

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

First Sunday of each
month only

St Pius V Chapel

Birmingham, Alabama

9:30 AM

Second, Fourth, and Fifth
Sundays of each month only.

TWENTY FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Weekly Bulletin #1173

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

November 7, 2010 – Green

Mass of Sunday GI Cr comm. Holy Martyrs

Preface Holy Trinity

THE POWER OF PRAYER

RICHARD GRÄF, CS.Sp.

1957

Part 46

Some Practical Hints

In mental prayer we seek to enter into familiar contact with God and, above all, to maintain that contact. Once we get talking to him we should be slow to seek material from outside; such is mere makeshift. The end in view is and remains to free ourselves gradually from the supports and find our own personal way in prayer. If we need the help of a book we should have recourse to it only when we cannot make headway by ourselves.

For religious, the time for meditation is fixed by their daily order of time. Lay people wishing to lead a more fervent Christian life must find means of fitting mental prayer into their day's work. Only for serious reasons should they omit it. In Orders and Religious Congregations the time set for meditation is almost always in the morning. In this way their mental prayer can effectively influence the entire day. Only there may be a disadvantage bound up with this arrangement. Strange as it may seem, it is in the morning, and not in the evening, that many nowadays feel most fatigued. And as the mental machine requires a certain time to accelerate, so to speak, if it is to work properly, it happens that for some time after rising such are incapable of concentration, and so of praying. If a person is free in the matter he should choose that time for mental prayer which he finds will suit him best. Five or ten minutes every day should be devoted to it by all who are anxious to advance in the spiritual life. And so they will have to design a time to be otherwise unoccupied for this task. Rather than miss these minutes devoted to private prayer it is preferable to reduce to essentials one's formal prayers. Care must be taken to secure, first, the requisite external quiet and repose and then an interior calm. Without exterior and interior recollection it will scarcely be possible to pray well.

The fact that God is not far removed from us—"In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17, 28)—and that we are His living temples (2 Cor. 6, 16) and the kingdom of God is within us (Luke 17, 21) proves a capacity to converse intimately with Him not merely in the church but in all places; we can pray everywhere. More important than the place is the posture we adopt at prayer. This should tally with the presence of Him whom we are addressing and who is living and present to us. It should not, however, be so stiff and studied as to interfere eventually with recollection and attention to God. The purpose of prayer is not mortification (there are plenty of other opportunities and exercises for this) but union with God; and for this we have to direct our undivided attention to Him, protected from inconveniences from without. Anything that could interfere with our inner recollection should be avoided. Seneca is quoted for the remark that one can best think (and pray too) in a sitting posture.

One's life of prayer is a highly personal matter for each. The more mental prayer is reduced to method and pattern the more it is robbed of its finest and most precious element, its personal quality. Unless this quality is developed in people we shall never have personalities, only mass production. The liberty of the individual is restricted enough as it is by many regulations (in part necessary) and tends to be restricted more and more. The process of reducing all to a dead level of uniformity has advanced far. If now a man's freedom, the most valuable and prized asset he has is to be curtailed in the matter of prayer as well, nothing more will surprise us! For fear that a soul will take a false step once in a way, fixed lanes are pegged out on every side, and all are expected to keep to these and, if possible, in like step with eyes on the file leader! Does not the Spirit of God breathe where He will? We know nothing of the way He came or the way He goes: "So is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3, 8). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3, 17). Let us not set bounds to the "liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8, 21) unless it is absolutely necessary. "The word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. 2, 9).