

Theory 4

MEDITATION OR MENTAL PRAYER – THE 3R's

1. Definition of Meditation

- a. Meditation or Mental prayer is to turn your attention to God and *think* about what He has said or done.
 - i. To understand the supernatural truth
 - ii. Love God for this truth
 - iii. Apply that truth to your life
 - iv. Form a resolution based on this truth that we will put into practice with the assistance of grace.
- b. **The Purpose of Mental Prayer**
 - i. John of the Cross (Ascent 2, 14, 2) says:
 - 1. "The purpose of discursive meditation on divine subjects is the acquisition of knowledge and love of God."
 - 2. "Through many particular acts this loving knowledge of God reaches the point at which a habit is formed in the soul."
- c. **Transition to Affective Prayer and the Prayer of Simplicity**
 - i. Once a person has reached this habit of a general loving knowledge of God by means mental prayer (the 2nd stage of prayer) then the Holy Spirit prompts a person to the 3rd stage – a loving attentiveness without discursive meditation.

2. Teresa of Avila gives us three simple steps for Mental prayer:

- a. Recall that God the Father, Son and Spirit dwell in your soul
- b. Begin with Vocal Prayer:
 - i. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to pray.
 - ii. Begin with an Our Father, Hail Mary or any prayer of your choice.
 - iii. Or just speak to God from the heart.
 - 1. **Read or listen to** something from the Word of God found in Scripture, Tradition (the writings of the Saints) or the Magisterium (the teaching of the Church).
 - a. As soon as something strikes you – stop reading

2. **Reflect or think** about what struck you.
 - a. To understand the supernatural truth
 - b. Love God for this truth
 - c. Then apply that truth to your life
 - i. Am I living this or not?
 - ii. If I am not living this, then what habitual or root vice(s) are preventing me? Pride, vanity, envy, sloth, anger, greed, gluttony, lust, etc.
 - iii. What occasions of sin, what circumstances prompt me to fall into this vice or sin?
 - iv. It is essential to learn two things by the double reflection on the Word of God and one's life:
 1. One's dominant habitual sins
 2. The occasions that lead to those sins.
3. **Resolution**
 - a. Choose something practical and concrete to remember or to do that day based on your meditation to stop a vice and practice the conquering virtue

3. Transformational Power of Meditation & Resolution

- a. The purpose of prayer is that we should change and become more like God.
 - i. We will change if, with the help of God's grace, we practice the truth that God impressed upon us during our meditation.
 - ii. We will not change if we don't.
 - iii. In fact, we will get worse, because fallen human nature tends toward sin, not virtue, without effort and God's grace.

St. Francis de Sales on the importance of a resolution:

The most important thing of all is that you cling firmly to the resolutions you have taken in meditation so as to practice them carefully. That is the great fruit of meditation, without which it is often not only useless but harmful. Why so? Because the virtues upon which we have meditated but not practiced sometimes puff us up so much in mind and heart that we think we are already what we are resolved to be which no doubt is the case if our resolutions are solid and ardent. But when, on the contrary, they are not practiced, they are useless and dangerous.

Introduction to the Devout Life, II Chap 8

- b. Examples of a resolution:
 - i. Today I will listen more than I speak.
 - ii. I will not gossip today.
 - iii. I complain too much; today I will practice thanking God ahead of time for working everything for good.
 - iv. I am anxious; today I will replace that feeling of anxiety with an Act of Trust in God.
- c. What if I cannot find a resolution?
 - i. Remember your meditation all day long.
 - ii. This remembrance will change the way you think and the way you act.