

OUTLINE ON MENTAL PRAYER

—Compiled by Fr. Rene
Schatteman



1. There are many forms of prayer:
 - vocal prayer: this means praying with set words, a formula for prayer, even though it may be recited silently.
 - mental prayer: described in this outline.
 - liturgical prayer: this includes the Liturgy of the Hours, the Mass and the celebration of the other Sacraments. It is the official prayer of the Church.
2. Mental prayer has been given many different names with slightly different meanings: spontaneous prayer, contemplative prayer, meditation. But all have the same root. It can be called mental prayer because ordinarily one does not speak out loud; all the activity takes place in the mind.
3. How does one enter into Mental Prayer?
 - Set aside 10-15 minutes each day"You haven't been praying? Why, because you haven't had time? But you do have time. Furthermore, what sort of works will you be able to do if you have not meditated on them in the presence of the Lord, so as to put them in order? Without that conversation with God, how can you finish your daily work with

perfection?" (St. Josemaria, *Furrow*, 448)

-At a set hour of the day: first thing in the morning, right before lunch, in the evening, before Mass...

-In the best place: before the Blessed Sacrament, at home, in the car, at the office, on the bus...

4. Begin strong: with a firm act of the presence of God: "My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me." (St. Josemaria)

-God is everywhere and is very eager to share ideas and affections with us.

-Beg God for the grace to pray well, to concentrate on him: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

-Raise your mind to realize that for the next few minutes you will be speaking with the Triune God: the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of all! What a privilege! Who are you to deserve this?

5. What to pray about?

"About him, and yourself: joys, sorrows, successes and failures, great ambitions, daily worries – even your weaknesses! And acts of thanksgiving and petitions – and love and reparation. (St. Josemaria, *The Way*, 91)

-Talk things over with our Lord.

The "today" of our life, what we

have inside: concerns, hopes,

dreams, desires.

- "Verbs" can help: Lord, I need...

(your grace, your help). Lord, I

want.. (to serve you better, to know

how to work better). Lord, I hope...

(you will grant me all that I ask for).

Lord, forgive me... (for not having

thought more often about you, for

my selfishness and pride). Lord,

show me...(how to follow you, win

the hearts of my friends so that they

also want to follow you).

-Talk to God about your family

and friends, your spouse, children,

parents and aging relatives, your

neighbors and the world!

6. If you do not know how to go on

or if you want to enrich your prayer,

"we are usually helped by books,

and Christians do not want for them:

the Sacred Scriptures, particularly

the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical

texts of the day or season, writings

of the spiritual fathers, works of

spirituality, the great book of

creation, and that of history – the

page on which the 'today' of God is

written." (Cat. n. 2705)

-The Catechism is one of the best

guides ever for prayer. (m. 2558-

2865)

-Sacred Scripture: The best

beyond all doubt. It is a book filled

with prayers; cf. the Psalms to begin

with. "When you open the Holy

Gospel, think that what is written

there –the words and deeds of Christ

- is something that you should not

only know, but live. Everything,

every point that is told there, has

been gathered, detail by detail, for

you to make it come alive in the

individual circumstances of your

life." (St. Josemaria, *The Forge*, n. 754)

-Other books that can help in

Mental Prayer: the other works of St.

Josemaria, *In Conversation with*

God, classical works like the *Imitation*

of Christ. (Cf. the list available at

www.cicdc.org.)

7. Helpful hints:

-Ask your Guardian Angel to

help you stay focused in prayer for

those few minutes.

-Every 3-5 minutes ask the Holy

Spirit once again to help you pray

well.

- "You don't know what to say to

our Lord in prayer. Nothing comes

to you and yet you would like to

ask his advice about many things.

Look: take some notes during the

day of the things you want to think

about in the presence of God. And

then go with those notes to pray."

(St. Josemaria, *The Way*, n. 97)

-Take note of what you are saying

to our Lord in prayer. Keep those

notes and pray with them again and

again.

-Remember: prayer is not just

thoughts and ideas. Prayer is

especially an act of the will: to love

God more, and to know and accept

his will, and be ready to put it into

practice.

8. At the end of your time of Mental

Prayer, get ready to wrap things up.

Do not slack off. Instead...

-Intensify your acts of faith, hope,

love and desire.

-Formulate at least one clear

resolution that you will try to put

into practice in the next few

minutes/hours.

-Conclude with a final prayer:

"I thank you, my God, for the good

resolutions, affections and

inspirations you have

communicated to me in this

meditation. I beg your help to put

them into effect." (St. Josemaria)

-Thank our Lord for being so

good to give you this time. Thank

Mary for her help in all that you do.

Compiled by: Fr. Rene Schatteman

rene@warrickhouse.org

The published works of St. Josemaria

can be accessed at:
www.escrivaworks.org.