

PRAYER – PART SIX

Before we talk about distractions and hindrances to prayer, let us first talk about the importance of *personalities and prayer*.

Everyone is different in how they see and approach the world and what they do with all the info that comes to them from the senses. Hopefully by now you are familiar with the *Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory*, or at least have heard the comparisons that they use between Extrovert (E) and Introvert (I), Sensate (S) and Intuitive (N), Thinker (T) and Feeler (F), and Judger (J) and Perceiver (P). These types are all part of our personality to one degree or another, and that our range is on these scales may differ from person to person. For example, the Extrovert is more outgoing than the Introvert. One test to see if you are an 'E' or 'I' is from your reaction to the following: there is a room filled with strangers and you are thrown into the midst of them. How would you react? The 'E' would love it, and would want to know all these new people personally. The 'I' would head for the nearest exit! Another example is that the 'P' sees the forest but misses the trees, the 'J' sees the tree but misses the forest.

If this is new, I would suggest reading up on it, but look for a book that combines Spirituality and the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory. You will find this topic very interesting! One book I suggest is called *Prayer and Temperament* by C. P. Michael and M. C. Norrissey.

Once we know our personality, then we will have a better idea of *what style of praying* we will feel more comfortable with. For example, if we are a 'T' (Thinker), then maybe we would be more at home with Meditation; Saint Thomas Aquinas would agree. If we are more of a 'F' (Feeler), then Affective Prayer would be our style; Saints Ignatius and Francis would agree. It is important to know this, since any difficulty we have with prayer could just be that we are in a style of prayer that is not suited for us. First find the style that fits you and stick to that style for a while. However, we do need to *challenge ourselves* with the other types of prayer. A 'Feeler' would need to move outside of their comfortable Prayer of Affirmation and be challenged by Meditation. The 'Heart' needs to be challenged by the 'Head' in prayer at times. This is where we will need to grow!

Now we can look at hindrances to prayer. The most common type is **TIME**; finding time throughout the day. For Religious, we have our prayer schedule, especially monasteries. For the Lay, you will have to make time, regular time in the day. I find mornings a great time for me since I am refreshed. My mother was a night owl, she always like praying and doing her spiritual readings at night. You will know the best time for yourself when **your prayer time** is a time of delight, relaxation, a break from the routine, an oasis, etc., (assuming you now know your personality and prayer style). The best solution to 'not having enough time' is to **SCHEDULE!**

The next Hindrance to prayer is **DISTRACTIONS**, especially for prayers of Quiet and Contemplation. Having a FOCUS WORD or PHRASE is the best solution. This Word or Phrase can be as simple as the word, 'Jesus'. Don't make it too complicated. Changing your phrase each day may be a problem remembering it, since we will get distracted a lot. Some folks use a word or phrase from the day's gospel.

STAGNATION or **DRYNESS** is another hindrance or distraction to prayer, usually more of a hindrance. Having a COMPANION/S on the journey can be very helpful and a blessing, especially one *with experience*. Otherwise, a PRAYER GROUP can be very helpful, since rarely would everyone be beginners. Support from others is not only comforting, but they can challenge us to be faithful to our prayer time!

JOURNALING can be a help, since we can keep track what happened throughout the day or the previous day that may have led up to the present dryness or stagnation. Dryness or Stagnation in prayer cannot be avoided, eventually it will come, but it is a **very good sign** after several years of faithful prayer (even though it may not feel like it). We will talk more about this in another article.

Using your own PRAYER BINDER can be not only a help, but make your prayer time more personal. We will talk about this in Part Seven. Trying different prayer styles can help, but I find it is good to have at least one style that we like and can fall back on, otherwise we spent our prayer time looking for and trying out better and newer prayer styles, especially in times of dryness!

There is no better way or prayer style. Eventually we have to come to the Quiet in Prayer to let go and let God do his thing in us!