

## **PART SIX: Praying with Faith of the Heart: A Common Method**

Prayer is our time of ***conscious encounter with God***. It is chiefly during this time of conscious encounter that God grants the greatest gifts and favors to those God loves. It is then that our growth in the virtues of Jesus is most favored. Therefore, the hours of prayer are the most precious of our life.

How well we pray is as important as how much we pray. Therefore, the way we pray makes a difference. "To make mental prayer well, it is important to ***follow a method***. Without a method, even the simplest of tasks would result in failure." As a help to praying well, Father Chaminade left us a common method of prayer. The following is a brief explanation of that method.

Because prayer is our most conscious encounter with God, we must treat the time of prayer as a precious treasure. It is very important to choose the ***topic of prayer*** beforehand, like the night before, so the topic already begins to influence our spirit. Generally, the topic for prayer is one of three kinds: a word from Scripture, a truth of faith, or a mystery of Jesus. At times our needs might determine other subjects.

In choosing a topic, we follow our needs, our interior attractions, or the grace we desire to obtain from prayer. If we want to change or acquire some attitude or disposition, we will choose some mystery. If we have been granted some interior gift of the Spirit, we might choose to rest in that grace during prayer. Once we have prepared the topic, we carry it in our memory like a treasure to be unfolded during the next period of prayer.

## **Four Important Considerations for Entering into Prayer:**

God embraces us at every moment with **(1) presence**, ready to communicate with us. We are always in God's presence, but often we are not aware of it. So, we enter into prayer by giving our attention to God and recalling that God sees and hears us. Once begun, we hold ourselves in God's presence throughout the entire time of prayer.

Of Christ alone can it be said that he "offered up prayers and supplications...and was heard because of his reverent submission" (Heb 5:7). We realize that we cannot pray as we should. We do not have the dispositions to be heard by the Father. But **(2) Jesus** invites us to pray in his name and to join him in his prayer to the Father. The more we know we are sinners, the more we feel the need to unite ourselves to Jesus praying for us.

God chose Mary to experience him in a unique way – as his mother. Mary conceived God in her heart by faith and in her whole being by the power of the Holy Spirit. She knew Jesus in every mystery and virtue of his life, his death, and his resurrection. It is an awesome privilege for us to pray in the company of one who knows the Lord so fully that her charity brings him forth in our heart. God gave Mary the primary role in forming him in his human personality. Because we want to take on the same personality, **(3) Mary** has the same role in our life. To pray in union with Mary means to open our heart to her formative presence during prayer.

Jesus has given us his **(4) Spirit** to be with us at all times, especially to guide us in prayer. Therefore, we ask the Holy Spirit to take possession of our mind and heart as we submit our entire being to the Spirit's inspiration and guidance. We leave aside all useless thought, disturbing concerns, and unruly affections as we abandon ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## Praying

In God's presence, united with Jesus and Mary and given over to the influence of the Holy Spirit, we are into the heart of prayer. Immediately we ***bring to mind the topic*** chosen beforehand. If the topic is a passage from Scripture or a revealed truth, we consider the subject under various aspects – meaning, importance, applications – especially I view of the grace we desire. If the subject is a mystery of Jesus, we imagine vividly the details of the event and ponder his actions, words, and especially his inner feelings and dispositions. In every case, we reflect in a listening attitude, open and attentive to the movements within us.

When some insight, feelings, or desire moves us, ***we pause and savor it*** so that it can take root in us. We make acts of faith until a truth becomes a personal conviction. We express an emotion until it attaches us to God or turns us away from evil. We nurture a desire until it moves us to change for the better. Awe, praise, gratitude, contrition, petitions – we express such sentiments to God in colloquy as long as they continue without strain or burden.

Sometimes we will be moved quickly; at other times we may have to continue considerations for some time, perhaps even into the following period of prayer. But we always remain sensitive to the movements of the Spirit within and give ourselves over to their influence. We do not indulge in lengthy speeches or in prolonged reasoning. Prayer is not a study; it is an ***encounter with God***.

This ***common method of praying*** in faith gradually makes God's work our own convictions; by degrees, it attaches us to Jesus through feelings and choices. Thus, God's wisdom and power become the guiding light and strength of our lives.

## **Concluding and Reviewing Formal Prayer**

Although the formal conclusion of prayer is brief, it is very important. It assures a continuation in us of the good effects produced by prayer. It consists of four brief acts.

- 1- We thank God for being called to prayer; for any insights, sentiments, or desires we experienced, and graces received, even if dry or tasteless.
- 2- We ask pardon for any lack of openness or response on our part, any resistance or obstacle that we maintained during prayer.
- 3- We commend ourselves to God and to the Blessed Virgin as we leave formal prayer, and aske them to sustain that grace in us.
- 4- We formulate some reminder to carry with us throughout the day; this will recall the grace of prayer and keep it active in our lives.

## **Review of Prayer**

To preserve the dispositions acquired during prayer, we do not leave prayer too abruptly. Quietly and calmly, we pass from prayer to more exterior occupations.

The effects of prayer are too precious to leave to chance. Therefore, at some moment after formal prayer, we review the preparation, manner of praying, and what we gained from it, either immediately after or some later time in the day. Give the fruits of prayer the care they need to become permanent dispositions in us.