

MORE ABOUT PRAYER:

In long prayers there is nearly always difficulty in preserving our attention and avoiding distraction. Voluntary distraction is, of course, blameworthy, especially when it means a complete turning of our mind away from God and from what we are doing. There may be partial distractions which can be included in our prayer, under the form of an act of charity, or by some necessary action or duty; in these cases we really do not turn our hearts away from God, we only change our way of serving Him for the moment. The Saints have always been noted for their readiness to break off their private prayers to serve Christ in the person of their neighbor.

Involuntary distractions are quite different. Unless they proceed from our deliberate carelessness, such as a lack of a proper effort to fix our attention AT THE BEGINNING of our prayer, there is certainly no blame attached to them. Even with the best will in the world, they cannot be avoided. Thought evokes thought, image evokes image; the very nature of our mind and imagination is such that they tend to wander. Until we ADVERT TO SUCH WANDERING, there is no question of fault on our part. When we do advert to the distraction, some effort must be made to renew our attention. Sometimes one can easily get rid of the distraction, at other times, it is so persistent, that the best plan is to leave it alone and "look over its shoulder" at God. To renew our attention is not always easy, and there are times when our prayer seems to be nothing but one long series of distractions, combated it is true, but with no sign of success. It is well to remember that such prayer can be very pleasing to God. Each attempt to restore our attention is an "ELEVATION OF THE MIND" to Him made under difficulty, and therefore very pleasing to Him as a prayer - whether it be successful or not as an effort to banish distraction.

It should be noted that IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO ATTEND TO EVERY WORD WE SAY. In prayer one can attend merely to the saying of the words correctly; or one can attend to the meaning of the words used; or finally one can attend to the purpose of the words used, or to the person to whom they are addressed. THE ORIGINAL INTENTION IS MOST IMPORTANT. Thus one could be attentive to God, and quite forget what one was saying to Him! Such attention is very praiseworthy, and we need never be afraid to let the Person to Whom we speak distract us from the words we say to Him in ordinary prayer. We should always remember that, unless deliberately accepted and retained, distractions do not render our prayers useless. On the contrary, they often are the occasion of very meritorious service to God.

LORD, SEND US MONKS!

LORD, SEND US HOLY MONKS!

LORD, SEND US MANY HOLY MONKS!