



# Mental Prayer

Catholic Teachings by the Deacons

# What is Mental Prayer?

- St. Theresa of Avila: “Mental prayer is a close sharing between friends. It means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.”
- Also called meditative prayer, Christian meditation, prayer of the heart, contemplative prayer
- What it is NOT: Eastern meditation, transcendental meditation, centering prayer
- CCC 2709-2719

# Praying with the Bible

- Mental prayer is the Resting (or Contemplatio) step
  - Reading
  - Reflecting
  - Responding
  - Resting
  - Resolving

# More on Mental Prayer

- The life of prayer is not the result of a technique, but a gift that God freely give us that we must receive.
- Therefore, to be “successful” at prayer does not mean perfecting our methods of prayer but increasing in our ability to receive the grace of God.
- Furthermore, our ability to receive grace is not a learned skill. We don’t even need to understand how to receive the gift.
- But there are conditions to being receptive to God’s gift...

# Faith

- The life of prayer includes struggle, and the essential weapon for this struggle is faith.
- When we pray, we must believe with our whole heart that God is present.
- We must believe that all people without exception are called to an authentic life of prayer.

# Perseverance

- Along with faith is fidelity. Prayer must be persevering.
- Fidelity or faithfulness is more important than the quality of our prayer.
- This is often the first battle in pursuing a life of prayer – being faithful to our times of mental prayer.
- Perseverance often remains the main battle.

# Humility

- In solitude before God, we can hide nothing.
- We are unsupported and alone with the reality of who we are.
- We must be poor and weak before our Lord.
- We must also be aware of false humility

# Why Mental Prayer?

- Without a life of prayer there is no holiness
- There is no spiritual progress without mental prayer – there will be a plateau
- Without mental prayer we cannot receive all the help from God that we need to be transformed and sanctified in depth.



# The Problem of Time

- Time is not always the real problem.
- The real problem is knowing what really matters in life.
- If it is important to you, you will find the time.
- Schedule prayer

# How do you do it?

- What matters in mental prayer is not so much what we do, as what God does in us.
- The essential act of prayer is to put ourselves in God's presence and then stay there.
- The only goal is to remain in God's presence and let him act in the depths of our heart.

# No really... how do you do it?

- Baby steps – start slowly building from other prayer methods
  - Rosary, Lectio Divina, Adoration, imaginative prayer.
- Remember the “First Things First”
  - Location
  - Silence
  - Position
  - Distractions
- Then just be

# Conclusion

- In the end our prayer should be one simple act of love.
- But to get to that level of simplicity takes time, perseverance so that God can work within us.
- God is able to do this in a very real way through the humanity of Jesus.