

Chapter 22

The Way of Perfection

Part 4: Prayer in General

Chapter 22 Mental Prayer

(summary)

Saint Teresa of Avila

Chapter 22 Explains what mental prayer is.

Realize daughters that the nature of **mental prayer** isn't determined by whether or not the mouth is closed.

If while speaking I thoroughly understand and know that I am speaking with God and I have greater awareness of this than I do of the words ... **mental** and **vocal prayer** are **joined**.

If, however, others tell you that you are speaking with God while you are **reciting** the Our Father and at the same time in fact **thinking of** the world, then I have nothing to say.

But if you are to be speaking, as is right, with so great a Lord, it is good that you **consider whom you are speaking with** as well as **who you are**, at least if you want to be polite...

In sum ... may You never permit, Lord, that anyone who is about to speak to You consider it good to do so only **vocally**.

2. What is this, Christians, that you say **mental prayer** isn't necessary? ... You don't know what mental prayer is, or how **vocal prayer** should be recited, or what **contemplation** is, for if you did you wouldn't **condemn** on the one hand what on the other you **praise**.

3. ... It is harmful to walk on this road with **fear**. It is very important for you to know that you are on the **right road** ...

When we begin to pray, it is important to **consider whom we are going to speak with**, and **who we are**, so as to **know how to speak** with Him ... If you do this you will spend a lot of time in **mental prayer** ...

4. ... The angels who assist Him know well the attitude of their King, for He **delights** more in the **unpolished manners** of a **humble** shepherd ... than He does in the talk of very wise and learned men ... if they don't walk in **humility** ...

To come near Him, we should strive to be aware of His **purity** and of **who He is** ... Here

below people in paying honor don't take into account the **persons themselves** ... but only their **wealth**.

5. O miserable world! ... where men pay attention not to what they have **within** themselves but to what their tenant farmers and vassals have; without subordinates, no **honor** is paid them ... This is a **good pastime**: to notice how **blindly** those in the **world** **spend their time**.

6. ... Oh, God help me ... to know how to explain clearly ... a number of the many things we can **consider** in order to have some knowledge of **who this Lord and Good** of ours is!

7. Yes, bring yourselves to **consider** and **understand whom you are speaking with**, or, as you approach, **with whom you are about to speak**.

In a thousand lives we would never completely understand the way in which this Lord deserves that we speak with Him, for the angels tremble before Him. **He commands all; He can do all; for Him, to will is to do**.

It is only right, daughters, that we try to **delight** in these **grandeurs** our Spouse possesses and that we **understand** whom we are wedded to and what kind of **life** we must live.

Here below, before getting married, a person knows the other party, who he is and what he possesses ... They don't try to make those who are betrothed renounce such thoughts, Why then should they try to prevent us from **thinking about who this man is, who His Father is, what country He is going to bring me to, what good things He promises to give me, what His status is, how I can make Him happy**, in what ways I can **please Him** and by studying, how I can **conform my way of life to His**?

Now, if a woman is to be happily married, she must, according to the advice she receives, strive for this **conformity** even though her husband is a man of lowly estate.

8. Well, my Spouse, must they in everything pay less attention to You than to men? If paying more attention to You doesn't seem right to them, let them at least leave Your brides, who live with You, alone. Indeed, their life is a good one.

If a spouse is so jealous that he doesn't want his bride to talk to anyone, it would be a fine thing if she did **not** think about how she might please him in this matter, the reason she has for putting up with this jealousy and for wanting to avoid speaking with another since in him she has all that she could want!

This is **mental prayer**, my daughters:

to understand these truths.

If you should want to grow in understanding these things and pray vocally, well and good.

You should not be **thinking of other things** while speaking with God, for doing so amounts to not knowing what **mental prayer**

is.

I believe the matter has been explained. May it please the Lord that we know how to put it into practice. Amen