



How one man carves out time for faith in a busy, bustling life — and makes it a priority

I have been privileged to work with an incredible team of business leaders in the Lumen Institute who live and work in the tri-state area of New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. They all have extremely demanding jobs. They begin their days before dawn and often end with limited but precious time with their families later in the evening.

“Time is money” on Wall Street, so leaving the desk for a break can possibly mean missing a huge opportunity for a deal or a big development in the markets. I am fascinated by so many professional men and women who are somehow able to weave prayer into their tightly wound days.

John McManus, a member of our Lumen New Jersey chapter and the founder of McManus & Associates, a highly respected trusts and estates law firm, seems to have found the right balance in working spirituality into his busy day.

“I start my day with a few short prayers in bed,” he told me. “I start with an Our Father and a series of Hail Marys. I am fortunate in that I take my son to school each day, and along the way we discuss what we appreciate around us as we travel. Thereafter, we launch into our daily prayer routine, which includes prayers to Our Lord, to Mary, to the Holy Spirit, and to St. Michael. After its completion, we set goals for the day,” McManus said.

“During the day, as an estate planning lawyer, in meeting after meeting with clients and our team, I have my secret weapon,” he said. “Before going into the more complex meetings or prior to a new client meeting, I recite a prayer by Cardinal Mercier to the Holy Spirit: to enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me ... Tell me what I should say and do. It centers me and slows me down before walking into the room,” McManus continued.

“There are two churches near my New York and my New Jersey offices that I try to stop in to make time for a few moments: Our Lady of Peace in New Providence, and St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Midtown, Manhattan, if I can make it. It’s also among the best parts of my day. I often start by praying for my wife and children,” he said. “At St. Pat’s, I try to find the same spot to pray and to center me. That is the Pieta, which is to the right

— behind the altar. I try to patiently wait for the kneeler to be free and then I dig in and concentrate.”

He continued, “In each instance, I try to spend the first few minutes praying to say hello, review the happenings of the day, decompress, and then ask for wisdom on work issues. Then I finish with a prayer for the family and friends who are at the front of my mind,” McManus said. “I often try to light a candle, and I pray for someone or something specific. I recently began to take photos of the **lit candle and then send it to that loved one saying, ‘We are praying for you.’**”

McManus had more to share on how he makes time for God and for prayer. “When I come home, I will often pray with my children as they are about to sleep, frequently kneeling by their bed to provide much-needed humility to Dad. At that time, we focus on the best things that happened to each of us that day and then say a prayer of thanks for our good fortune, typically ending with a Glory Be to the Father,” he explained.

“As my wife and I wind down for the night and go to bed, I expand on the things for which I am appreciative, adding up to 10 or so [things]. Then I close with a prayer of thanks, as does my wife, Rosemary,” McManus concluded.

You have to want it. As a spiritual coach, I always begin with this question: “Do you see the value of having God’s wisdom and God’s strength in your life?” If you tell me that you have a deep faith and love for Christ, does it show in your daily schedule?

It goes back to embracing one’s fundamental identity as a child of God, a spouse, and a parent. If the first relationship is not cultivated, the other two simply can never reach their fulfillment, no matter how hard one tries or white-knuckles it. We all need God’s help!

Fr. Michael Sliney, LC, is a Catholic priest who is the New York chaplain of the Lumen Institute, an association of business and cultural leaders.

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