

A Simple Guide for Mental Prayer

The only wrong thing you can do in mental prayer is giving up on it if you feel too distracted or that you're not "getting anything out of it". Keep in mind, as well, that the method in mental prayer described below is meant as a suggestion, as "training wheels" are on a bicycle, with the important difference that you can use them as long as you find them helpful. There's no time limit!

In practicing mental prayer, you can take anywhere from 15 minutes to half an hour. If one session seems too dry or pointless (or even several sessions) don't assume this will always be the rule. If you give up because of dryness or distractions (which all the saints experienced at one time or another) you might very well miss out on other opportunities to experience God's love and wisdom in ways you never imagined!

Father Jon Bartunek., defines four important things (all conveniently starting with the letter **C**) we need to do in meditation: These "four C's" can be a great memory aid! They are as follows:

1. **Concentrate** (Focus on being in God's presence.)
2. **Consider** (Read and Reread and Think about what the scripture text is saying to you.)
3. **Converse** (Engage in your own spontaneous "dialogue" with God about what you've read and what it suggests to you.)
4. **Commit** (Think about whatever resolutions you might wish to apply from your meditation to help your spiritual growth.)

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

To elaborate further beyond these memory aids:

- 1) In placing yourself in God's presence, find some place quiet where you won't be distracted. God is always present to us, but we must turn to him (**Concentrate**) be present to him and acknowledge his presence. (*DoS are highly encouraged to do their prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament if at all possible, awareness and acknowledgement of his concrete presence in the Eucharist will help keep you focused on him*). You can be kneeling or just sitting down, if the posture of kneeling causes you to focus on some knee pain.

2) In DoS the scripture passage is that for Mass each day of Lent. **Consider** the texts. Read them several times over. Mull them over in your mind. Think about what is being said to you, taught to you or revealed to you. What does this material mean? How can I relate to it? How does it challenge or console me? How can it help me fight against a particular sin?

3) Share now your thoughts with God as they come up. Talk to him (**Converse**) and in the quiet 'listen' to him. What is he stirring in your heart and mind. Pay attention to it. Ask Him for His insights as to how to grow closer to Him in holiness. This is all part of your conversation with our Lord. Share what is on and in your heart as you would with a friend.

4) "Sum up" your time spent with Jesus with a resolution (**Commit**) of how to follow Him more closely in your life. The idea is to "give God permission" (in Mother Teresa's words) to work within you in some way so that you can share His love and goodness with others. Remember to follow your resolution as best you can and ask for God's help with this. Empty promises won't make you more Christ-like or help you advance in holiness as a Citizen in training for heaven. Say "Today, I will do (or not do) such and such, or for the next few days, etc." Keep your resolution challenging in that you're trying to give up some sinful habit or inclination, but keep it *do-able* as well.

5) Some words of thanks and love never hurt to sum up your "encounter" with your Creator, in your own words and/or with some short vocal prayers, or just the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be to strengthen your will to carry out your resolution.

The important thing here is to take your time in all this and be patient. Jot thoughts down in a "spiritual diary" if you think that might help. And don't worry if you don't come up with any special thoughts right away or even over time.

Practice and perseverance is the key in mental prayer. The more you do mental prayer, the more you'll get out of it. Don't think your effort is a failure if you don't come away from it "feeling" something. If you do experience some warm, fuzzy emotions from mental prayer, so much the better. Just don't expect them. It is, also, important to note that Catholic meditation is **Christ-centered, not Self-centered.**

Keep the focus firmly on Jesus and keep dragging your wandering mind back to him - a hundred times if needs be.