

Methods of Meditation

From The Means of Grace: A good meditation in the morning closes the door against sin.

Saint Alphonsus, Way of Salvation and Perfection, page 215): And, further, he who does not meditate, does not know his own failings, and thus, says St. Bernard, he does not detest them; so also, he does not see the perils of his state, and therefore does not think of avoiding them. (de Cons. 1. x. v. 2.) ... without meditation there is no prayer.

Henry Cardinal Manning (Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost, page 395): Wisdom therefore is the source of mental prayer. Isaac went out to meditate in the fields at eventide. Meditation is the patient thought of wisdom musing on divine things. If you find it hard to meditate, you may know the reason. The gift of wisdom is somehow hindered. But this gift is not to be obtained by eager poring over books, nor by the strength of the imagination or intellect. It is a gentle and calm contemplation of God and His truth in the love of it. If you wish to learn the habit of meditation, unite your heart to God humbly and patiently, sitting, as it were, at the feet of God, and looking up into His face.

Saint Serapion: The mind is purified by spiritual knowledge (that is by holy prayer and meditation), the spiritual passions of the soul by charity, and the irregular appetites by abstinence and penance.

Fr. Fahey, Mental Prayer, page 68: At this epoch of feverish activity, it is indispensable to set aside some time for Mental Prayer, and we ought to give as much time to it as the duties of our state of life allow. Fr. Fahey wrote this in 1927!

Saint Alphonsus, Preparation for Death page 410: It was said by a servant of God, that “mental prayer and mortal sin cannot exist together.”

A Simple Summary by Pope Michael

Remain here, all you earthly and distracting thoughts. I may have time for you after meditation. (Saint Bernard)

Preparation. Almighty God, I believe in Thee, humbly accept me for Thy servant and grant me light to see Thy will in this meditation. O Lord, I offer this meditation for my own needs, spiritual and material and the conversion of sinners. Amen.

Consideration. Here read and consider the point of today's meditation. Make a resolution to carry forward to improve your life. Also plan to return to the consideration throughout the day until tomorrow's meditation.

Spiritual Bouquet. Sum up the meditation in a maxim or ejaculation to be recalled during the day.

Conclusion. Almighty God, thank You for the inspirations you have just given me. Help me to carry my resolutions into practice, by giving me the graces I need. Amen.

We recommend starting with three minutes a day and working up slowly to five minutes, then ten, etc. Never allow a day go by without meditation!

MENTAL PRAYER

From The Means of Grace, Rev. Herman Rolfus and Rev. F. J. Brandle, translated from German by Rev. Richard Brennan, LL.D. 1894

It is not necessary that prayer should always be in the form of words from the lips. We can pray inwardly and without uttering a word. This mode of prayer is called mental prayer or meditation.

Although oral prayer is most excellent, yet mental prayer rates higher and is of more value, for it furnishes the material for oral prayer; then it can be practiced at times when we would be unable to pray orally. Meditation is thus a more exact and intimate intercourse with God. The Christian who meditates retires within himself, dwells in the vision of God, in the remembrance of His greatness, goodness, glory, majesty, and justice. He places before himself the subject of some sublime mystery, of some admirable deed of divine mercy, and draws forth nourishment for his soul. Thus meditation supplies food to the soul, preserving it from dryness, aridity of sentiment, pusillanimity, and despondency. On this account every Christian should devote some time, be it ever so short, to daily mental prayer.

The most suitable time, undoubtedly, for meditation is the morning, immediately after our rising. Then the heart is not yet disturbed by passion, nor the mind by distracting thoughts. A good meditation in the morning closes the door against sin, and as its object is to make good resolutions, it bears them in abundance like a fruitful mother. Nor is any great cleverness required for a profitable meditation. It is precisely to the poor in spirit that the Holy Ghost reveals all the depth and grandeur of the Gospel.

Meditation may be made according to the following simple suggestions:

Let the Christian select his subject from the Ten Commandments, the seven petitions of the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the mysteries of the rosary, or a passage from the Bible, a verse from a hymn, a paragraph from a catechism, or whatever will engage his attention. Then let him collect and compose his thoughts, that peace and repose may dwell in his soul. Then let him reflect according to the following rules:

1. Place yourself in the presence of God, and invoke the Holy Ghost that He would infuse light, understanding, and consolation into your soul.

2. Then take the mystery on which you are to meditate, whether it be a dogma of faith, a moral precept, or an incident from Sacred Scripture, and say to yourself: "What does this say to me? what does the Lord wish? what lesson am I to draw from this?" etc. This is the first part of the meditation, called the consideration or prelude.

3. When you have considered the matter of the subject make the application to your circumstances and calling in life, and ask yourself what God requires from you at your time of life, in your state of life, and what you should do. For example, in meditating on the precept, "Be ye merciful," it is plain that the father of a family, the servant, the priest, the doctor, the judge, the soldier, must all obey it alike, though their modes of doing so must necessarily be very varied.

4. Then resolve to do whatever the Lord requires you to do. To this end make a firm resolution as to what you are to do today. Before this, consider here what works you will have to do during the day, how you will do them, in what danger you may be placed

with regard to sin, in what places you will be, whom you will meet; and then form your resolve.

Thus meditation consists of three divisions—the consideration, the application, and the resolution. In conclusion, ask God for grace to carry out your resolution, commend yourself to your guardian angel and patron saint, say an Our Father for the souls in purgatory, and often during the day recall and renew your good resolutions. Thus your meditation will be like unto a fire that illuminates your spirit, warms your heart, and inspires your whole being with sentiments of praise, prayer, and thanksgiving.

There is also another very profitable mode of mental prayer, sometimes called accidental prayer, or the prayer of opportunity.

We can take any object that we meet, and consider it in its supernatural relation to God, the great and beneficent Creator. Thus the fire on the hearth may remind us of the torments of hell. The fair spring season, recalling all nature to life, may suggest the resurrection of the body on the last day. The fruit-laden tree is a figure of the good Christian. The leafless, fruitless tree in winter suggests the poverty of soul in a slothful Christian. A street-crossing may remind us of the necessity of choosing the right path in our spiritual journey to the next world. A pious thought may arise out of every incident in our daily life.

Meditation of this kind on God's works in nature fills our heart with faith in God's wisdom and providence. Thus David was first a shepherd-boy in the field, then an inspired composer, and afterwards an instrument in the hand of God, and the favorite of heaven.

St. Peter of Alcantara's Method of Meditation

It may render useful service to those who are left to their own resources.

Its six parts are:

1. the preparation or the placing of oneself in God's presence;
2. the reading of a spiritual theme or subject;
3. the consideration of the foregoing in which the intellect, the imagination and especially the heart are engaged;
4. the prayer of thanksgiving for this and all divine favors;
5. the total offering of self and of Christ and His saints to the Father;
6. the prayer of petition for oneself, the Church and all immortal souls.

Any soul that will use this little instrument with sincerity, regularity and real devotion, allowing the Holy Ghost to work within him as He sees fit, is sure to gain a strong and lasting foothold on the road to sanctity.

Saint Alphonsus

With regard to practice, meditation has three parts: preparation, consideration and conclusion. In the preparation must be made three acts: 1. of the presence of God; 2. of humility; 3. of petition for light. We say, 1. “My God, I believe Thou art here present, and I adore Thee;” 2. “I deserve at this moment to be burning in hell. O my God, I am sorry for having offended Thee!;” 3. “Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus and Mary,

grant me light in this meditation, that I may profit by it.” Then say a Hail Mary to the divine Mother, and a Glory be to the Father, etc., in honor of our angel guardian. Then read the point of meditation, and be sure to meditate, at least occasionally, on the Passion of Jesus Christ. It must also be understood that the fruit of prayer does not so much consist in meditating, but rather- 1. In producing affections-for instance, of humility, confidence, love, sorrow, offering, resignation, and the like; 2. In making petitions, and especially imploring God to grant us perseverance and His holy love; 3. in making the resolution to avoid some particular sin, and of practicing some particular virtue.

Finally, the conclusion is made thus: “I thank Thee, O God, for the lights Thou hast given me;” 2. “I purpose to kept the resolutions I have made;” 3. “and I beg Thy grace to fulfill them.” Nor must we ever forget to recommend to God the holy souls in purgatory, and all poor sinners. We must never omit our accustomed meditation, whatever coldness and weariness we may fell over it; for St. Teresa says, “To do so would be to cast ourselves into hell with our own hands.” Moreover, let all bear in mind that Benedict XIV granted a plenary indulgence to everyone who makes a meditation of half an hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, every day for a month, with confession, Communion, and prayer to the intention of the Church, and partial indulgences are also granted every day to those who mediate. This indulgence is applicable to the souls in purgatory.

Meditations on the Gospels

Translated from the French of Pere Maille, S.J., by the Rev. William H. Eyre, S.J.
1909

Mental prayer is a raising and applying of our mind and heart to God, in order to express to Him our allegiance, to lay bare to Him our needs and thus to become better, for His glory’s sake.

Mental prayer comprises three parts, namely, the beginning or preparation, the body of the prayer and the conclusion.

I. Three things to be done at the Beginning of the Meditation.

1. We must place ourselves by an act of faith in presence of God, believing firmly that God is everywhere, that He is in the place where we are and in our hearts; this leads us to adore Him and to behave with due reverence before His Divine Majesty.

2. We must acknowledge ourselves unworthy by reason of our sins to appear before God; we must implore His pardon for them by an act of contrition and unite ourselves with our Lord Jesus in order that we may appear before His Father and pray to Him in Christ’s Name.

3. We must acknowledge that or ourselves we are incapable of meditating in a way profitable to our salvation, and hence must implore the held of the Holy Ghost.

II. The Body of the Meditation contains three Points.

1. In the first point, we must consider the subject of the meditation with relation to Our Lord, noting carefully what He said, did or thought on this matter, and then paying Him our homage, treasuring in our minds His thoughts, His words, His actions; praising them, loving them, and filling our heart with feelings of gratitude; to which may at times be added acts of admiration, of joy or of compassion, according to the nature of the subject. If the mediation be made on the perfections of God or on the persons of the

Most Holy Trinity, we should adore these and perform in their honor other suitable acts of religion.

2. In the second point, we must consider the subject of our meditation with relation to ourselves. 1. examining what we ought to do, or to avoid, for our sanctification; and next, in order to lead us more effectually to embrace virtue and to fly from vice, we must try to convince our mind of our duty by the consideration of the motives and the reasons best calculated to bind us to it. 2. We must then contrast our conduct with our obligations in this matter and reflect seriously as to whether we have been faithful to our duty; and, as this inquiry will make us aware of many failings, we should humble ourselves and elicit acts of contrition for past sins, of shame for our present condition, of desire to do bettering future, and should evoke other affections suitable to the considerations we have made. 3. Lastly, at sight of our past shortcomings and present weakness, we should have recourse to God and earnestly entreat Him for grace to be better in future, appealing, in order to obtain it, to the merits of Jesus Christ and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

3. In the third point, in order to cooperate with the grace which we have asked from God, we must make good resolutions, suited to the subject of our meditation, our wishes, and our needs: which resolutions should be not only general, but also particular, for the time present and actual circumstances; they should be practical and lead us to surmount obstacles and to employ fitting means; finally, they should be accompanied by distrust of ourselves and confidence in God.

III. The Conclusion of the Meditation includes three Things.

1. We should thank God for the favors He has bestowed on us during the meditation.

2. We should crave His pardon for the faults we have committed in it.

3. We should ask Him to bless our resolutions, the present day, our life and our death.

Then we make the spiritual bouquet, which is merely the choice of some good thoughts or of some holy affections that have touched us most during the meditation, in order that during the day we may be mindful of them from time to time.

We end by placing our resolutions and the fruit of our meditation under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and we may say for this purpose the prayer, *Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, etc.* (We fly to thy patronage, etc.)

Bellord

From Meditations on Dogma by Rev. Bellord

METHOD OF MEDITATION.

REMOTE PREPARATION.

1. Read the meditation over-night.

2. Review it at intervals till next morning.

3. Affections of love and joy up to the meditation.

INTRODUCTION.

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.

2. Act of humility: acknowledge your unworthiness.

3. Confess your incapacity: ask for aid.

THE MEDITATION.

I. Adoration.

1. Contemplate the subject in God the Father, or in Jesus Christ: with reference to His

(i) Dispositions, (2) Words, (3) Actions.

2. Offer Him, with respect to the subject, (1) Adoration, (2) Admiration, (3) Praise, (4) Love, (5) Joy, (6) Gratitude.

II. Reflex action on yourself.

Transfer to yourself what you have contemplated in God, considering:

1. What example, or warning, or knowledge is to be gathered with a view to your own case?

2. What are your past negligences, present deficiencies, future needs?

3. What grace do you require from God?

III. Practice.

1. Petition.

(1) Simple petition

(2) With obsecration (through the merits of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, etc.).

(3) With thanksgiving.

(4) With intercession for others. N.B.—Your petitions must be 1. Humble. 2. Confident. 3. Persevering.

2. Resolutions.

(1) Let them be practical.

(2) For immediate use.

(3) Adapted to your special case.

(4) Efficacious.

3. Colloquies.

With God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, your Guardian Angel, etc.

CONCLUSION.

I. Thanksgiving.

(1) For admission to God's presence.

(2) For ability to pray.

(3) For lights received.

2. Contrition. For faults in meditation, with a brief examination of the meditation.

3. Oblation. Offer the meditation to God by the hands of the Blessed Virgin for the supplying of all defects.

4. Spiritual Bouquet. Sum up the meditation in a maxim or ejaculation to be recalled during the day.

In conclusion, Just do it, meditate every day and become saint, don't meditate every day and salvation is quite unlikely. Meditate on this point!

<http://www.catholicresearch.org/Sanctification/Sanctification.html>

<http://www.vaticaninexile.com/Sanctification/Sanctification.html>