

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

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From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 568-577

WHAT ARE THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE LIFE OF PRAYER ?

Christian tradition has preserved three forms for expressing and living prayer: vocal prayer, meditation and contemplative prayer. The feature common to all of them is the recollection of the heart.

HOW CAN VOCAL PRAYER BE DESCRIBED ?

Vocal prayer associates the body with the interior prayer of the body with the interior prayer of the heart. Even the most interior prayer, however, cannot dispense with vocal prayer. In any case it must always spring from a personal faith. With the *Our Father* Jesus has taught us a perfect form of vocal prayer.

WHAT IS MEDITATION ?

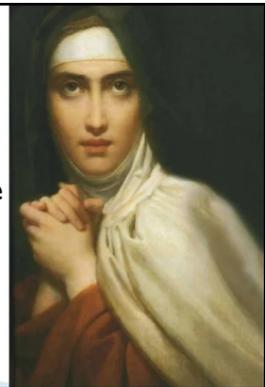
Meditation is a prayerful reflection that begins above all in the Word of God in the Bible. Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion and desire in order to deepen our faith, convert our heart and fortify our will to follow Christ. It is a first step toward the union of love with our Lord.

WHAT IS CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER ?

Contemplative prayer is a simple gaze upon God in silence and love. It is a gift of God, a moment of pure faith during which the one praying seeks Christ, surrenders himself to the loving will of the Father, and places his being under the action of the Holy Spirit. Saint Teresa of Avila defines contemplative prayer as the intimate sharing of friendship, “in which time is frequently taken to be alone with God who we know loves us.”

“Contemplative prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him whom we know loves us...”

– St. Teresa of Jesus (of Avila)



WHY IS PRAYER A “BATTLE” ?

Prayer is a gift of grace but it always presupposes a determined response on our part because those who pray “battle” against themselves, their surroundings and especially the Tempter who does all he can to turn them away from prayer. The battle of prayer is inseparable from progress in the spiritual life. We pray as we live because we live as we pray.

ARE THERE OBJECTIONS TO PRAYER ?

Along with erroneous notions of prayer, many think they do not have the time to pray or that praying is useless. Those who pray can be discouraged in the face of difficulties and apparent lack of success. Humility, trust and perseverance are necessary to overcome these obstacles.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFICULTIES IN PRAYER ?

Distraction is a habitual difficulty in our prayer. It takes our attention away from God and can also reveal what we are attached to. Our heart therefore must humbly turn to the Lord. Prayer is often affected by *dryness*. Overcoming this difficulty allows us to cling to the Lord in faith, even without any feeling of consolation. *Acedia* is a form of spiritual laziness due to relaxed vigilance and lack of custody of the heart.

HOW MAY WE STRENGTHEN OUR FILIAL TRUST ?

Filial trust is tested when we think we are not heard. We must therefore ask ourselves if we think God is truly a Father whose will we seek to fulfil, or simply a means to obtain what we want. If our prayer is united to that of Jesus, we know that He gives us much more than this or that gift. We receive the Holy Spirit who transforms our heart.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO PRAY ALWAYS ?

Praying is always possible because the time of the Christian is the time of the risen Christ who remains “with us always” (Matthew 28:20). Prayer and Christian life are therefore inseparable.

“It is possible to offer frequent and fervent prayer even at the market place or strolling alone. It is possible also in your place of business, while buying or selling or even while cooking.” St John Chrysostom.



WHAT IS THE PRAYER OF THE *HO*UR OF JESUS ?

It is called the priestly prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper. Jesus, the High Priest of the New Covenant, addresses it to His Father when the *hour* of His Sacrifice, the *hour* of His “passing over” to Him is approaching.

It is essential that every Catholic has access to good Catechesis to be able to deepen their faith. The Diocese of Plymouth recommends the many Catechetical Workshops from 'Franciscan at Home,' for more information on access to these and online or real group sessions contact deborah.vankroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk