

Life of Prayer

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Lent School of Prayer

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How does one go from a time of prayer to a life of prayer with the goal of prayer being union with God. Our whole life should be about union with God.

How though does one have their life be a prayer 24 hours a day? How is it possible to make your whole life a prayer? This idea could make you laugh when you consider you don't even half a half hour to dedicate to prayer.

It is about the entire life becoming a prayer. Teresa of the Little Flower defines prayer as follows:

"For me, prayer is a burst from my heart, it is a simple glance towards Heaven, a cry of thanksgiving and love in times of trial as well as in times of joy. It is something big, supernatural; it expands my heart and unites me to Jesus."

Understanding prayer like this allows you to go from a time of prayer to a life of prayer. Our entire life is to be carried out under **God's watchful eye**. It is the practice of silent prayer that leads us slowly to the point that our **whole life** is filled with God's presence. A person becomes acutely aware that until he has given **all** to God, he has given **nothing**.

To go from a time of prayer to a life of prayer our life needs to be carried out under God's watchful eye with an awareness of His presence.

It's the mystery of God's presence that will gradually bring about in us the practice of prayer. It is the quality of our presence to

God that will bring about the quality of presence both to myself, to others and to life's happenings.

Silent prayer is not an exercise of concentration nor is it about emptying your mind (of your problems, concerns etc.). It is our whole life that is becoming a prayer. This requires us to correct our understanding of prayer beyond what words express.

Prayer must be engaged as a constant attitude of presence and attention to God.

We respond to God's presence with our presence to Him. Prayer is the art of being with God. It is the path towards union with God. It is not an exercise, an external practice or an obligation but rather a life.

It is a **life of union with God**. It is a **living relationship** between **two living beings**- a **reciprocal** and **aware presence**. It is about gradually becoming aware of God's presence. He is present to us and we must learn to be present to Him through a loving attention.

The difficulty in prayer is about **love**. When we love someone deeply, his memory never leaves us. His memory lives in us no matter what we are doing.

It is this that we are seeking to develop with God.—the awareness that God is present with us. It is a concrete demonstration of our **filial life** as sons of God.

Silent prayer is inscribed in the dynamic of our filial relationship with God. Through silent prayer, I bring alive my **filial life**, my **Baptismal life** and my **Christian vocation**.

In spite of our active lives, we are still able to live out silent prayer, rather than by stopping, we can develop the practice of diffused prayer. We do not always have 30-60 minutes to pray, but in all situations, at

any time, we can live out what Therese tells us to do, that is we can **elevate our souls towards God** or **glance in His direction**. In other words, we are to be aware that God is looking at us wherever we are. He never leaves us. His look does not judge, but rather it is a look of having loved us from all eternity.

Understanding prayer like this allows us to make our lives a prayer. I become a praying person. I go from a time of prayer to my life taking place under God's watchful eye with a keen awareness of His presence. This changes everything.

A life of prayer asks of us for a quality of being present to God. As a result, we develop a quality of presence towards others.

God asks us to pray without ceasing. But, how can we do that if I don't even have 5 minutes to pray?

It is a recommendation that I need to assume and it is possible. It is also an illusion to believe oneself even with God because we gave Him an exact and punctual time of prayer- 1-2 hours of our day.

St. Francis de Sales said that he preferred to practice diffused prayer during all of his daily activities rather than to pray in a narrow and mechanical way.

The score is not even with God because we had our daily prayer time of one half hour. We have checked off the God-box and throughout the rest of the day God is not there. In other words, my life is compartmentalized. The only problem is that God needs to be in all aspects of our lives. It is an illusion to believe we have paid our debt to God.

St. Francis de Sales preferred diffused prayer throughout all of his activities. He said he lived his life under God's watchful eye, with God, by God.

A prayer in the divine office this morning expressed the following: "That your grace inspire our behavior and support it to the end so that all of our activities find their origins in You and receive from You their completion which is their crowning."

In other words, all begins and ends with prayer. And this not only because I am in the chapel but because I live in the awareness of God's presence.

It is a question of living faith, incarnate faith. I no longer live a compartmentalized life but a unified one. My life has been simplified; I am no longer divided but united.

A life in prayer; pray at all times. St. Paul tells us that prayer becomes an expression of my permanent relationship with God. Prayer becomes possible in all circumstances as well as a vital necessity because it gives us a life lived out in Christ. So prayer is either excluding all else (a time of prayer) or diffused throughout my daily life.

This is what we live in friendship; though we may live far apart, the person lives within us. Yet, there are special times when all activity stops and we spend a moment together. This is prayer which excludes all else. The remainder of the time the memory of the other lives in me. The other lives in me. This is diffused prayer which spreads throughout my entire life.

This ties into what St. Paul tells us: "Whether you are eating or drinking, whatever you are doing, do all for the glory

of God.” All in life is done for the glory of God.

Again St. Paul tells us that whatever we do, do it in Christ’s name giving Him glory.

This is living in Christ.

So there is a difference between a time of prayer, an act of prayer and a life of prayer. The soul that longs for an intimate life with God is not willing to limit his time with God to a time of prayer but seeks to prolong this time during the day.

The soul whose love is constant seeks to have continual and lasting relationship with its beloved.

In short, the life of prayer is about love. It is not a pious exercise or an obligation to satisfy our Christian conscience. It is rather love within that develops a life of prayer, in other words in communion with God.

Silent prayer leads us little by little to this life of presence, a quality presence. We are now living from faith, hope and love.

What characterizes our life now? Our life is now based on the theological virtues of faith, hope and love (charity).

Is my life driven only by my intellect or does faith have an impact on my life?

Silent prayer will gradually help us to come under the control of the Holy Spirit where I only want and desire God’s will.

The ultimate fruit of silent prayer: We live out God’s will in our lives. It is the union of wills. This can be done in each moment without ceasing.

We need to start asking ourselves in the midst of our activities what is motivating this activity. Is God involved here? God must be present in all I do even in the most insignificant activity. Strive to carry out

your activities through God and in communion with Him.

Our life becomes silent prayer. It is interiorly accomplished as the will of God. The soul’s entire life becomes a prayer, a loving embrace of God.

As Christians we need to develop a vigilance to preserve our filial life that comes from Baptismal grace. We are not just anybody, we are marked by Christ for life’s spiritual combat. It means to live out our filial life in God.

Of course, prayer has difficulties such as distractions, lack of time etc. but, the deep intention is to live out of this divine presence, this communion with God that can be lived out in all circumstances of our lives. To simplify the message, silent prayer is first of all about understanding prayer rather than being preoccupied with the difficulties encountered in prayer.

Once I understood silent prayer as communion with God, the path towards communion, union with God, throughout my entire life, I am no longer focused on the difficulties. I don’t come to prayer to evacuate life’s events but rather with what I have experienced and with what I am. All of this should be brought to prayer. It is not about concentration but about expanding one’s heart.

The best fruit of silent prayer and contact with God, is that my heart gradually expands, opens to God. So let’s not get bogged down in our poverty but in this quest, ever-deepening, to union with God. That is given in a life of prayer, which results from a time of prayer to a life is deployed in God’s presence, in communion with Him. Amen