

Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

www.christthekingabbey.org

Cullman, Alabama

Every Sunday: 6:00 AM and 10:00 AM

Daily: 6:00 AM

Holy Days of Obligation:

6:00 AM - 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel

Montgomery, Alabama

10:45 AM

Only on first Sunday
of each month

St Pius V Chapel
Birmingham, Alabama

9:30 AM

Every Sunday except
first Sunday of each month

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER SUNDAY

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April 18, 2010 – White

Mass of Sunday GI; Cr; Preface of Easter

THE POWER OF PRAYER Part 28

RICHARD GRÄF, CS.Sp.

FOR RELIGIOUS

Training in prayer, even in the case of religious, often leaves much to be desired. In convents for women, especially, a great deal of prayer is undertaken; detailed instruction is given during the postulanship on prayer and on methods and systems of prayer, but too little is said about a life of prayer. Method is made so much a part of meditation that one is led to believe that the essence of mental prayer consists precisely in a careful observance of a series of rules: if you keep these well you have meditated well! What is meant to serve as a stay, an introduction, is made into an end in itself, so that progress in prayer is rendered difficult and even impossible. The result in many cases is that religious who have spent some thirty years and more of fervent religious life meditate in exactly the same way as they did during their novitiate, even not so well, as they ruefully confess. Hence for many souls encouragement to break away from method acts as a tonic.

In not a few Religious Congregations the burden of vocal prayers of obligation, mostly to be said in common, is a heavy one. We do not object to vocal prayers as such; but criticism might be leveled at the many additions made over the years to the number of obligatory prayers. These "trimmings" constitute in themselves almost as heavy a burden as the original prayers. With the considerable active work religious have to face and the number of vocal prayers they have to say, it is difficult to find a moment in the day for silent, personal prayer. They have to rush their work in order to be in time for community prayer; and prayer has to be hurried so that work can be punctually resumed. So prayer is crowded by work and work by prayer. No wonder, then, that despite goodwill and the many graces to be had, one sees in these places so few signs of a really interior life; it has in fact little chance to develop owing to a lack of inner calm and recollection. Edel Quinn, an heroic legionary of our own time, once expressed surprise on visiting a convent that the nuns' order of time was so laden and that so little time was allotted to real prayer. She writes: "The Sisters' work is doubtless a prayer; but don't you think it a pity a religious Sister has so little time for real uninterrupted communion with God?" (*Edel Mary Quinn*, by Bishop Suenens, p. 44).

"What must I do, asked a nun once, in order to pray well? I would dearly love to do so." She was told she must attend first to the prayers of obligation, and when these vocal prayers were finished she should not impose any further ones on herself; but if time permitted, let her speak with our Lord as inclination and opportunity prompted. In surprise and unbelief she asked if that were prayer; and when assured that real prayer begins when the prayer book is shut to, she breathed a hearty *Deo gratias*, adding: "I would gladly have prayed so this long time but did not trust myself to do it, believing that such procedure was not prayer. Prayer, I thought, was only what you find in set texts and in prayer books." "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 2: 31). □