

Theory 3a

PARTS AND BASIC GUIDE TO MEDITATIVE PRAYER

Meditative, Mental or Discursive Prayer

General Considerations

When you meditate, you are making yourself available for God to change you that you might be more united with Him. The more united with God you are the more holy you are. Holiness is transforming union with God.

When you meditate, the Holy Spirit, your Guardian Angel, and any saints can assist you, if you have asked them for help to meditate.

When you meditate, you are putting forth the necessary effort to fight your distractions, emotional dryness, superficiality, and temptations of the Evil One.

When you meditate, you are praying just as Jesus did to His Father (Our Father). You are imitating the “Spirit of Christ” Who prayed always.

When you meditate, you believe that God wants you to put forth the effort to pray in this way to help you grow stronger and closer to Him, as His friend, son/daughter, brother/sister, follower, and disciple.

Preparation for Meditative Prayer

- Select a suitable place that can be gone to daily that enables quiet and as few distractions as possible.
- Make sure to keep a schedule (same time of day) as much as possible. What time of the day is best for you? When are you most alert to reflect? Discuss with your spiritual mentor what is best for you. Work toward up to a half-hour period per day as this seems the right amount of time to gain something.
- Check to see whether you are reasonably relaxed and comfortable to concentrate, listen, and reflect. What is the best position for you to pray? Do you need some time to *quiet* your body and/or mind from current concerns and distractions? A brief relaxation exercise may help. You are entering a prayer time with God. We are taught by Christ to pray daily to God.

- Now, say a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking Him to come and be with you, to aid you in this time of prayer. Ask your Guardian Angel for his help – even Mary and Joseph (patron of the interior life) or other saints can be called upon.
- You are ready to read, listen, or view a holy image.

1. Read

Make sure you have something ready to read, hear, or see (like a holy image) in hand already that is *helpful to your life*.

What to read? Read a book written for spiritual meditation. Obvious examples are the Gospels and the Psalms. Spiritual meditation material is any book written for the purpose of bringing the soul into communion with God; to sit still with our being enjoying His Being. “My being with His Being sitting and being together.”

Examples of spiritual reading: *In Conversation with God* by Fr. Francis Fernandez; *Searching for and Maintaining Peace: A Small Treatise on Peace of Heart* by Fr. Jacques Philippe (actually, all of his books are excellent!); *Divine Intimacy* by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen; *The Way* by St. Josemaría Escrivá; *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales; *Story of a Soul* by Thérèse of Lisieux.

Having prepared what to read, hear, or see beforehand ensures that time is not wasted and the distraction and/or anxiety in choosing what to read or hear at the last moment is removed. The subject matter may also (but not always) include information that is about virtue, to help uproot vice. **Now read slowly, and perhaps more than once, until something gets your attention and then...**

2. Reflect

a. General Definition of Reflecting:

- To reflect is the consideration of some subject matter, idea, or purpose. To reflect can also mean to study, review, think again and again, evaluate, judge, assess, ponder, value – a thought, idea, opinion, object, or statement.

b. Specific Definition to Meditation:

- To reflect is a spiritual skill that requires thinking and imagining, a virtue that makes meditative prayer possible. It is finding meaning and truth in spiritual resources that you read, hear, or see *to apply to your life* as God wants for you, aided by His grace. There are two actions occurring: while one is reading, one is also thinking and imagining, that is, reflecting.

➤ See Theory 3b on **AIR: Helps to Reflect More Easily in Meditative Prayer**

3. Resolution

When you have discovered some spiritual meaning or truth during reflecting, a practical action ensures the completion of your meditating. We call this a *resolution*. You are planning to make a small change in your day to act out and show evidence of what you were given in your reflection. This is your decision to put into action something that is Christ-like, which makes you more like Christ.

Without a resolution, meditation is just a holy act without any real effect. Resolution gives necessary value to the time spent meditating. It is mostly true that if you have reflected well, a resolution will surface. Forming a resolution is a response to the time spent in God's presence, and the grace, blessing, or insight He has given you.

When you visit someone you love and whom loves you, you don't abruptly leave the meeting you just had. Often as the one you love has done something for you, you return a favor. In the case of meditation, your meeting was with Christ, and your resolution is a response to your personal encounter with Him.

You form a resolution to satisfy not only the effort you spent reflecting but more importantly as a sincere response to having encountered the Lord! This could be many different things. Here are some examples: recalling later in the day a particular point during the meditation that was striking to you, physical or spiritual works of mercy and charity for others, striving for a particular virtue, praying for others, sacrificing, being more deliberate in prayer....

Discussing the making of resolutions with your spiritual mentor is helpful as you develop your skill in reflecting and forming resolutions.

Tip: If you struggle to remember your resolution, do something to help you remember. Use timers, notes, reminders, etc. on phone or electronic calendars to sound, thus giving you helpful reminders to recall your resolution and reflect on progress.

- See Theory 3b on **Areas of Spiritual Growth from Meditative Prayer Done Over Time.**