

OUTLINE ON MENTAL PRAYER

—Compiled by Fr. Rene
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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.” (*Catechism*, n. 2705)

-The *Catechism* is one of the best guides ever for prayer. (nn. 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.

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The published works of St. Josemaria
Escriva can be accessed at:
www.escrivaworks.org