

# Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)  
[www.christthekingabbey.org](http://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  
Second, Fourth, and Fifth  
Sundays of each month only.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 12, 2010 – Green

Mass of Sunday Gl; Cr; Comm Holy Name of Mary Preface Holy Trinity

Weekly Bulletin #1165

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

RICHARD GRÄF, CS.Sp.

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### INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL PRAYER

#### Preliminary Remarks:

“Meditation” is the term more usually employed for mental prayer. It has, however, an unfortunate connotation suggesting as it does to the mind a method and system of meditating, whereas methods and systems are no part of mental prayer; they serve only as introduction or transition to it.

The number of such methods is quite considerable. Some indeed are so complex and systematized that we are tempted to expostulate: surely a child's talking with its father (and that is prayer) cannot be that difficult! And it would be necessary, as a first step, to release a number of the faithful from meditation of that sort and restore them their lost liberty! Other methods are clearer and more direct, hence easier to learn and practise. But there are many childlike, straightforward souls who find even a simple method quite beyond them. Discursive, deductive thinking is presupposed for even the simplest method: from one or two known truths others have to be inferred and excogitated. Narrate, report, describe—all can do that, we may say; but not every one is able to think things out for himself, to deduce. Even those who can make something of methodical prayer have from the start to be definitely warned that even the best method is but transition and that they have gradually to outgrow formal meditation.

Perhaps for educated beginners whose intellectual side has been markedly developed methodical meditation will be a very necessity. A small rivulet with little water is in danger of being lost in the sand if it has no channel. When, however, its water is collected in a bed and thus conserved, it can make its way unimpeded, to be finally merged in river and ocean. Similarly with many people, prayer when not canalised tends to be dissipated; too dispersed to be consecutive, it needs a well-defined channel to contain and direct it. *But no matter how important a fixed method may be for many beginners, they should gradually outgrow it, reaching the stage when they can have their own independent prayer. Those who their whole lives long have to follow a strict method when praying mentally have really no organized life of prayer, or else they are leading tepid lives devoid of inspiration and vigour.* Just as language extends as the mind develops, prayer, which is the language of the interior life, develops with the growth of that life.

As has already been said, instruction in prayer is one of the most important elements in religious training. This applies especially to mental prayer. Mental prayer is not the preserve of priests and religious; it should be practised by the laity too. All without exception, whether cloistered or following an avocation in the world, *should aim at proficiency at prayer; otherwise they will be unable to lead a really interior life—an obligation enjoined on all—“Be you perfect. . .”*