



The Practice of Silent Prayer

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"Beginning to be a **servant of Love**" (V 11,1)

"Well, let us speak now of those
who are beginning to be
servants of love...
to follow resolutely by means of this
path of prayer Him
who loved us so much" (V 11,1)



The evangelical foundation of prayer

- ▶ In inviting us to pray, to "**be prayer**", Teresa of Jesus invites us in a certain way to imitate Christ Jesus himself;
- ▶ Jesus made the choice to stop two important activities: the **announcement** of the Word of God and the **healing** of the sick for an "**activity**" even more important-**prayer**. Jesus stopped "**doing**" to "**be**" with his Father.

(Read Luke 5: 15-16)



The evangelical foundation of prayer

- ▶ To **take time to pray** is to take time to leave one activity that might be good, perhaps very good, **to be with God**;
- ▶ To let yourself **be loved by him**. It is **time freely given to God**.
- ▶ This is why it is important to **change places to pray**.



Prayer, a theological act

- ▶ Praying is not only about **stopping my activities** it is also about **living on a theological plane**.
- ▶ It means putting into practice daily the theological virtues of **Faith, Hope and Charity**.
- ▶ It means **believing** in the **loving & active presence of God** encountered in prayer in spite of what I am **feeling or experiencing**.



Prayer, a theological act

- ▶ It is **hoping** in the realization of God's promises who through his only Son wants to make me **his beloved child**.
- ▶ Come and freely **keep him company** for his sake.
- ▶ Remember that this **encounter with God** can only be lived in **Faith, Hope and Charity**.



How to practice silent prayer

- ▶ You have to "**choose**" to pray; to decide to stop all other activities and choose to enter into prayer.
- ▶ It may be useful to have a dedicated "**prayer corner**".
- ▶ It can be very simple: an open Bible, a crucifix, a candle ... A small space that helps you "move" into something else.
- ▶ Decide in advance how much **time** you will spend in prayer and stick to it.



How to practice silent prayer

- ▶ It is important not to give in to your **feelings**;
- ▶ When all is going well you **prolong** your prayer time; when faced with dryness, you **stop** praying all together.
- ▶ If possible, establish your prayer time at the **same time and place daily** to help to develop the **habit**.



Entering into prayer

There are **three important keys** to help enter into prayer:

Body

Heart

Spirit



Body



- ▶ **Find a position** that allows you to remain awake and comfortable so that you don't have to change positions every two minutes.
- ▶ Welcome your body so that it helps you to focus, to turn within and to **recollect yourself**.
- ▶ **Following your breath** is a good way to calm down and go within.

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Heart

- ▶ You don't **meet people** with your intellect... but with your **heart**. Take time ... to **discover** what's there.
- ▶ Praying from the heart allows you to **pray from your own reality**. It is no longer some **pre-established idea** of what you should pray.
- ▶ It is important to feel free to **tell the Lord exactly what is in your heart** without any obligation.
- ▶ The heart is the place where **freedom** is exercised.



Heart

- ▶ What do you really **want**? What do you **want to experience** right now in this moment? What are you **looking for**?
- ▶ You **make these decisions** in your heart starting from your own reality
- ▶ Determine what you want to **experience in this friendship** with the Lord.



Spirit

- ▶ We don't really **know how to pray**.
- ▶ We **need the work of the Holy Spirit** within us to truly pray.
- ▶ Prayer is the **joint work** of both man and God.
- ▶ Take time in your daily prayer to **ask for the gift** of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Become a **beggar** of the Holy Spirit.



Persevering in prayer

Rely on the Word


- ▶ Remember that in this encounter you are **preceded by the Lord**.
- ▶ You can pray by **murmuring** the name of Jesus in your heart, allowing him to completely **invade you** and thus achieve an **inner silence by grace**.
- ▶ It is also good to take the time to **meditate on Scripture**. Observe **Christ Jesus** in his **holy humanity**.



Persevering in prayer

Start from where I am

- ▶ Sometimes a **life situation invades my entire being**, so this is where I have to begin.
- ▶ I start by **explaining to the Lord** what's bothering me.
- ▶ I do this by **inserting my concerns** into the **Our Father** for example:
- ▶ that your **Kingdom come** ... Yes, that it come into **this situation** ...



Persevering in prayer

Start from where I am

- ▶ That **your Will be done** ... Yes, that it be done in **this situation** ...
- ▶ **Forgive us** our trespasses ... Forgive me for **my role** in the situation; forgive this or that behavior...
- ▶ It is important to **persevere in surrendering all** –myself & my life- to the Lord.
- ▶ **Conversion** is what is needed here. It's a true **spiritual exercise**.



Persevering in prayer

Offer myself to the Lord

- ▶ There will be days when the **Word** doesn't speak to me.
- ▶ When this happens I have to just **put myself** at the **feet of the Lord** and **offer myself to him**.
- ▶ I consciously **surrender myself** to his **creative gaze** and **put myself** in **his hands**.



Concluding a prayer session

- ▶ **Give thanks** to the Lord when the time set aside for this friendship with him has come to an end. Thank him for **his presence** and for **his creative work in you and in the world**.
- ▶ Determine to **pay attention** to **other people**: **smile** at the first person you meet; **be attentive** to the needs of another person.
- ▶ **Love and service** to our brothers and sisters sharing a common humanity is the **fruit of prayer** and of our **meeting with the Lord**.



Prayer: a spiritual combat

Take time

- ▶ What are your **priorities**?
- ▶ You **make time** for what you like to do.
- ▶ Your **choices** clearly **reflect your priorities**.



Prayer: a spiritual combat

Distractions

- ▶ If a little **butterfly** appears in the **sky of my thoughts** I simply let it go by.
- ▶ The **problem** is that I often **hunt for butterflies**.
- ▶ I **entertain** the distractions. I let myself be carried away by them.



Prayer: a spiritual combat

Distractions

- ▶ To **refocus my thoughts** on the Lord I can read Scripture or open my eyes and look at the cross, the Bible or an icon or I can repeat the name of Jesus.
- ▶ It is important to have **several tools** to not to let distractions lead me astray.
- ▶ A "**determined determination**" and **vigilance** are necessary to take these actions.



Prayer: a spiritual combat

Preoccupations

- ▶ If the **distraction** enters my mind, its **origin** is in my heart.
- ▶ To **prevent** a concern from becoming an **obstacle to prayer**.
- ▶ I "**cover it**" with the prayer of Jesus, the **Our Father**, so that by his grace it becomes a prayer.



Prayer: a spiritual combat

Boredom

- ▶ When I am bored I need to ask myself about **how I entered into prayer**.
- ▶ If I have used the **three keys** (body, heart, spirit) to enter into prayer.
- ▶ Then I **allow** myself to be bored for the **love of the Lord**. This **changes everything**.
- ▶ I give him my **time**, I give him **myself** and I freely **make an act of Faith, Hope and Charity**.



Prayer: a spiritual combat

Temptations

- ▶ It is possible to **experience awful thoughts and temptations** that might cause you to want to give up prayer.
- ▶ **Don't give in** to this temptation! Engage in **spiritual combat!**
- ▶ **Don't** try and **resist** the temptation ...**raise your heart** to the Lord.



Prayer: a spiritual combat

Temptations

- ▶ **Admit** your poverty and misery.
- ▶ **Don't resign yourself** to it just place it in the **blazing furnace of love** that is the heart of God.



Prayer: a spiritual combat

Consent

- ▶ Sometimes you just **can't consent** to what is being asked of you even though you may intuitively sense that it is God's calling.
- ▶ Remember that you are **never alone** when you pray.
- ▶ The "yes" that you can't pronounce, **ask Jesus ... to say it in you.**
- ▶ Put your **heart in the hands** of Jesus or Mary and ask them to obtain the grace of consent for you.
- ▶ **Ask** your brothers and sisters in Christ to **pray for you.**



Some advice from Saint Teresa of Jesus

- ▶ "Anyone who cannot find a master to teach him prayer should take this glorious **Saint [Joseph]** for his master and he will not go astray." (v 6, 8)
- ▶ "In spite of any wrong that he who practices prayer does, he must **not abandon prayer** since it is the means by which he can **remedy** the situation." (v 8, 5)

Some advice from Saint Teresa of Jesus

- ▶ "This is the method of prayer I then used: since I could not reflect discursively with the intellect, I strove to **picture Christ within me**, and it did me greater good—in my opinion – to picture Him in those scenes where I **saw Him more alone**. It seemed to me that being alone and afflicted, as a person in need, He had to accept me. I had many simple thoughts like these." (V 9, 4)
- ▶ "Now in the **beginning strive to walk with joy and freedom**. [...] Have great confidence, for it is necessary not to hold back one's desires, but to believe in God that if we try, we shall, little by little, even though it may not be soon, **reach the state the saints did with His help**. » (V 13, 1-2)



Some advice from Saint Teresa of Jesus

"I trust in the mercy of God,
who **never fails to repay** anyone who has
taken Him for a **friend**.

For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than
an **intimate sharing between friends**;

it means taking **time frequently**
to be **alone** with Him who we **know loves us**. » (V 8, 5)