

CHURCH OF THE MAGDALEN

Wednesday #3: Using Prayer Resources

The movement between meditation to contemplation

January 19, 2022

There are generally three types of prayer, or communication with God: 1) Vocal prayer- praying by speaking words in order to communicate with God; 2) Meditation- the pondering of what God has said to us through nature, Scripture, liturgy, etc; 3) Contemplation- the receiving of God, Who infuses something of Himself into our awareness. We cannot produce contemplation on our own, but it is the goal of all prayer- to be in union with God. While we cannot do anything to achieve it, we can certainly prepare ourselves. The best ways to prepare are to let go of our sins and develop a regular routine of prayer in our lives.

“While meditative prayer involves reading, thinking, imagining, drawing conclusions, and conversing inwardly with the indwelling Trinity, contemplation is none of these things. Rather it is a real awareness of God, desiring and loving Him, which we do not produce but simply receive from Him when we are ready for it. There are no images, ideas, or words. In the first stages what He gives is usually a dry desire for Him (that is, with little or no feelings), or it is a gentle, delightful awareness of His presence. Both of these two types of awareness are brief.” (*Prayer Primer*, Dubai)

Many people experience the delicate beginnings of infused, contemplative prayer without realizing it. The trick is recognizing it and allowing the desire for more to transform our lives now that we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good!

A guide for meditation:

- 1) Find a quiet place at a suitable time to pray.
- 2) Recollect yourself in mind and heart, inviting God to be with you.
- 3) Get inspired: Read a passage from Scripture, the writings of the saints, song, etc.
- 4) Allow this inspiration to lead to your personal response to what has been read, “applying it to our life and conversing with the Lord about it. The reading, pondering, and applying prepare us for the heart of Christian meditation: adoring, loving, praising, thinking, and sorrowing with inner, quiet words. These affections of will and heart are the chief aim of meditation, which is not a mere pious study about religious matters.”
- 5) Make a resolution. Determine to do something specific related to your meditation.

Tips for being open to contemplation:

- Get ready to stop, drop, and pray!
- If you notice any of the following, stop what you’re doing- drop any reading or rosary-ing, and just be attentive and open to the movement of the Holy Spirit
 - An inclination to stop thinking
 - A desire to just *be* with God
 - A sudden sense of awareness that God is present with you
 - Subtle (or overt) glimpses of joy, peace, love, or tenderness
- Remember, we can’t do anything to make contemplation happen, but very often the Lord will inspire us with ideas of what we might need to do to help us move closer to Him: sometimes it’s by pointing out areas of sinfulness that need to be examined, perhaps a call to go to Confession, sometimes it’s drawing us towards something or someone who can help us love more profoundly; for as St.. Teresa says, “The important thing is not to think much, but to love much!”

Guided Meditation: Using Prayer Resources

1. Enter in: Make the sign of the Cross and become aware of God's presence.
 - o Deep breath. Relax those shoulders. Get comfy in the pew.
 - o Take a full minute to look at Jesus on the altar, and let Him look at you.
 - o Ask God in your own words to be with you during your time of prayer. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you, to let you know that He's with you.
 2. Talk to God. Starting with vocal prayer, tell Him what's on your mind. Give yourself the chance to be seen and known by the God who loves you.
-
-

3. Listen up. Quiet yourself to hear the Lord's response. Notice any words or images, feelings, or aspirations for good that might appear in your experience.
4. Sometimes this practice of conversation with God produces good fruit right away, and we can just stay there, talking back and forth...always stopping if we notice an influx of peace or joy, just to give God space to enter into our hearts.
 - o If it seems like you are coming up Empty or filled with distractions, move onward.
5. Get inspired. If you brought a spiritual book to read, go for it. OR choose one of the Mysteries of the Rosary and reflect on that time in Jesus' life (e.g. The Resurrection. The Ascension, The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost) If you're looking for another option, here's an excerpt from Pope St. John Paul II's World Youth Day address in 2000:

It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.

6. Converse with the Lord in your heart about what you just read/imagined. What stands out to you? Did you notice any particular words or phrases tug at your heart? How does it seem to apply to your life? Pay attention to anything that seems to lead you to expressing love and praise to God; then do that- find a way in your heart to love and praise Him! Even if the love is full of sorrow or compassion or concern- give your love to God.
7. Still struggling to connect? Focus on someone you love. Think about all the ways and reasons you love that person. Let that love take you to God.
8. Conclude by thanking God, making an Act of Faith, and if possible, a promise or resolution.

