

## **Practicum for CSM Session II: Teaching Mental Prayer – the 3 R's**

### **1. Definition and Purpose of Mental Prayer (Meditation or Discursive Meditation)**

- a. Mental Prayer is to turn your attention to God and *think* about what He has said or done;
  - i. To understand the supernatural truth;
  - ii. Love God for this truth;
  - iii. Apply this truth to your life;
  - iv. Form a resolution based on this truth that we will put into practice with the assistance of grace.
  - v. To then grow in virtue and happiness.

### **2. Teresa of Avila gives us three simple steps for Mental prayer – the 3R's**

- a. Recall the indwelling of the Father, Son and Spirit
  - b. Begin with Vocal Prayer:
    - i. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray
    - ii. Begin with an Our Father, Hail Mary or any prayer of your choice
    - iii. Or just speak to God from the heart
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1. **Read or listen to** something from the Word of God found in Scripture, Tradition (the writings of the Saints) or the Magisterium (the teaching of the Church).
    - a. As soon as something strikes you – stop reading.
  2. **Reflect or think** about what struck you.
    - a. To understand the supernatural truth;
    - b. Love God for this truth;
    - c. Then apply that truth to your life;
      - i. Am I living this or not?
      - ii. If I am not living this:
      - iii. What habitual or root vice(s) are preventing me?
        1. Pride, vanity, envy, sloth, anger, greed, gluttony, lust, etc.
      - iv. What occasions of sin, what circumstances prompt me to fall into this vice or sin?
      - v. It is essential to learn two things by the double reflection on the Word of God and one's life:
        1. Learn about God
        2. Learn about oneself
          - a. One's dominant habitual sins;
          - b. The occasions that lead to those sins
  3. **Resolve or Resolution**
    - a. Choose something practical and concrete to remember or to do that day based on your meditation to stop a vice and practice the conquering virtue.
    - b. Examples of Resolutions
      1. Today, I will listen more than I speak.
      2. I will not gossip about so-and-so today, but only speak when I can say something positive about someone else.
      3. I complain too much. I will offer 3 things I am grateful for throughout the day today rather than complain.
      4. Today, whenever I feel anxious, I will pray; "Jesus, I Trust in You."

### **Additional Helpful Information:**

**3. Establishing the Habit of Daily Mental Prayer** - If possible, try to pick a specific time and place to pray each day and stick to it. Generalities are useless.

**a. When should we pray?**

- i. Early in the morning is ideal (or late afternoon)
- ii. If you leave it to the end of the day the devil will set traps.

**b. Where should we pray?**

- i. Go into your room, shut the door, and speak to your Father in secret. (Matt. 6)
- ii. Solitude and Silence.
- iii. Create a special place at Home.
- iv. Best place is in the Presence of the Eucharist.

**c. How long should we pray?**

- i. St. Francis de Sales, St. Theresa of Avila, and Venerable Fulton Sheen all recommended that laity should meditate for 30 minutes a day.
- ii. If this is too intimidating, then start at 15 minutes a day. I have found that it is easier to expand your time once the habit is formed than it is to form a habit if the initial goal is too high.
- iii. Try the 30-minute goal first before deciding that this time allotment is too much. Don't sell yourself short.
- iv. The over-riding question is: How much time is necessary for an intimate loving conversation? Don't leave off too soon.

**4. Overcoming common obstacles to Mental Prayer** (*more detailed answers in Theory 4!*)

**a. I am too busy. I don't have time to pray.**

1. What is most important to me? My use of time reflects my priorities.

**b. I don't know what to read.**

1. The Gospels and the Psalms.
2. Listen to or read the transcript from The Daily Rosary Meditations

**c. What if nothing strikes me when I'm reading?**

- i. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you receive His insights as you re-read a part slowly.
- ii. Circle any word or phrase that offers you any divine information or insight.

**d. I have trouble forming a resolution.**

- i. Another method is to simply recall your meditation throughout the day. Take a phrase or word from your prayer and repeat it throughout the day.

**e. My mind wanders. I get distracted.**

- i. When our mind wanders off, simply, peacefully and gently bring your attention back to God. Go back to a point that struck you.
- ii. Or move on and read to another point that strikes you

**f. I am not very good at Mental Prayer. It doesn't feel like it's working.**

- i. What matters in prayer is not what we do but what God does in us.
- ii. The essential act of prayer is to place ourselves in God's presence & remain.