

From the desk of our Pastor:

Meditative Prayer:

Last week I spoke about the power of vocal prayer. In this second installment about prayer, I would like to talk about meditative prayer as distinct from vocal prayer. Obviously, these two types of prayer may overlap, but they are also distinct from one another as well.

Meditative prayer means praying with the use of our mental faculty. This prayer engages the mind (and the heart) with the use of images, stories, personal history, words or nature. Meditative prayer is a “higher” form of prayer than simply vocal prayer. St. Teresa of Jesus, the great Doctor of prayer, says that mental prayer is essential if a person is going to grow in their interior life. It is through mental prayer that we enter into a real, thoughtful dialogue with God in order to reach the highest levels of perfection. The great Doctor also says that if a person dedicates themselves to at least 15 minutes of mental prayer each day, that their salvation will be assured. This is because a person who engages in mental prayer will receive the grace to overcome personal sins and temptations.

If you have not yet experienced this type of prayer, I'd like to give you a few ways to begin mental prayer and then some practical tips of advice in order to persevere in the practice of mental prayer.

Three ways to begin mental prayer: One great way to start a life of mental prayer is to use a spiritual book or Scripture as a diving board for your prayer. The idea is to read a short paragraph or a page from whatever source you choose and then to talk to Jesus about what you've just read. This process of reading and talking; reading and talking is a great way to start a habit of mental prayer. In the tradition of the Church, this is called “*lectio divina*” - or divine reading. A second way to enter into mental prayer is to imagine a scene from the life of Christ and place yourself into the scene. Rather than *talking*, this is the mental prayer of *imagination*. Through your imagination you can place yourself into the events of Jesus' life. You can imagine that you are St. Peter or one of the other Apostles or that you are a bystander

watching a miracle. If you were living in that moment, what would your reaction have been? What might you have seen? Think about as many details to the scene as you can and ask questions like why, when, who, etc. Another form of mental prayer is to simply talk to Jesus about your life as you would talk to a friend. Jesus is alive and he hears you. Often, he will also answer, if we have faithful ears to listen.

As you begin the practice of mental prayer it is good to note that there are several dangers that may beset you. I would like to warn about these pitfalls so that you can avoid them. The first pitfall is to do mental prayer only when you feel like it. It is better to make a plan to practice mental prayer at a set time and place every day. The reason is that if you pray only when you feel like it, you pray for your enjoyment rather than for the glory of God. We should pray even when we feel tired, sad or uninspired. Don't stop praying just because it doesn't feel good! Dry, boring prayer is essential for the mature Christian. Too many of us think that our prayer is valuable only if it *feels good*. This a very grave danger for those beginning mental prayer. Love does not always feel good. Love is not measured by emotion but rather by a firm decision of the will. A second danger is to worry about distraction. Do not worry if you are distracted in your prayer. Everyone is distracted when they pray! It is part of our human nature. As long as we try to refocus our hearts and our minds to the task at hand, distractions do not lessen the power of our prayer, but in fact increase its efficacy. Finally, it is important to pray - even if you are tempted to think you are unworthy. The devil will tell you not to pray because you are not worthy to stand before the Lord. This is totally false. We do not approach the Lord because we are worthy; we approach him because we are unworthy and need his help. Try it! It will change you!

In Christ,
Fr. Dave

The New Crucifix for Queen of All Saints

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

These words are taken from chapter one of St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians. They are perhaps a motto for us as we prepare to install a new crucifix which will adorn the sanctuary of the church. By its presence we will preach Christ crucified which is the very wisdom of God. With these words of St. Paul in our mind, I would like to remind you that the mass is the sacrifice of Jesus. During mass we are offering to the Father the sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Along with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we should also offer to the Father the sacrifice of our own lives. If we give ourselves to Jesus during mass, our lives are united with his perfect sacrifice. Although my life is anything from perfect and I do not have much to offer to God - when I unite myself to the mass - the offering of my life takes on epic and even infinite merit before the throne of the Father. The goal of the Christian is to live the mass and to live the mass throughout the entire week by offering up every day and every minute in union with the mass that we offer each Sunday as we gather as God Eucharistic people.

I would like to remind you of what St. John Paul the Great said about the mass as sacrifice in the first chapter of the encyclical letter “Ecclesia de Eucharistia.” It may help to understand the unity of the cross and the holy mass.

“The sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic mystery cannot ...be understood as something separate, independent of the Cross or only indirectly referring to the sacrifice of Calvary.”

“By virtue of its close relationship to the sacrifice of Golgotha, the Eucharist is a sacrifice in the strict sense, and not only in a general way, as if it were simply a matter of Christ's offering himself to the faithful as their spiritual food.”

“In giving his sacrifice to the Church, Christ has

also made his own the spiritual sacrifice of the Church, which is called to offer herself in union with the sacrifice of Christ.”

These words remind us of the essential character of the mass as sacrifice. They remind us that the mass is Jesus' unbloody sacrifice of infinite value offered again to the Father for the forgiveness of our sins and to achieve our redemption. There is a fitting (though not exclusive) theology that invites the presence of a crucifix at the celebration of the holy mass.

The corpus of Jesus has arrived and it is much more beautiful in person than in the photos. I am more certain than ever that this new image will reinvigorate the spiritual health of the parish. I think that the cross will open our hearts to the gift that we receive and I think it will add a beautiful and visual image to enhance our prayer during the celebration of holy mass.

I would like to give you an update on when the crucifix will be installed. The company that will install the crucifix plans to come this week. It is my earnest hope that this crucifix will be installed by next Sunday. If it is installed by next Sunday, we will begin all the masses by blessing the cross and asking Jesus to keep before our eyes the vision of his sacrifice.

The cost of the crucifix and its installation is about \$20,000. Although we have the money to pay for the new crucifix, I would also like to offer any of you the opportunity help pay for this cross through your own donations. Because this cross will hang in our church for many years, some of you may like the idea that you made a special contribution to make its installment and purchase possible. You may simply make an envelope with the words “Crucifix donation” if you would like to make a contribution.

I pray and hope that this image will guard us in sanctity and unite us in perfect harmony to Jesus Our Saviour who died and rose to give us life.

Peace,
Fr. David