

"Being a 'Yes' to God"

Difficulties in Silent Prayer

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Because the subject –**difficulties in prayer** – seemed rather **austere** to me, I wanted to give this presentation a more encouraging title; one which directs us towards the **goal** and motivates us to **stand firm in prayer**.

I came across this expression from Father Caffarel: "**Be a 'Yes' to God**". In other words, "**I want what you want**", and this, infinitely. The expression is very complex but is the **path** prayer leads us down and the **full union** God leads us towards with the help of His grace if we remain faithful to prayer.

In the practice of silent prayer, to "**Be a 'Yes' to God**" means to accept what He wants for us during this time of prayer we have allotted Him, no matter what happens during this time:

"Lord, I am here for You. Do with me what You will. Give me what You desire I have."

Little by little, as we continue to practice silent prayer by the grace of God, these "**Yeses**" made during each time of prayer, these repeated agreements with God's will, will tend to become a single agreement to what God desires, in all aspects of our lives.

So, "to be a "**Yes**" to God" will be to be all for Him, all in accordance with what He desires and expects from us. It will mean being able to say at every moment with the Virgin Mary: "**Here is the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word.**" So, to "**be a 'Yes' to God**", is the dynamic for our **prayer life** here and now, but especially for our **life with God**, life with a **big L**.

Three Characteristic Difficulties

So, let's get to the heart of the matter and take a look at these infamous difficulties that we tend to encounter in silent prayer. As far as I can see, there are **three** that are really characteristic and that you have probably already experienced yourself in your practice.

The **first** difficulty are the **distractions** or how to pray with who and what I am. The **second** is **dryness**; in other words the **absence of sensory comfort** in prayer which is another way of saying how to pray when God is hiding. And then finally, the **third** difficulty is the challenge of **consistency**, or how to maintain a daily appointment with the Lord.

Although these difficulties are almost unavoidable, they can however be **opportunities** for **growth** and **grace**! Just how though you may ask? Well, prayer is like a program of learning about life with God; the life we were really made for. But when learning is necessary, so too is on-going and routine practice along with the need for instruction.

The difficulties we encounter can be seen as the **teaching tools** God uses to develop in us what's needed for **eternal life**. In fact, He has already deposited the necessary elements in us through the grace of baptism. In other words, the **theological virtues** of faith, hope and charity;

And, prayer is the **training ground** where we **exercise** and **strengthen** our **faith, hope** and **charity** (or love).

First Difficulty: Distractions, or "a Thousand Gifts in 20 minutes"

Let's recall the essence of the previous **three teachings**. **First** of all, know that we were made to pray and meet God, even if sin creates disorder in our inner beings and sometimes exiles us far from our hearts. **Secondly**, by the grace of the Baptism, the Holy Trinity comes to dwell in our souls, so that we may become participants in divine life, allowing us to truly know and love God. And then **finally**, through recollection, we descend within ourselves, to our souls, and remain there in the presence of the living God.

Distractions are simply the normal activity of our minds and senses that draw us away from recollection or being in God's presence. Our effort in prayer will be to recollect ourselves, that is to calm our senses and orient as much as possible the activity our intellect, will and imagination so that we may remain in a **loving attention to Christ**.

Each time we return to Jesus, we make an **act of faith**: "**Lord, I believe you are here.**"

This act of faith both strengthens our **faith** and gives Jesus a gift, maybe as many as "a thousand gifts in 20 minutes"!

So, in preparation for prayer, we can try to **prevent distractions** and if not, we can attempt to **remedy** them. We will now look closer at **both options**.