IN CHRIST	AWAKENING HOW DO I FEEL? WHY AM I LIKE THIS?	UNDERSTAND WHAT CAN I IMPROVE? HOW TO BE MORE COHERENT?	AMAR WHAT AM I COMMITTED TO? (ONE OR TWO THINGS)
<i>CALLED TO BE A PERSON</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical condition • Physical health • Self-esteem • Qualities and limitations • Character and temperament • Feelings and emotions • Wishes • Responsibilities • Free time 			
<i>CALLED TO BE A PERSON WITH OTHERS</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • School • Friends • Couple 			
<i>CALLED TO BE A CHRISTIAN</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My relationship with Christ • My relationship with the Father • My relationship with the spirit • With the Christian community • With the group or movement • With the poor 			
<i>CALLED TO BE A MISSIONARY DISCIPLE</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith, Hope, Love • Prayer • Listening to the Word • Sunday Eucharist • Sacrament of Confession • Christian Witness • Christian commitment 			
<i>SPECIFIC CALL</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed lay life • Ordained ministry (priest) • Consecrated religious life 			
<i>CALLED TO BE AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Augustinian Recollect • Member of the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity • Augustinian Recollect Religious • Augustinian Recollect Sister • ... 			



7. Script for writing the Life Project

Location,

I, (name of person), make this Life Project my own and, with God's grace, I assume it as a valuable tool that will help me to mature in my vital option for Christ.

General Objective:

Specific objectives:

Lines of action:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Means and resources:

Time, places, and people involved:

The attitude that moves me to carry on my personal project:

Biblical phrase that inspires and encourages my Life Project:

The date on which I intend to evaluate the implementation of my Life Project:

Date and signature.



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