

Practicing Recollection During the Day



St. John Chrysostom wrote, *“It is impossible, utterly impossible, for the man who prays eagerly and invokes God ceaselessly ever to sin”* (De Anna 4, 5). Since you are reading this post, I assume that you would like to be able to overcome every temptation. But how can we pray constantly, as not only Chrysostom, but also St. Paul taught (cf 1 Thessalonians 5:17)?

St. Teresa of Avila gives us a place to start. Speaking about praying vocal prayer well, she pauses a moment to urge her readers to pray throughout the day:

“We must retire within ourselves even during our ordinary occupations. If I can recall the companionship which I have within my soul for as much as a moment, that is of great utility” (Way of Perfection, Chapter 29).



In other words, we should pause often during the day, in the midst of our duties, to spend a moment with God. We don't have to leave what we are doing. We needn't take longer than a few seconds. We might begin by choosing a short prayer to say at regular times throughout the day. For example, every time our watch chimes the hour, we might pray silently, *“Let it be done to me according to your word.”* Or every time we pass a holy picture in our home, we might pray, *“Lord, help me to love you with my whole mind, heart, soul, and strength.”* Every time we think of food, we could say, *“Lord, let me desire you above all earthly pleasures.”*



A second way to pray throughout the day would be to imagine serving the Lord in our occupations. A mother dressing her child can imagine she is dressing the Christ Child and do it with special care. A person writing a business plan might imagine himself as an apostle writing the New Testament and write for the glory of God.

Instead of using words, we can use pictures in our minds. Lately I have been picturing the Eucharist in the monstrance several times during the day. I stop what I am doing and gaze at Him, sometimes saying a few words of praise as well. We could also picture the Sacred Heart, the Holy Spirit as a dove, the light of Christ burning in our hearts, or another simple image that can be recalled easily.



Praying throughout the day is not a substitute for a dedicated time of mental prayer. It extends it. It prepares us to be more recollected at mental prayer time. It sanctifies our day and keeps God as our primary focus. And, as St. John Chrysostom noted, it helps us overcome temptation

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