

The Art of Teresian Prayer

Carmelite School of Prayer Advent 2020

I take a moment to meditate on all these things in my heart (Luke 2:19)

When we stop to pray, we are quickly overwhelmed by our thoughts when all we want to do is pray! It is impossible to concentrate! I invite you today to distinguish between distractions and preoccupations. This distinction is important to get the most out of our prayer time.

“As Christians, there cannot be true joy outside of the joy of the Holy Spirit. It is there OUR JOY”
Brother Louis of the Trinity

Snippet #13: Distractions; Preoccupations

Today we are going to talk about a subject that unfortunately occupies a good part of our prayer time. It happens to all of us. We are going to discuss distractions and preoccupations. Let us begin with distractions. We are distracted beings but we can help ourselves focus. We can learn to do what is necessary so that our minds are more disciplined; not going in a million directions.

Distractions are a part of life. If I was distracted in prayer, this certainly does not mean that my time of prayer was not real or effective. It is not a reason for me to become discouraged or disappointed in myself.

What should you do when faced with distractions? Well, Nothing! Simply, let them go by as water off a duck's back; return to the Lord when you realize you are distracted; refocus on your prayer. You do not have to make a big deal of it.

Preoccupations, on the other hand, happen when something in my life is troubling me such as a sick child; a friend who is not doing well; difficulties at work. There are many, many examples I could cite. You have only to look at your own life.

In this case, it is absolutely necessary to act! I cannot just let it go as with distractions. I need to present my concern to the Lord as we saw on 8 December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. I need to present my troubles, 'My colleague is not doing well.' I present them to the Lord and let him handle them. I can then simply resume my prayer. My concerns have been incorporated into my prayer. This is what I am invited to do. Amen

Prepared by the Discalced Carmelite Friars, Paris, France (translated from French)