

Life 8 (5, 6)

A Friend in Prayer (Silent, Interior, Mental)

5. The blessings possessed by one who practices prayer -- I mean mental prayer -- have been written of by many saints and good men. Glory be to God for this! If it were not so, I should not have assurance enough (though I am not very humble) to dare to speak of it. I can say what I know by experience -- namely, that no one who has begun this practice, however many sins he may commit, should ever forsake it. For it is the means by which we may amend our lives again, and without it amendment will be very much harder. So let him not be tempted by the devil, as I was, to give it up for reasons of humility, but let him believe that the words cannot fail of Him Who says that, if we truly repent and determine not to offend Him, He will resume His former friendship with us and grant us the favors which He granted aforetime, and sometimes many more, if our repentance merits it. And anyone who has not begun to pray, I beg, for love of the Lord, not to miss so great a blessing. There is no place here for fear, but only desire. For, even if a person fails to make progress, or to strive after perfection, so that he may merit the consolations and favors given to the perfect by God, yet he will gradually gain a knowledge of the road to Heaven. And if he perseveres, I hope in the mercy of God, Whom no one has ever taken for a Friend without being rewarded; and mental prayer, in my view, is nothing but friendly exchange, and frequent solitary converse, with Him Who we know loves us. If love is to be true and friendship lasting, certain conditions are necessary: on the Lord's side we know these cannot fail, but our nature is vicious, sensual and ungrateful (marked by sin). You cannot therefore succeed in loving Him as much as He loves you, because it is not in your nature to do so. If, then, you do not yet love Him, you will realize how much it means to you to have His friendship and how much He loves you, and you will gladly endure the troubles which arise from being so much with One Who is so different from you.

6. O infinite goodness of my God! It is thus that I seem to see both myself and Thee. O Joy of the angels, how I long, when I think of this, to be wholly consumed in love for Thee! How true it is that Thou dost bear with those who cannot bear Thee to be with them! Oh, how good a Friend art Thou, my Lord! How Thou dost comfort us and suffer us and wait until our nature becomes more like yours and meanwhile dost bear with it as it is! Thou dost remember the times when we love Thee, my Lord, and, when for a moment we repent, Thou dost forget how we have offended Thee. I have seen this clearly in my own life, and I cannot conceive, my Creator, why the whole world does not strive to draw near to Thee in this intimate friendship. Those of us who are wicked, and whose nature is not like yours, ought to draw near to Thee so that Thou may make them good. They should allow Thee to be with them for at least two hours each day, even though they may not be with Thee, but are perplexed, as I was, with a thousand worldly cares and thoughts. In exchange for the effort which it costs them to desire to be in such good company (for Thou know, Lord, that at first this is as much as they can do and sometimes they can do no more at all) Thou dost prevent the devils from assaulting them so that each day they are able to do them less harm, and Thou give them strength to conquer. Yea, Life of all lives, Thou slay none of those that put their trust in Thee and desire Thee for their Friend; rather dost Thou sustain their bodily life with greater health and give life to their souls.

Questions to Consider:

-Among the elements already observed what changes are taking place here?

-What Biblical passages support the definition of mental prayer?

Gen. 12-25

1 Jn. 4, 7-10

Nicodeme Jn. 3, 1-21 Ps. 62

Ps. 102

La Samaritan Jn. 4, 1-29

Ap 3, 20

-How does St. Theresa describe this true, real friendship with Christ?