

# MEDITARI

## 12-day aid to mental prayer

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<sup>11</sup> AND HE SAID TO HIM: GO FORTH, AND STAND UPON THE MOUNT BEFORE THE LORD: AND BEHOLD THE LORD PASSETH, AND A GREAT AND STRONG WIND BEFORE THE LORD OVERTHROWING THE MOUNTAINS, AND BREAKING THE ROCKS IN PIECES: THE LORD IS NOT IN THE WIND, AND AFTER THE WIND AN EARTHQUAKE: THE LORD IS NOT IN THE EARTHQUAKE.

<sup>12</sup> AND AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE A FIRE: THE LORD IS NOT IN THE FIRE, AND AFTER THE FIRE A WHISTLING OF A GENTLE AIR. - 1 KINGS 19: 11-12

## HOLY 40 SILENCE CHALLENGE

### **CONSTANT NOISE IS THE ENEMY OF VIRTUE.**

The world is noisy, not only in an audible sense but also in all our senses. Noise and distraction of the world has overcome all of us. Modern man does not know how to turn within himself but rather uses only outside sources for entertainment and distraction. Today we live in a world of noise more than any time in human history, the over stimulation via our phones, social media, texting, browsing mindlessly, music in the car, music forced into our ears no matter where we go, the secularization of Christmas, the lure of an object that looks delightful to our senses such as the fruit that tempted Eve. We constantly go out of our way to distract ourselves from ourselves, modern man has become so averse to his/her conscience that the ultimate punishment for man in prison is solitary confinement. We go out of our way and engage in extreme measures to escape from ourselves. We justify every form of distraction as a noble and virtuous act in order to escape from ourselves. We engage in constant social media posts and justify that we are doing it for Christ, we substitute meditation and silent prayer with music and that arouses the lower faculties in order to justify it as prayer. Constant noise of our sins, Gossip, detraction, calumny, constant chatter, constant talking and a loss of virtue. We have constant background noise while we engage in tasks, YouTube videos about the life of others while we engage in our duties, a never-ending selection of podcasts only to fill our intellect and memory with information. We go through life finding endless ways to entertain ourselves so we can feed our lower faculties that are disordered to begin with. These actions only lead us to further enslave ourselves, we give in to our passions whenever they call us and make little effort to subordinate them to our intellect and will according to right reason. We constantly talk to God but make no effort in listening when Scripture and the saints have told us that our Lord often speaks in silence and stillness. Of course, none of the things mentioned above are evil in and of themselves, they are necessary but only in moderation and not in excessive use.

Constant distraction makes us antsy, worrisome, anxious; it feeds our lower faculty and the further we allow it to rage in our soul the more difficult it becomes for us to have peace, stillness, and a pure soul. For man to have peace, man must first conquer himself, and if man is to conquer himself it must first begin with silence in the soul. This is not a rejection of all things that pertain to our irascible and concupiscible appetite, this is an invitation to a life of virtue which according to St. Thomas is the roadmap towards true peace and happiness. Virtue is a moral habit that align our actions and subjects them to right reason, this cannot be done if the soul is enslaved to itself because a disordered soul is only concerned with feeding his passions which further enslaves him. Silence, stillness, meditation in the life of Christ, examination of our consciences become instruments of a symphony in the soul that brings man a sense of interior order so he can be truly what he was created to be.

Let us look at the example of our lady, the most perfect receptacle of the word of God. St Alphonsus quoting the Church Fathers writes that before Mary conceived Christ in her Womb, she first Conceived him in her soul, through silence. Silence brings Christ into the soul. Before we begin to enter a life of habitual mental and silent prayer we must first learn of its importance and effects. Please take the time before you start your 12 days of Mental prayer to read this very short manual of instructions by St. Alphonsus Liguori.

## **Chapter 1. Mental Prayer is Morally Necessary for Salvation**

### **1. IT ENLIGHTENS THE MIND**

**In the first place, without mental prayer the soul is without light.** They, says St. Augustine, who keep their eyes shut cannot see the way to their country. **The eternal truths are all spiritual things that are seen, not with eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the mind; that is, by reflection and consideration. Now, they who do not make mental prayer do not see these truths, neither do they see the importance of eternal salvation, and the means which they can adopt in order to obtain it.**

The loss of so many souls arises from the neglect of considering the great affair of our salvation, and what we must do in order to be saved. "With desolation," says the prophet Jeremias, "is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart" (Jer 12:2). On the other hand, the Lord says that he who keeps before his eyes the truths of faith -----that is, death, judgment, and the happy or unhappy eternity that awaits us-----shall never fall into sin. **"In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Sirach 7:36).**

**St. Bonaventure also says that mental prayer is, as it were, a mirror, in which we see all the stains of the soul.** In a letter to the Bishop of Osma, St. Teresa says, "Although it appears to us that we have no imperfections, still when God opens the eyes of the soul, as He usually does in prayer, our imperfections are then clearly seen."

**He who does not make mental prayer does not even know his defects, and therefore, as St. Bernard says, he does not abhor them. He does not even know the dangers to which his eternal salvation is exposed, and, therefore, he does not even think of avoiding them. But he who applies himself to meditation instantly sees his faults, and the dangers of perdition, and, seeing them, he will reflect on the remedies for them.**

By meditating on eternity, David was excited to the practice of virtue, and to sorrow and works of penance for his sins. "I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years . . . and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit (Ps. 77:6)."

When the soul, like the solitary turtle, retires and recollects itself in meditation to converse with God, then the flowers -----that is, good desires-----appear: then comes the time of pruning, that is, the correction of faults which are discovered in mental prayer.

**"Consider," says St. Bernard, "that the time of pruning is at hand, if the time of meditation has gone before." For [says the Saint in another place] meditation regulates the affections, directs the actions, and corrects defects.**

### **2. IT DISPOSES THE HEART TO THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUES**

**Moreover, without meditation there is not strength to resist the temptations of our enemies, and to practice the virtues of the Gospel.**

Meditation is like fire with regard to iron, which, when cold, is hard, and can be wrought only with difficulty. But placed in the fire it becomes soft, and the workman gives it any form he wishes, says the venerable Bartholomew a Martyribus.

To observe the Divine precepts and counsels, it is necessary to have a tender heart, that is, a heart docile and prepared to receive the impressions of celestial inspirations, and ready to obey them. It was this that Solomon asked of God: "Give, therefore, to thy servant an understanding heart" (3 Kings 3: 9).

Sin has made our heart hard and indocile; for, being altogether inclined to sensual pleasure, it resists, as the Apostle complained, the laws of the spirit: "But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind" (Rom. 7: 23).

**But man becomes docile and tender to the influence of grace which is communicated in mental prayer.** By the contemplation of the Divine goodness, the great love which God has borne him, and the immense benefits which God has bestowed upon him, man is inflamed with love, his heart is softened, and made obedient to the Divine inspirations.

**But without mental prayer his heart will remain hard and restive and disobedient, and thus he will be lost:** "A hard heart shall fare evil at the last" (Sirach 3: 27). Hence, St. Bernard exhorted Pope Eugene never to omit meditations on account of external occupations. "I fear for you, O Eugene, lest the multitude of affairs [prayer and consideration being intermitted] may bring you to a hard heart, which abhors not itself, because it perceives not."

**Some may imagine that the long time which devout souls give to prayer, and which they could spend in useful works, is unprofitable and lost time. But such persons know not that in mental prayer souls acquire strength to conquer enemies and to practice virtue.**

"From this leisure," says St. Bernard, "strength comes forth." Hence, the Lord commanded that his spouse should not be disturbed. "I adjure you . . . that you stir not up, nor awake my beloved till she please" (Song of Songs 3:5). He says, "until she please;" for the sleep or repose which the soul takes in mental prayer is perfectly voluntary, but is, at the same time, necessary for its spiritual life. He who does not sleep has not strength to work nor to walk but goes tottering along the way.

**The soul that does not repose and acquire strength in meditation is not able to resist temptations, and totters on the road.** In the life of the Venerable Sister Mary Crucified, we read that, while at prayer, she heard a devil boasting that he had made a nun omit the common meditation, and that afterwards, because he continued to tempt to her, she was in danger of consenting to mortal sin. The servant of God ran to the nun, and, with the Divine aid, rescued her from the criminal suggestion. Behold the danger to which one who omits meditation exposes his soul!

**St. Teresa used to say that he who neglects mental prayer, needs not a devil to carry him to Hell, but that he brings himself there with his own hands.** And the Abbot Diocles says that "the man who omits mental prayer soon becomes either a beast or a devil."

### **3. IT HELPS US TO PRAY AS WE SHOULD**

**Without petitions on our part, God does not grant the Divine helps; and without aid from God, we cannot observe the Commandments. From the absolute necessity of the prayer of petition arises the moral necessity of mental prayer; for he who neglects meditation, and is distracted with worldly**

**affairs, will not know his spiritual wants, the dangers to which his salvation is exposed, the means which he must adopt in order to conquer temptations, or ever the necessity of the prayer of petition for all men; thus, he will give up the practice of prayer, and by neglecting to ask God's graces he will certainly be lost.**

The great Bishop Palafox in his Annotations to the letters of St. Teresa, says: "How can charity last, unless God gives perseverance? How will the Lord give us perseverance, if we neglect to ask Him for it? And how shall we ask Him without mental prayer? Without mental prayer, there is not the communication with God which is necessary for the preservation of virtue." **And Cardinal Bellarmine says, that for him who neglects meditation, it is morally impossible to live without sin.**

**Someone may say, I do not make mental prayer, but I say many vocal prayers. But is necessary to know, as St. Augustine remarks, that to obtain the Divine grace it is not enough to pray with the tongue, it is necessary also to pray with the heart.**

On the words of David, "I cried to the Lord with my voice," (Ps. 141: 2) the holy Doctor says, "Many cries not with their own voice [that is, not with the interior voice of the soul], but with that of the body. Your thoughts are a cry to the Lord. Cry within, where God hears."

This is what the Apostle inculcates: "Praying at all times in the spirit" (Eph. 6: 18). In general, vocal prayers are said distractedly with the voice of the body, but not of the heart, especially when they are long, and still more especially when said by a person who does not make mental prayer; and, therefore, God seldom hears them, and seldom grants the graces asked.

**Many say the Rosary, the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and perform other works of devotion; but they still continue in sin. But it is impossible for him who perseveres in mental prayer to continue in sin: he will either give up meditation or renounce sin. A great servant of God used to say that mental prayer and sin cannot exist together.** And this we see by experience: they who make mental prayer rarely incur the enmity of God; and should they ever have the misfortune of falling into sin, by persevering in mental prayer they see their misery and return to God. **Let a soul, says St. Teresa, be ever so negligent, if it perseveres in meditation, the Lord will bring it back to the haven of salvation.**

## **Chapter 2. Mental Prayer is Indispensable in Order to Attain Perfection**

**All the Saints have become Saints by mental prayer. Mental prayer is the blessed furnace in which souls are inflamed with the Divine love.** "In my meditation," says David, "a fire shall flame out" (Ps. 39:4). St. Vincent of Paul used to say that it would be a miracle if a sinner who attends the sermons in the mission, or in the spiritual exercises, were not converted.

Now, he who preaches, and speaks in the exercises, is only a man; but it is God Himself that speaks to the soul in meditation. "I will lead her into the wilderness; and I will speak to her heart" (Hosea 2:14).

St. Catherine of Bologna used to say, "He who does not practice mental prayer deprives himself of the bond that unites the soul with God; hence, finding her alone, the devil will easily make her his own." "How," she would say, "can I conceive that the love of God is found in the soul that cares but little to treat with God in prayer?"

Where, but in meditation, have the Saints been inflamed with Divine love? By means of mental prayer, St. Peter of Alcantara was inflamed to such a degree that in order to cool himself, he ran into a frozen pool, and the frozen water began to boil like water in a caldron placed on the fire.

In mental prayer, St. Philip Neri became inflamed, and trembled so that he shook the entire room. In mental prayer, St. Aloysius Gonzaga was so inflamed with Divine ardor that his very face appeared to be on fire, and his heart beat as strongly as if it wished to fly from the body.

St. Laurence Justinian says: "By the efficacy of mental prayer, temptation is banished, sadness is driven away, lost virtue is restored, fervor which has grown cold is excited, and the lovely flame of Divine love is augmented." Hence, St. Aloysius Gonzaga has justly said that he who does not make much mental prayer will never attain a high degree of perfection.

A man of prayer, says David, is like a tree planted near the current of waters, which brings forth fruit in due time; all his actions prosper before God. "Blessed is the man . . . who shall meditate on his Law Day and night! And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season, and his leaf shall not fall off: and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3). Mark the words "in due season;" that is, at the time when he ought to bear such a pain, such an affront, etc.

St. John Chrysostom compared mental prayer to a fountain in the middle of a garden. Oh! what an abundance of flowers and verdant plants do we see in the garden which is always refreshed with water from the fountain!

**Such precisely is the soul that practices mental prayer: you will see that it always advances in good desires, and that it always brings forth more abundant fruits of virtue. Whence does the soul receive so many blessings. From meditation, by which it is continually irrigated.** "Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates with the fruits of the orchard . . . The fountain of gardens, the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Ubanus." (Song of Songs 4: 13).

But let the fountain cease to water the garden, and behold, the flowers, plants, and all instantly wither away; and why? Because the water has failed. You will see that as long as such a person makes mental prayer, he is modest, humble, devout, and mortified in all things.

**But let him omit meditation, and you will instantly find him wanting in modesty of the eyes, proud, resenting every word, indevout, no longer frequenting the Sacraments and the church; you will find him attached to vanity, to useless conversations, to pastimes, and to earthly pleasures; and why? The water has failed, and, therefore, fervor has ceased. "My soul is as earth without water unto thee. . . . My spirit hath fainted away" (Ps. 143:6).**

The soul has neglected mental prayer, the garden is therefore dried up, and the miserable soul does from bad to worse. When a soul abandons meditation, St. Chrysostom regards it not only as sick, but as dead. "He," says the holy Doctor, "who prays not to God, nor desires to enjoy assiduously His Divine conversation, is dead. . . . The death of a soul is not to be prostrated before God."

The same Father says that mental prayer is the root of the fruitful vine. And St. John Climacus writes, that prayer is a bulwark against the assault of afflictions, the spring of virtues, the procurer of graces."

Rufinus asserts, that all the spiritual progress of the soul flows from mental prayer. And Gerson goes so far as to say that he who neglects meditation cannot, without a miracle, lead the life of a Christian.

Speaking of mental prayer, Jeremias says, "He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace; because he hath taken it up upon himself" (Lam. 3:28). **That is, a soul cannot have a relish for God, unless it withdraws from creatures, and sits, that is, stops to contemplate the goodness, the love, the amiableness of God. But when solitary and recollected in meditation -----that is, when it takes away its thoughts from the world-----it is then raised above itself; and departs from prayer very different from what it was when it began it.**

St. Ignatius of Loyola used to say that mental prayer is the short way to attain perfection. In a word, he who advances most in meditation makes the greatest progress in perfection. **In mental prayer the soul is filled with holy thoughts, with holy affections, desires, and holy resolutions, and with love for God. There man sacrifices his passions, his appetites, his earthly attachments, and all the interests of self-love.**

**Moreover, by praying for them, in mental prayer, we can save many sinners,** as was done by St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, and is done by all souls enamored of God, who never omit, in their meditations, to recommend to Him all infidels, heretics, and all poor sinners, begging Him also to give zeal to priests who work in His vineyard, that they may convert His enemies.

**In mental prayer we can also by the sole desire of performing them, gain the merit of many good works which we do not perform. For, as the Lord punishes bad desires, so, on the other hand, he rewards all our good desires.**

### **Chapter 3. The Ends of Mental Prayer**

In order to practice well mental prayer, or meditation, and to make it truly profitable to the soul, we must well ascertain the ends for which we attempt it.

#### **TO UNITE OURSELVES TO GOD**

**We must meditate in order to unite ourselves more completely to God. It is not so much good thoughts in the intellect as good acts of the will, or holy desires, that unite us to God; and such are the acts which we perform in meditation -----acts of humility, confidence, self-sacrifice, resignation, and especially of love and of repentance for our sins. Acts of love, says St. Teresa, are those that keep the soul inflamed with holy love.**

But the perfection of this love consists in making our will one with that of God; for the chief effect of love, as Dionysius the Areopagite says, is to unite the wills of those who love, so that they have but one heart and one will.

St. Teresa also says, "All that he who exercises himself in prayer should aim at, is to conform himself to the Divine will, and he may be assured that in this consists the highest perfection; he who best practices this will receive the greatest gifts from God, and will make the greatest progress in an interior life."

There are many, however, who complain that they go to prayer and do not find God; the reason of which is, that they carry with them a heart full of earth. "Detach the heart from creatures, says St. Teresa; seek God, and you will find Him." "The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. 3:

25). **Therefore, to find God in prayer, the soul must be stripped of its love for the things of earth, and then God will speak to it: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart" (Hosea 2:14).**

But in order to find God, solitude of the body, as St. Gregory observes, is not enough; that of the heart is necessary too. **The Lord one day said to St. Teresa: "I would willingly speak to many souls; but the world makes such a noise in their heart that my voice cannot make itself heard." Ah! When a detached soul is engaged in prayer, truly does God speak to it, and make it understand the love which He has borne it;** and then the soul, says St. Laurence Justinian, burning with holy love, speaks not; but in that silence, oh, how much does it say!

The silence of charity, observes the same writer, says more to God than could be said by the utmost powers of human eloquence; each sigh that it utters is a manifestation of its whole interior. It then seems as if it could not repeat often enough, "My Beloved to me, and I to Him."

### **TO OBTAIN GRACE FROM GOD**

**We must meditate in order to obtain from God the graces that are necessary to advance in the way of salvation, and especially to avoid sin, and to use the means which will lead us to perfection.**

**The best fruit which comes from meditation is the exercise of prayer. Almighty God, ordinarily speaking, does not give grace to any but those who pray.**

St. Gregory writes: "God desires to be entreated; He desires to be constrained; He desires to be, as it were, conquered by importunity." It is true that at all times the Lord is ready to hear us, but at the time of meditation, when we are most truly in converse with God, He is most bountiful in giving us His aid.

**Above all, should we, in meditation, ask God for perseverance and His holy love. Final perseverance is not a single grace, but a chain of graces, to which must correspond the chain of our prayers. If we cease to pray, God will cease to give us His help, and we shall perish.**

He who does not practice meditation will find the greatest difficulty in persevering in grace till death. Let us remember what Palafox says: "How will the Lord give us perseverance if we do not ask it? And how shall we ask for it without meditation? Without meditation there is no communion with God."

**We must also be urgent with prayers to obtain from God His holy love.** St. Francis de Sales says that all virtues come in union with holy love. "All good things came to me together with her."

**Let us, therefore, pray continually for perseverance and love;** and, in order to pray with greater confidence, let us ever bear in mind the promise made us by Jesus Christ, that whatever we seek from God through the merits of His Son, He will give it us. Let us, then, pray, and pray always, if we would that God should make us abound in every blessing.

**Let us pray for ourselves, and, if we have zeal for the glory of God, let us pray also for others. It is a thing most pleasing to God to be entreated for unbelievers and heretics, and all sinners.** "Let the people confess to Thee, a God; let all the people confess to Thee." [Ps. 66: 6] Let us say, O Lord, make them know Thee, make them love Thee. We read in the lives of St. Teresa and St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi how God inspired these holy women to pray for sinners. **And to prayer for sinners let us also add prayers for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.**

## **WE OUGHT NOT TO SEEK IN MENTAL PRAYER SPIRITUAL CONSOLATIONS**

**We must apply ourselves to meditation, not for the sake of spiritual consolations, but chiefly in order to learn what is the will of God concerning us.** "Speak Lord," said Samuel to God, "for Thy servant heareth" (1 Kings 3: 9). Lord, make me to know what Thou wilt, that I may do it. Some persons continue meditation as long as consolations continue; but when these cease, they leave off meditation.

It is true that God is accustomed to comfort His beloved souls at the time of meditation, and to give them some foretaste of the delights He prepares in Heaven for those who love Him.

These are things which the lovers of the world do not comprehend; they who have not taste except for earthly delights despise those which are celestial. Oh, if they were wise, how surely would they leave their pleasures to shut themselves in their closets, to speak alone with God!

**Meditation is nothing more than a converse between the soul and God; the soul pours forth to Him its affections, its desires, its fears, its requests, and God speaks to the heart, causing it to know His goodness, and the love which He bears it, and what it must do to please Him.**

**But these delights are not constant, and for the most part, holy souls experience much dryness of spirit in meditation. "With dryness and temptations," says St. Teresa, "the Lord makes proof of those who love Him." And she adds, "Even if this dryness lasts through life, let not the soul leave off meditation; the time will come when all will be well rewarded."**

The time of dryness is the time for gaining the greatest rewards; and when we find ourselves apparently without fervor, without good desires, and, as it were, unable to do a good act, let us humble ourselves and resign ourselves, for this very meditation will be more fruitful than others.

**It is enough then to say, if we can say nothing more, "O Lord, help me, have mercy on me, abandon me not!" Let us also have recourse to our comforter, the most holy Mary. Happy he who does not leave off meditation in the hour of desolation.**

### **Chapter 4: Principal Subjects of Meditation**

The Holy Spirit says, "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Sirach 7:36). **He who often meditates on the four last things-----namely, death, judgment, and the eternity of Hell and Paradise will not fall into sin. But these truths are not seen with the eye of the body; the soul only perceives them.**

**If they are not mediated on, they vanish from the mind; and then the pleasures of the senses present themselves, and those who do not keep before themselves the eternal truths are easily taken up by them; and this is the reason why so many abandon themselves to vice, and are damned. All Christians know and believe that they must die, and that we shall all be judged; but because they do not think about this, they will live far away from God.**

If we, moreover, do not meditate especially on our obligation to love God on account of His infinite perfections and the great blessings that He has conferred upon us, and the love that He has borne us, we shall hardly detach ourselves from the love of creatures in order to fix our whole love on God.

It is in the time of prayer that God gives us to understand the worthlessness of earthly things, and the value of the good things of Heaven; and then it is that He inflames with His love those hearts that do not offer resistance to His calls.

After all, the good rule is that we preferably meditate on the truths and mysteries that touch us more and procure for our soul the most abundant nourishment.

Yet the subject most suitable for a person that aspires to perfection ought to be the Passion of our Lord. Louis Blossius relates that our Lord revealed to several holy women -----to St. Gertrude, St. Bridget, St. Mechtilde, and St. Catherine of Siena-----that they who meditate on His Passion are very dear to Him. According to St. Francis de Sales, the Passion of our Redeemer should be the ordinary subject of the meditation of every Christian. Oh, what an excellent book is the Passion of Jesus!

There we understand, better than in any other book, the malice of sin, and also the mercy and love of God for man. To me it appears that Jesus Christ has suffered so many different pains-----the Scourging, the Crowning with thorns, the Crucifixion, etc.-----that, having before our eyes so many painful mysteries, we might have a variety of different subjects for meditating on His Passion, by which we might excite sentiments of gratitude and love.

## **Chapter 5. The Place and the Time Suitable for Meditation**

### **THE PLACE**

We can meditate in every place, at home or elsewhere, even in walking, in working. How many are there who, not being able to do so otherwise, raise their hearts to God and apply their minds to mental prayer without leaving for this purpose their occupations, their work, or meditate even when traveling! He who seeks God will find Him everywhere at all times.

The essential condition to converse with God is the *solitude of the heart*, without which prayer would be worthless, and, as St. Gregory says, it would profit us little or nothing to be with the body in a solitary place, while the heart is full of worldly thoughts and affections.

But to enjoy the solitude of the heart, which consists in being disengaged from worldly thoughts and affections, deserts and caves are not absolutely necessary.

Those who from necessity are obliged to converse with the world, whenever their hearts are free from worldly attachments, even in the public streets, in places of resort, and public assemblies, can possess a solitude of heart, and continue united with God.

**All those occupations that we undertake in order to fulfill the Divine will have no power to prevent the solitude of the heart.**

St. Catharine of Siena truly found God in the midst of the household labors in which her parents kept her employed in order to draw her from devotional exercises; but in the midst of these affairs she preserved a retirement in her heart, which she called her cell, and there ceased not to converse with God alone.

**However, when we can, we should retire to a solitary place to make our meditation. Our Lord has said, "When thou shalt pray, enter thy chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in**

secret" (Matt. 6: 6). St. Bernard says that silence, and the absence of all noise, almost force the soul to think of the goods of Heaven.

**But the best place for making mental prayer is the church; for Jesus Christ especially delights in the meditation that is made before the Blessed Sacrament, since there it appears that He bestows light and grace most abundantly upon those who visit Him.**

He has left Himself in this Sacrament, not only to be the food of souls that receive Him in Holy Communion, but also to be found at all times by every one who seeks Him. Devout pilgrims go to the holy House of Loreto, where Jesus Christ dwelt during His life; and to Jerusalem, where He died on the Cross; **but how much greater ought to be our devotion when we find Him before us in the tabernacle, in which this Lord Himself now dwells in person, Who lived among us, and died for us on Calvary!**

It is not permitted in the world for persons of all ranks to speak alone with kings; but with Jesus Christ, the King of kings, both nobles and plebeians, rich and poor, can converse at their will, setting before Him their wants, and seeking His grace; **and there Jesus gives audience to all, hears all, and comforts all.**

#### **THE TIME**

**We have here to consider two things -----namely, the time of the day most suitable for mental prayer, and the time to be spent in making it.**

**1. According to St. Bonaventure, the morning and the evening are the two parts of the day which, ordinarily speaking, are the fittest for meditation. But, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, the morning is the most seasonable time for prayer, because says the Saint, when prayer precedes business, sin will not find entrance into the soul. And the Venerable Father Charles Carafa, founder of the Congregation of the Pious Workers, used to say that a fervent act of love, made in the morning during meditation, is sufficient to maintain the soul in fervor during the entire day.**

**Prayer, as St. Jerome has written, is also necessary in the evening. Let not the body go to rest before the soul is refreshed by mental prayer, which is the food of the soul. But at all times and in all places we can pray; it is enough for us to raise the mind to God, and to make good acts, for in this consists mental prayer.**

**2. With regard to the time to be spent in mental prayer, the rule of the Saints was, to devote to it all the hours that were not necessary for the occupations of human life. St. Francis Borgia employed in meditation eight hours in the day, because his Superiors would not allow him a longer time; and when the eight hours had expired, he earnestly asked permission to remain a little longer at prayer, saying, "Ah! Give me another little quarter of an hour."**

St. Philip Neri was accustomed to spend the entire night in prayer. St. Anthony the Abbot remained the whole night in prayer; and when the sun appeared, which was the time assigned for terminating his prayer, he complained of it for having risen too soon.

Father Balthassar Alvarez used to say that a soul that loves God, when not in prayer, is like a stone out of its center, in a violent state 'for in this life we should, as much as possible' imitate the life of the Saints in bliss, who are constantly employed in the contemplation of God.

But let us come to the particular time which a religious who seeks perfection should devote to mental prayer. Father Torres prescribed an hour's meditation in the morning, another during the day, and a half-hour's meditation in the evening, when they should not be hindered by sickness, or by any duty of obedience.

If to you this appears too much, I counsel you to give at least two hours to mental prayer. **It is certain that a half-hour's meditation each day would not be sufficient to attain a high degree of perfection; for beginners, however, this would be sufficient.**

Sometimes the Lord wishes you to omit prayer in order to perform some work of fraternal charity; but it is necessary to attend to what St. Laurence Justinian says: "When charity requires it, the spouse of Jesus goes to serve her neighbor; but during that time she continually sighs to return to converse with her Spouse in the solitude of her cell." Father Vincent Carafa, General of the Society of Jesus, stole as many little moments of time as he could, and employed them in prayer.

**Mental prayer is tedious to those who are attached to the world, but not to those who love God only. Ah! Conversation with God is not painful nor tedious to those who truly love Him. His conversation has no bitterness, His company produces not tediousness, but joy and gladness."**

**Mental prayer, says St. John Climacus is nothing else than a familiar conversation and union with God. In prayer, as St. Chrysostom says, the soul converses with God, and God with the soul.**

No, the life of holy persons who love prayer, and fly from earthly amusements, is not a life of bitterness. If you do not believe me, "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 33: 9). Try it, and you shall see how sweet the Lord is to those who leave all things in order to converse with Him only.

**But the end which we ought to propose to ourselves in going to meditation should be, as has been said several times, not spiritual consolation, but to learn from our Lord what He wishes from us, and to divest ourselves of all self-love.**

"To prepare yourself for prayer," says St. John Climacus, "put off your own will." To prepare ourselves well for meditation, we must renounce self-will, and say to God, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Lord, tell me what Thou wishest me to do; I am willing to do it. And it is necessary to say this with a resolute will, for without this disposition the Lord will not speak to us.

## **Chapter 6. The Manner of Making Mental Prayer**

**Mental prayer contains three parts: the preparation, the meditation, and the conclusion.**

### **I. THE PREPARATION**

**Begin by disposing your mind and body to enter into pious recollection.**

**Leave at the door of the place where you are going to converse with God all extraneous thoughts, saying, with St. Bernard, O my thoughts! wait here: after prayer we shall speak on other matters. Be careful not to allow the mind to wander where it wishes; but should a distracting thought enter, act as we shall tell you in Chapter 7.**

The posture of the body most suitable for prayer is to be kneeling; but if this posture becomes so irksome as to cause distractions, we may, as St. John of the Cross says, make our meditation while modestly sitting down.

The preparation consists of three acts: 1. Act of faith in the presence of God; 2. Act of humility and of contrition; 3. Act of petition for light. We may perform these acts in the following manner:

Act of Faith in the Presence of God, and Act of Adoration

*"My God, I believe that Thou art here present, and I adore Thee with my whole soul".*

Be careful to make this act with a lively faith, for a lively remembrance of the Divine presence contributes greatly to remove distractions. Cardinal Carracciolo, Bishop of Aversa, used to say that when a person is distracted in prayer there is reason to think that he has not made a lively act of faith.

Act of Humility and of Contrition

*"Lord, I should now be in Hell in punishment of the offenses I have given Thee. I am sorry for them from the bottom of my heart; have mercy on me."*

Act of Petition for Light

*"Eternal Father, for the sake of Jesus and Mary, give me light in this meditation, that I may draw fruit from it."*

We must then recommend ourselves to the Blessed Virgin by saying a "Hail Mary," to St. Joseph, to our Guardian Angel, and to our holy Patron.

These acts, says St. Francis de Sales, ought to be made with fervor, but should be short that we may pass immediately to the meditation.

## II. THE MEDITATION

When you make meditation privately you may always use some book, at least at the commencement, and stop when you find yourself most touched.

St. Francis de Sales says that in this we would do as the bees that stop on a flower as long as they find any honey on it, and then pass on to another. St. Teresa used a book for seventeen years; she would first read a little, then meditate for a short time on what she had read. It is useful to meditate in this manner, in imitation of the pigeon that first drinks and then raises its eyes to Heaven.

When mental prayer is made in common, one person reads for the rest the subject of meditation and divides it into two parts: the first is read at the beginning, after the preparatory acts; the second, towards the middle of the half hour, or after the Consecration if the meditation is made during the Mass. One should read in a loud tone of voice, and slowly, so as to be well understood.

It should be remembered that the advantage of mental prayer consists not so much in meditating as in making affections, petitions, and resolutions: these are the three principal fruits of meditation.

"The progress of a soul," says St. Teresa, "does not consist in thinking much of God, but in loving Him ardently; and this love is acquired by resolving to do a great deal for Him."

Speaking of mental prayer, the spiritual masters say that meditation is, as it were, the needle which, when it has passed, must be succeeded by the golden thread, composed, as has been said, of affections, petitions, and resolutions; and this we are going to explain.

## 1. THE AFFECTIONS

**When you have reflected on the point of meditation, and feel any pious sentiment, raise your heart to God and offer Him acts of humility, of confidence, or of thanksgiving; but, above all, repeat in mental prayer acts of contrition and of love. The act of love, as also the act of contrition, is the golden chain that binds the soul to God.**

An act of perfect charity is sufficient for the remission of all our sins: "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." [1 Peter 4: 8] The Lord has declared that He cannot hate the soul that loves Him: "I love them that love Me." [Prov. 8: 17] The Venerable Sister Mary Crucified once saw a globe of fire in which some straws that had been thrown into it were instantly consumed. By this vision she was given to understand that a soul, by making a true act of love, obtains the remission of all its faults. Besides, the Angelic Doctor teaches that by every act of love we acquire a new degree of glory. "Every act of charity merits eternal life." [1. 2, q. 114, a. 7]

**Acts of love may be made in the following manner:**

***"My God, I esteem Thee more than all things."***

***"I love Thee with my whole heart. I delight in Thy felicity."***

***"I would wish to see Thee loved by all. I wish only what Thou wishest."***

***"Make known to me what Thou wishest from me and I will do it."***

***"Dispose as Thou pleasest of me and of all that I possess."***

**This last act of oblation is particularly dear to God.**

**In meditation, among the acts of love towards God, there is none more perfect than the taking delight in the infinite joy of God. This is certainly the continual exercise of the blessed in Heaven; so that he who often rejoices in the joy of God begins in this life to do that which he hopes to do in Heaven through all eternity.**

It may be useful here to remark, with St. Augustine, that it is not the torture, but the cause, which makes the martyr. Whence St. Thomas [2. 2, q. 124, a. 5] teaches that martyrdom is to suffer death in the exercise of an act of virtue. From which we may infer, that not only he who by the hands of the executioner lays down his life for the faith, **but whoever dies to comply with the Divine will, and to please God, is a martyr, since in sacrificing himself to the Divine love he performs an act of the most exalted virtue.**

We all have to pay the great debt of nature; let us therefore endeavor, in holy prayer, to obtain resignation to the Divine will ----to receive death and every tribulation in conformity with the dispensations of His Providence. As often as we shall perform this act of resignation with sufficient fervor, we may hope to be made partakers of the merits of the Martyrs. St. Mary Magdalene, in reciting

the doxology, always bowed her head in the same spirit as she would have done in receiving the stroke of the executioner.

**Remember that we here speak of the ordinary mental prayer; for should anyone feel himself at any time united with God by supernatural or infused recollection, without any particular thought of an eternal truth or of any Divine mystery, he should not then labor to perform any other acts than those to which he feels himself sweetly drawn to God. It is then enough to endeavor, with loving attention, to remain united with God, without impeding the Divine operation, or forcing himself to make reflections and acts.**

**But this is to be understood when the Lord calls the soul to this supernatural prayer; but until we receive such a call, we should not depart from the ordinary method of mental prayer, but should, as has been said, make use of meditation and affections. However, for persons accustomed to mental prayer, it is better to employ themselves in affections than in consideration.**

## **2. PETITIONS**

**Moreover, in mental prayer it is very profitable, and perhaps more useful than any other act, to repeat petitions to God, asking, with humility and confidence, His graces; that is, His light, resignation, perseverance, and the like; but, above all, the gift of His holy love.** St. Francis de Sales used to say that by obtaining the Divine love we obtain all graces; for a soul that truly loves God with its whole heart will, of itself, without being admonished by others, abstain from giving Him the smallest displeasure, and will labor to please Him to the best of its ability.

**When you find yourself in aridity and darkness, so that you feel, as it were, incapable of making good acts, it is sufficient to say:**

***"My Jesus, mercy. Lord, for the sake of Thy mercy, assist me."***

**And the meditation made in this manner will be for you perhaps the most useful and fruitful.**

The Venerable Paul Segneri used to say that until he studied theology, he employed himself during the time of mental prayer in making reflections and affections; but "God" [these are his own words] "afterwards opened my eyes, and thenceforward I endeavored to employ myself in petitions; and if there is any good in me, I ascribe it to this exercise of recommending myself to God."

Do you likewise do the same; ask of God His graces, in the name of Jesus Christ, and you will obtain whatsoever you desire. This is our Saviour has promised, and His promise cannot fail: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you."

**In a word, all mental prayer should consist in acts and petitions. Hence, the Venerable Sister Mary Crucified, while in an ecstasy, declared that mental prayer is the respiration of the soul; for, as by respiration, the air is first attracted, and afterwards given back, so, by petitions, the soul first receives grace from God, and then, by good acts of oblation and love, it gives itself to Him.**

## **3. RESOLUTIONS**

**In terminating the meditation it is necessary to make a particular resolution; as, for example, to avoid some particular defect into which you have more frequently fallen, or to practice some virtue, such as**

to suffer the annoyance which you receive from another person, to obey more exactly a certain Superior, to perform some particular act of mortification.

We must repeat the same resolution several times, until we find that we have got rid of the defect or acquired the virtue. Afterwards reduce to practice the resolutions you have made as soon as an occasion is presented. You would also do well, before the conclusion of your prayer, to renew the vows or any engagement by vow or otherwise that you have made with God.

This renewal is most pleasing to God if we multiply the merit of the good work and draw down upon us a new help to persevere and to grow in grace.

### **III. THE CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of meditation consists of three acts:

- 1. In thanking God for the lights received.**
- 2. In making a purpose to fulfill the resolutions made.**
- 3. In asking of the Eternal Father, for the sake of Jesus and Mary, grace to be faithful to Them.**

Be careful never to omit, at the end of meditation, to recommend to God the Souls in Purgatory and poor sinners. St. John Chrysostom says that nothing more clearly shows our love for Jesus Christ than our zeal in recommending our brethren to Him.

St. Francis de Sales remarks that in leaving mental prayer we should take with us a nosegay of flowers, in order to smell them during the day; that is, we should remember one or two points in which we have felt particular devotion, in order to excite our fervor during the day.

The ejaculations which are dearest to God are those of love, of resignation, of oblation of ourselves. Let us endeavor not to perform any action without first offering it to God, and not to allow at the most a quarter of an hour to pass, in whatever occupations we may find ourselves, without raising the heart to the Lord by some good act.

Moreover, in our leisure time, such as when we are waiting for a person, or when we walk in the garden, or are confined to bed by sickness, let us endeavor, to the best of our ability, to unite ourselves to God. It is also necessary by observing silence, by seeking solitude as much as possible, and by remembering the presence of God, to preserve the pious sentiments conceived in meditation.

## **Chapter 7. Distractions and Aridities**

### **1. DISTRACTIONS**

If, after having well prepared ourselves for mental prayer, as had been explained in a preceding paragraph, a distracting thought should enter, we must not be disturbed, nor seek to banish it with a violent effort; but let us remove it calmly and return to God.

Let us remember that the devil labors hard to disturb us in the time of meditation, in order to make us abandon it. Let him, then, who omits mental prayer on account of distractions, be persuaded that he

**gives delight to the devil. It is impossible, says Cassian, that our minds should be free from all distractions during prayer.**

**Let us, then, never give up meditation, however great our distractions may be. St. Francis de Sales says that if, in mental prayer, we should do nothing else than continually banish distractions and temptations, the meditation would be well made. Before him St. Thomas taught that involuntary distractions do not take away the fruit of mental prayer. [2, 2. q. 83, a. 13]**

Finally, when we perceive that we are deliberately distracted, let us desist from the voluntary defect and banish the distraction, **but let us be careful not to discontinue our meditation.**

## **2. ARIDITIES**

The greatest pain of souls in meditation is to find themselves sometimes without a feeling of devotion, weary of it, and without any sensible desire of loving God; and with this is joined the fear of being in the wrath of God through their sins, on account of which the Lord has abandoned them; and being in this gloomy darkness, they know not how to escape from it, it seeming to them that every way is closed against them.

**When a soul gives itself up to the spiritual life, the Lord is accustomed to heap consolations upon it, in order to wean it from the pleasures of the world, but afterwards, when He sees it more settled in spiritual ways, He draws back His hand, in order to make proof of its love, and to see whether it serves and loves God unrecompensed, while in this world, with spiritual joys.**

**Some foolish persons, seeing themselves in a state of aridity, think that God may have abandoned them; or, again, that the spiritual life was not made for them; and so they leave off prayer, and lose all that they have gained.**

In order to be a soul of prayer, man must resist with fortitude all temptations to discontinue mental prayer in the time of aridity. St. Teresa has left us very excellent instructions on this point. In one place she says, **"The devil knows that he has lost the soul that perseveringly practices mental prayer."** In another place she says, **"I hold for certain that the Lord will conduct to the haven of salvation the soul that perseveres in mental prayer, in spite of all the sins that the devil may oppose."**

Again, she says, "He who does not stop in the way of mental prayer reaches the end of his journey, though he should delay a little." Finally she concludes, saying, **"By aridity and temptations the Lord proves His lovers, Though aridity should last for life, let not the soul give up prayer: the time will come when all shall be well rewarded."**

The Angelic Doctor says that the devotion consists not in feeling, but in the desire and resolution to embrace promptly all that God wills. **Such was the prayer that Jesus Christ made in the Garden of Olives; it was full of aridity and tediousness, but it was the most devout and meritorious prayer that had ever been offered in this world. It consisted in these words: My Father, not what I will, but what Thou wilt.**

**Hence, never give up mental prayer in the time of aridity.** Should the tediousness which assails you be very great, divide your meditation into several parts, and employ yourself, for the most part, in petitions to God, even though you should seem to pray without confidence and without fruit. It will be sufficient

to say and to repeat: **"My Jesus, mercy. Lord, have mercy on us."** Pray, and doubt not that God will hear you and grant your petition.

**In going to meditation, never propose to yourself your own pleasure and satisfaction, but only to please God, and to learn what He wishes you to do. And, for this purpose, pray always that God may make known to you His will, and that He may give you strength to fulfill it. All that we ought to seek in mental prayer is, light to know, and strength to accomplish, the will of God in our regard.**

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

For the next 12 days you will engage in silence and meditation 20 minutes a day. We have prepared Scripture verses, Quotes from Saints, and a short reflection to read.

- Step 1. Find a quiet place
  - If possible, wake up 20 minutes before everyone
- Step 2. Set your timer for 20 minutes
  - Sit up or stand up (if physically possible)
- Step 3. Read the scripture, Saint quote & the reflection
- Step 4. Sit in stillness and silence while reflecting on the passages until time runs out.

## DAY 1 (NECESSITY OF PRAYER)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." - Luke 10:38-42

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

Prayer is the most important deed of all; it makes things impossible to become possible, it makes things difficult to become easy. It is impossible for a praying person to sin. - St. John Chrysostom

### **Reflections:**

*"If our thoughts are kind, peaceful, and quiet, Say's Elder Thaddeus of Vitnovica, "turned only to the good, then we also influence ourselves and radiate peace all around us - in our family, the whole country, everywhere." This is extremely important to understand if we wish to advance in a life of holiness. For our souls to be at peace we must put prayer as the center of our lives and preserver in it. Prayer is necessary to satisfy the virtue of Justice which is rendering unto God what is his due, similarly as spouses wish to spend time with one another we should be more eager to will ourselves to spend time with our lord contemplating his radiant face. We must make time for God no matter how busy the modern life may be. This act of setting aside time for prayer must be accompanied by our will regardless of how tired, unmotivated, or dry our spiritual life may be. As the Doctor of the Church St John of the Cross once said, "The secret essence of the soul that knows the truth is calling out to God: Beloved, strip me of the consolations of my complacent spirituality. Plunge me into the darkness where I cannot rely on any of my old tricks for maintaining my separation. Let me give up on trying to convince myself that my own spiritual deeds are bound to be pleasing to you. Take all my juicy spiritual feelings, Beloved, and dry them up, and then please light them on fire. Take my lofty spiritual concepts and plunge them into darkness, and then burn them. Let me only love you, Beloved. Let me quietly and with unutterable simplicity just love you." Some may say, "But my mental faculty is so scattered I am sure to face a barrage of distractions." Distractions in our thoughts often are beyond our own control, the enemy is able to place thoughts in our mind in order to distract us from meditating on our Lord. This very fact should give us the reassurance that if our enemy goes out of his way to distract us then mental prayer and meditation then it must be of great importance! As we begin to spend time in silence let us take the advice from St. Therese the Little flower on distractions, "As soon as I am aware of them, I pray for those people the thought of whom is diverting my attention, and in this way, they reap benefits from my distractions. I accept all for the love of God, even the wildest fancies that cross my mind."*

## DAY 2 (GOD'S WILL)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. – 1 Thessalonians 5:18

### **Advice from the Saints:**

*How can you find out if you are living within the will of God? Here is the sign: If you are troubled about anything, this means that you have not completely given yourself over to the will of God. A person who lives in the will of God is not concerned over anything. And if he needs anything, he gives both it and him over to God. And if he does not receive the necessary thing, he remains calm nevertheless, as if he had it. The soul which has been given over to the will of God is afraid of nothing, not of thunder nor of thieves – nothing. But whatever happens, she says, "Thus it pleases God." If she is sick, she thinks this means that I need to be sick, or else God would not have given it to me. Thus, peace is preserved in both soul and body. – St. Silouan the Athonite*

### **Reflection:**

St Alphonsus writes regarding Perfection, "Perfection is founded entirely on the love of God: "Charity is the bond of perfection;" and perfect love of God means the complete union of our will with God's: "The principal effect of love is so to unite the wills of those who love each other as to make them will the same things." Since God is Perfect, therefore his direct will for us is also perfect as its tailored perfectly for the sake of our sanctification. Our love of pleasure and the horror of suffering has conditioned us to reject the very crosses God allows in our lives for our perfection. This rejection of our daily crosses is rooted in pride, it is a usurpation of our finite above God who is infinite. Humility consists in surrendering to God's daily crosses for us, this very truth inspired St Ephrem the Syrian to write "In the measure to which a man cuts off and humbles his own will, he proceeds toward success. But insofar as he stubbornly guards his own will, so much does he bring harm to himself." We often think God's will for us is only measured in the major events of our lives, our profession, our vocation, and things of this sort. Although these major events in our lives are important it does not mean our day to day is insignificant. On the contrary! Uniting our will to God's will day to day is where perfection is attained. We often are anxious about events and circumstances in our lives that are out of our control, such as complaining about the weather, and especially reacting to the actions of others. St Alphonsus writes in his book Uniformity with God's will, "There is a story to this effect in the "Lives of the Fathers" about a farmer whose crops were more plentiful than those of his neighbors. On being asked how this happened with such unvarying regularity, he said he was not surprised because he always had the kind of weather he wanted. He was asked to explain. He said: "It is so because I want whatever kind of weather God wants, and because I do, he gives me the harvests I want." If souls resigned to God's will are humiliated, says Salvian, they want to be humiliated; if they are poor, they want to be poor; in short, whatever happens is acceptable to them, hence they are truly at peace in this life. In cold and heat, in rain and wind, the soul united to God says: "I want it to be warm, to be cold, windy, to rain, because God wills it." There is no life that is at greater peace than a life that is surrendered totally to the will of God. If we desire only God's will we will truly be at peace, St Therese the Little Flower reminds us of this when she says, "I desire neither death nor life. Were Our Lord to offer me my choice, I would not choose. I only will what He wills, and I am pleased with whatever He does."

## DAY 3 (SANCTITY & DUTY)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. - 1 Corinthians 15:58

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

*"Avoid idleness and idle people; carry out your duties. Whenever you are idle you are in danger of falling into sin, because idleness teaches us all kinds of vice."* – St John Bosco

### **Reflection:**

The Perfection of Charity consists in the perfect conformity of our wills with the divine will; this divine will is expressed, first, in the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. Moreover, it is expressed in a more concrete and detailed way in the duties of our state in life. The duties of our state determine particularly how we must act in daily life. To be always in conformity with the divine will; for a religious, these duties are set forth in their Rule, the customs of their institute and the commands of their superiors, and the tasks imposed by disobedience. For a Priest, their duties are to care for the souls of their parishioners. For Laity, duties are those required by serving our family, diligence in our profession or occupation, our social activities and by acting as a good citizen. God's will is always marked out for us by the circumstances of our life, whether important or not, down to the smallest detail, health or sickness, poverty or wealth, aridity or interior consolation, success or failure, misfortune, losses, and struggles. From time-to-time God asks of us to fulfill special tasks of Charity, patience, activity, or renouncement, detachment, submission, generosity, and sacrifice. But everything is permitted by God, all is ordered by Him for our Sanctification. Benedict the 15<sup>th</sup> says *"Sanctity properly consists only in conformity to God's will, expressed in a constant and exact fulfillment of duties of our state in life."* This statement from the Pope in Holy memory confirms St. Therese the little flower that Sanctity does not consist in doing extraordinary things but is essentially reduced to the fulfillment of duty. For this reason, we all must be punctual and preserving in the fulfillment of our duties, punctual, that is, diligent, being careful to please God in all our actions, to do his holy, sanctifying will. Hence, we must accustom ourselves to see the expression of God's will in every one of our duties, for then everything we do will be an opportunity to submerge ourselves in God's love and unite ourselves to him; preserving, that is, fulfilling our duties faithfully, not only when we feel great fervor, but also when we are sad, tired, or in a state of aridity; constancy calls for generosity. To Quote Pope Pius XI in holy memory *"It takes uncommon virtue to fulfill with exactitude, that is without carelessness, negligence, or indolence, but with attention, piety, and spiritual fervor, the whole combination of ordinary duties which make up our daily life."* This untiring, generous fidelity will not always be easy; however, we must not become discouraged by our failures, but begin again every day, fully confident that someday, God will make our poor efforts fruitful. (Excerpt taken from Fr Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen)

## DAY 4 (TEMPTATIONS)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

Because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. – James 1:3

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

*“Conquer temptations by the patience and prayer. If you oppose them without these, you will fall all the more severely.” - St. Mark the Ascetic*

### **Reflection:**

We often spend the majority of our time and energy attempting to avoid all forms of temptations, our unwillingness to accept temptations even as a means of sanctification is due to the horror of suffering. When a soul is attached to pleasure and is enslaved to his passions, temptations are seen as a burden rather than a grace towards Virtue. St. Philip Neri beautifully portrays this truth when he said, *“Do not grieve over the temptations you suffer. When the Lord intends to bestow a particular virtue on us, He often permits us first to be tempted by the opposite vice. Therefore, look upon every temptation as an invitation to grow in a particular virtue and a promise by God that you will be successful, if only you stand fast.”* Our Lord commanded us to carry our cross daily, to crucify our pride and all our vices. God’s Grace in our lives is to allow temptations (whether they may be from our concupiscible appetite or outside temptations from the enemy) for the soul to enter into great battle within himself for the greater glory of God. St. Anthony the great once said, *“It is absurd to be grateful to doctors who give us bitter and unpleasant medicines to cure our bodies, and yet to be ungrateful to God for what appears to us to be harsh, not grasping that all we encounter is for our benefit and in accordance with his providence. For knowledge of God and faith in Him is the salvation and perfection of the soul”* The ordinary means of sanctification is through what we perceive as trials, but these trials are only perceived as burdensome to us because pride falsely usurps our will and love of comfort above God’s work in us. Even our Lord was not exempt from exterior temptation, He showed us how to die to ourselves daily, he’s our perfect example that glorifying God is far greater than giving into temptation that only satisfies the flesh for a moment. *“Virtue is nothing without the trial of temptation,”* says Pope St. Leo the Great, and he continues *“for there is no conflict without an enemy, no victory without strife.”* Battling temptation through every means that God has given us is the great battle of a Catholic soul, there are not other options to life, whether we accept God’s grace which perfects us, or we reject his grace and allow the enemy to destroy us.

## DAY 5 (INTERIOR PEACE)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

In the multitude of words there shall not want sin, He that hath no guard of his speech shall meet with evils – Proverbs 10,19 – 13,3)

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

What we need most in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God with our appetite and with our tongue, for the language he best hears is silent love.

--St John of the Cross,

### **Reflection:**

In his great book *Divine Intimacy* Father Gabriel shares these reflective words regarding interior peace and silence. *"The rule of life of a consecrated soul, even if she lives in the world, should always provide for the practice of silence; and if, because of the demands of her duties, it is absolutely impossible for her to observe fixed times of silence, it is indispensable, that she holds fast to his principle; to speak as little as possible with others to be able to speak as much as possible with God. She must, therefore, accustom herself to keeping control over her words, thus avoiding loquaciousness, idle chatter, prolonged conversations, and excessive exchange of confidence. The same norm which governs the use of the senses governs also the use of speech, it is to be used only in the measure of required by duty or charity. Of course, it is certainly licit to talk for the purpose of talking some just alleviation or recreation, but always with moderation and within reasonable limits. However, it is not enough to observe exterior silence we must also strive for interior silence, that is, silence of the interior senses, the memory, imagination, sensitive feelings, thoughts, recollections of the past and useless conjectures about the future."* Speaking when it is necessary to speak allows us to be attentive to every moment for as St. Ambrose once said, *"In some causes silence is dangerous."* Just as virtue is found in the mean, which is between excess and defect, the same is with speech, only when it is necessary in order to avoid false pleasure, loquaciousness, and possible slander or gossip. This silence both exterior and interior, disposes the soul to know and listen to God who dwells within her. Interior silence is of great importance in advancement towards a life of holiness, for if we can control our interior faculties and subject them to right reason, we become less attached to them. This allows the devil very little ammunition against a soul that has found her peace in God. This spiritual reality is what inspires a certain monk who asked one of the elders, *"Why are my thoughts always inclined to defilement, so that they give me no rest even for an hour, and my soul is troubled?"* The elder said to him, *"If the demons inspire thoughts in you, do not give in to them." It is their nature to tempt constantly. And even though they never leave off this temptation, they cannot force you to sin. It depends on your will to listen to them or not to listen."* The brother said to the elder, *"What should I do? I am weak and the passion is conquering me."* The elder answered, *"Guard against them, and when they begin to speak to you, do not answer them, but pray to God: Son of God, have mercy on me!"* The enemy knows our attachment to exterior things, sinful acts, a disordered imagination, and will tempt us to use them contrary to the natural and divine law. And due to this attachment, we become fearful of losing the false pleasure and the comfort they bring. But if a soul has interior peace that if he may lose everything but maintain sanctifying Grace then the enemy has no power over him. God is our always our final end.

## DAY 6 (SPIRITUAL WARFARE)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. -

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

The temptation of the devils... is stronger than those of the world and the flesh because the devils reinforce themselves with these other two enemies, the world and the flesh, in order to wage a rugged war. - **St. John of the Cross**

### **Reflection:**

According to St. Nectarios of Aegina\_ *“We have within us deeply rooted weaknesses, passions, and defects. This cannot all be cut out with one sharp motion, but patience, persistence, care, and attention. The path leading to perfection is long. Pray to God so that he will strengthen you. Patiently accept your falls and having stood up, immediately run to God, not remaining in that place where you have fallen. Do not despair if you keep falling into your old sins. Many of them are strong because they have received the force of habit. Only with the passage of time and with fervor will they be conquered.”* Temptations and the fight for our soul is a spiritual reality all of us must face and rise to the challenges. Often times we think the enemy is working within his own accord but even the devil himself must seek permission from God before tempting a soul. This means that the enemy is but a means to an end, an instrument that God allows in order to perfect us when we overcome temptations in our battles of spiritual warfare. This is done for two reason, one for our own sake of sanctification, that when we flee from temptation, we strengthen the will. And the 2<sup>nd</sup> reason is when we say NO to the devil it becomes a massive blow of to his pride, that a creature by nature less than him would overcome his temptation. But say’s St. Angela Merici *“Remember that the Devil doesn’t sleep but seeks our ruin in a thousand ways.”* Luckily St. John Bosco gives us some remedies for the devil’s persistence when he say’s *“Do you want to outwit the devil? Never let him catch you idle. Work, study, pray, and you will surely overcome your spiritual enemy.”* There are so many reasons to reasons to resist temptation! For our own souls’ sake, for our interior peace, for to live in accordance with God’s natural and divine law, but most importantly to give God the glory he deserves. There is but 1 reason to give into temptation, a short moment of false pleasure which retracts from God the glory that we owe to him in justice and charity. According to St. Gregory the Great *“There are in truth three states of the converted: the beginning, the middle, and the perfection. In the beginning they experience the charms of sweetness; in the middle the contests of temptation; and in the end the fullness of perfection.”* We cannot obtain the fullness of perfection without the contests of temptation; therefore it is so vital that we understand that we are in a spiritual warfare and become vigilant in our daily crosses. Sometimes fear can cripple us into having complete and full trust in our Lord, take comfort in the words of St. Catherine of Siena when she said, *“And of what should we be afraid? Our captain on this battlefield is Christ Jesus. We have discovered what we have to do. Christ has bound our enemies for us and weakened them that they cannot overcome us unless we so choose to let them. So, we must fight courageously and mark ourselves with the sign of the most Holy Cross”*

## DAY 7 (SIN)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

“Happy the sinner whose fault is removed; whose sin is forgiven. Happy those to whom the LORD imputes no guilt” (Ps 32:1,2);

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

*Death rather than mortal Sin – St Dominic Savio*

### **Reflection:**

St. Catherine of Genoa wrote: “*When I had the vision in which I saw how much the shadow of the smallest act against God matters, I do not know why I did not die. I do not wonder that hell is so horrible, seeing that it is made for sin. But horrible as it is... I think ... that even there God shows mercy, so terrible does even the shadow of a venial sin seem to me.*” What is so terrible about sin? Why the fuss? Because we are called to an intimate life of love with God, a kind of marriage (Ez. 16; Is. 52, Hos. 1-3). If we are to be in this marriage, we must be holy, and every act that brings us away from that goal is a terrible tragedy. This life of intimacy with God is what motivated St. Teresa of Avila to write “*Follow the advice [to please God] until you find you have such a fixed determination not to offend the Lord that you would rather lose a thousand lives, and be persecuted by the whole world, than commit one venial sin.*” Sin not only offends God, but the consequence of Sin affects us personally as well as our neighbor. Sin blinds the intellect and weakens our will to choose the greater good. We therefore fall into habitual sin which attaches itself to disordered pleasure, causing harm towards others because we begin to view our neighbor as an object to fulfill our self-love. We must meditate daily on God’s mercy and Love for us just as much as we must meditate on our judgment. St Alphonsus Liguori helps us to see this truth when he says. “*He who does not acquire the love of God will scarcely persevere in the grace of God, for it is very difficult to renounce sin merely through fear of chastisement.*” Since the essence of Christian perfection consists in union with God by Charity and Charity is conforming our wills to God, it unites us to him more perfectly. Sin on the other hand directly opposes us to his will and produces the opposite effect. If we do not understand the evil of mortal sin then it would be prudent to meditate in its disastrous effects, after all one single sin instantly changed Lucifer, the angel of light into the an angel of darkness and ultimately into the eternal enemy of God. A single sin deprived Adam and Eve of the state of grace and friendship with God, taking away all their supernatural gifts and condemning them to death together with the rest of mankind. St. Cardinal John Henry Newman one wrote regarding sin; “*The Church holds it better for sun and moon to drop from Heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in the most extreme agony than that one soul should commit one single venial sin.*” Ask God today to help you accept all of your crosses since the purpose of our daily crosses is to help eradicate Sin out of our lives for the sake of our sanctification, our neighbor, and ultimately for the greater glory of God.

## DAY 8 (DETACHMENT)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust, and moth consume, and where thieves break through, and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. Matthew 6:19-21

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

*"Be brave and try to detach your heart from worldly things." ~St John Bosco*

### **Reflection:**

A brother came to see Abba Macarius the Egyptian, and said to him, "Abba, give me a word, that I may be saved." So the old man said, "Go to the cemetery and abuse the dead." The brother went there, abused them, and threw stones at them; then he returned and told the old man about it. The latter said to him, "Didn't they say anything to you?" He replied, "No." The old man said, "Go back tomorrow and praise them." So, the brother went away and praised them, calling them, "Apostles, saints, and righteous men." He returned to the old man and said to him, "Did they not answer you?" The brother said, "No." The old man said to him, "You know how you insulted them, and they did not reply, and how you praised them, and they did not speak; so you too, if you wish to be saved, must do the same and become a dead man. Like the dead, take no account of either the scorn of men or their praises, and you can be saved."

Detachment is of absolute necessity for one who engages in a life of holiness, detachment orders the faculties in relationship to the external object we desire. External goods are necessary for our time on earth, they can serve a purpose in the natural law (preservation of life) and the divine law (aid to our salvation). Where most of us fail in relationship to external goods is, we tend to make them an end in of themselves rather than a means to an end. Disordered attachments often become an impediment to our sanctification since the individual refuses to accept God's will in their lives in fear of losing the very object that might be harmful to their sanctification. The enemy knows this and goes to great length in tempting a soul in his concupiscence for the purpose in attaching a particular or Nemours vices that become habitual. Take St. Anthony of the desert as an example, St Anthony detached himself from the pleasures of the world and was only concerned with his relationship with God. The enemy had no earthly pleasure to tempt the good saint since the saint's faculties were perfectly ordered towards external goods. Frustrated by this the enemy resorted in physically abusing the Saint (permitted by God) which was an example of the good saint's great holiness. The moral here is not to leave our duties behind and live out in the desert, the example here is to order our faculties in relationship to external goods, as the old saying goes "do not allow the things you own, own you". If a soul desires to live a life of detachment, one must learn to fast from the very things we are attached to. Fasting helps us recognize that life is not all about earthly pleasures or feeding our lower passions whenever they call until we become enslaved to them. This leads to a life of disordered passions which ultimately leads to a life of misery, anxiety, and spiritual sloth.

## DAY 9 (VALUE OF SUFFERING)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. Genesis 50-20*

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

***“Trials and tribulations offer us a chance to make reparation for our past faults and sins. On such occasions the Lord comes to us like a physician to heal the wounds left by our sins. Tribulation is the divine medicine.”-St. Augustine of Hippo***

### **Reflection:**

St Pio regarding the value of suffering once said, *“I do not know what will happen to me; I only know one thing for certain, that the Lord will never fall short of His promises. “Do not fear, I will make you suffer, but I will also give you the strength to suffer,” Jesus tells me continually. “I want your soul to be purified and tried by a daily hidden martyrdom”. How many times,” Jesus said to me a little while ago, “would you have abandoned me, my son, if I had not crucified you.”*

Suffering is the disagreeable feeling which we experience when something, a situation, or a circumstance does not correspond to our inclinations, our needs or our hopes which does not harmonize with them to gratify them, but on the contrary contradicts and opposes them. All men are subject to this misery, but the Christian man alone possesses the secret of accepting it into his life without destroying the harmony of the happiness which he can enjoy of earth. The passion of our Lord teaches us in a concrete way that in the Christian life we must be able to accept suffering for the love of God. This is very difficult, repugnant lesson for our nature, which prefers pleasure; however, this teaching comes from the divine master, that if he commends suffering to us, it is because suffering contains a great treasure. This truth inspired St Ignatius of Loyola to say *“If God gives you an abundant harvest of trials, it is a sign of great holiness which He desires you to attain. Do you want to become a great saint? Ask God to send you many sufferings. The flame of Divine Love never rises higher than when fed with the wood of the Cross, which the infinite charity of the Savior used to finish His sacrifice. All the pleasures of the world are nothing compared with the sweetness found in the gall and vinegar offered to Jesus Christ. That is, hard and painful things endured for Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ.”* The more one accepts his suffering on earth and carries his cross for the love of God and sanctity of his soul the holier one will become. These are the means in which we build up the treasures in the kingdom of Heaven, accepting our crown of thorns leads to our crown of victory. The Saints embraced their suffering no matter magnitude because it was their way of proving their love for Christ, accepting the crosses he ordained for them in order to purify their soul. St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi once said *“I do not desire to die soon, because in Heaven there is no suffering. I desire to live a long time because I yearn to suffer much for the love of my Spouse.”* In Heaven there is no suffering, but the road there is filled with it, St John of the cross tells us this. *“The road is narrow. He who wishes to travel it more easily must cast off all things and use the cross as his cane. In other words, he must be truly resolved to suffer willingly for the love of God in all things.”* And the more one suffers on earth for the Love of Christ, the more one will enjoy the beatific vision.

## DAY 10 (ZEAL FOR SOULS)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

*“He must know that he who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way will save his own soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins” (St. James 5, 19-20).*

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

***“No sacrifice is more acceptable to God than zeal for souls.” Pope St. Gregory the Great***

### **Reflection:**

St Therese of Lisieux gives a beautiful summery regarding our time on earth spent in laboring for souls when she says. *“We have only short moments of this life to work for God’s glory. The devil knows this and that is why he tries to make us waste time in useless things. Oh, let us not waste our time! Let us save souls! Souls are falling into hell innumerable as the flakes of snow on a winter day. Jesus weeps! Instead of consoling Him we are brooding over our own sorrows. There is only one thing to do during the brief day, or rather, night of this life: Love Jesus with all the strength of your heart and save souls for Him, so that He may be loved!”* According to the measure in which the love of God takes possession of our heart, it creates and nourishes in us an ever-increasing love for our neighbor; this love, being supernatural, seeks only the supernatural good of our fellow men and thus becomes a zeal for the salvation of souls. If we have little love of God, we shall have little love for souls, and vice versa; if our zeal for souls is weak, this means our love of God is also weak. In fact, how could it be possible to love God sincerely without loving those who are his children. St Kolbe reminds us of this reality when he said, *“We have no right to rest as long as a single soul is Satan’s slave.”* Our Lord when speaking to Sister Josefa Menendez reveals to her *“Understand this well, Josefa: when a soul loves Me, she can make up for many who offend Me, and this relieves My Heart.”* *“One faithful soul can repair and obtain mercy for many ungrateful ones.”* *“A little act of generosity, of patience, of poverty. may become treasure that will win a great number of souls to My Heart.”* These beautiful words from our Lord should be of great motivation for us to labor, pray, and fast for souls, especially souls who are under our care and authority. Habitual vice enslaves us to our passions which in turn we develop a habit of committing mortal sin that diminishes charity in our soul. St. John Chrysostom affirms this; *“Nothing is colder than a Christian who does not care about the salvation of others.”* A soul who is zealous for other is devoted to God but devoting ourselves to the spiritual life does not mean shutting ourselves up in an ivory tower to enjoy God’s consolations undisturbed, with no concern for the welfare of others. It means concentrating all our powers on seeking God, working for our own sanctification in order to please God, and thus acquiring a power of action and impetration capable of obtaining the salvation of many souls. The Saints can give us great example of this when we read of their heroic virtues and zeal for souls. St. Jacinta at 6 years old has so much zeal for souls she used to go without water while working in the field as penance for the sake of souls. St. Joseph Cafasso slept for three hours and would not even scratch an itch because he saw it as a waste of time away from God. St Alphonsus Liguori wrote many volumes for the love of God and for the salvation of souls. Here is a very simple way to begin your zeal for souls, say multiple times throughout the day *“Jesus, Mary, Joseph we love you, save souls”* and offer up our sacrifices and duties up to God for the sake of the church suffering and the Church militant.

## DAY 11 (HUMILIATIONS)

### **Scripture Verse (Ready three times slowly)**

*But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." – James 4:6*

### **Reflection:**

Many souls would like to be humble, but few desire humiliations; many ask God to make them humble and fervently pray for this, but few want to be humiliated. This is also true with every virtue we want to possess yet do not desire the means in which we attain the virtue. It is impossible to gain humility without humiliations; the same as to acquire knowledge one must first study. Humiliations come in many forms, we make think of them as being publicly humiliated, or someone laughing at our defects or short comings. These types of humiliations are do play a role in our life of sanctification, but we often tend to miss the smaller moments of humility, such as engaging in duties that are contrary to our passions or intellect. Sometimes we think certain duties are beneath us and instead of engaging in them for the sake and love for God we become prideful and scoff at the small cross God has laid out for us. St. John the prophet displays this reality when he said, *"Humility consists in considering oneself to be nothing in all circumstances, cutting off one's will in all things, accusing oneself of everything, and bearing without confusion that which befalls him from without. Such is true humility, in which vainglory finds no place. A humble man does not need to try to show his humility in words, nor does he need to make himself do humble deeds, for both of these lead to vainglory, hinder progress, and cause more harm than good. But when they command anything, it is necessary not to contradict, but to fulfill it with obedience. This is what leads to success."* Before we seek humiliations on our own initiative, we should prepare to accept those which will come to us against our will. St Bernard says, *"Being humbles and being humble are two different things"* We can say that everyone, in one way or another, receives humiliation in this life. Not many, however become humble because very few of us accept humiliation and submit to it patiently. Pride causes us to usurp our will over God's will who is all knowing, we often tell God which humiliations we will engage in and force him to accept them as a meritorious act while rejecting the humiliations he has prepared for us. St Augustine speaks of the importance of humility when he says *"Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues. Hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance."* Here is some sound advice from an eastern Saint Theophan the Recluse *"External labor and ascetic endeavors are means and not ends. The main thing is our feelings and inward dispositions... Above all preserve humility and pray to be given it and find fault with yourself as often as you can, to attain this self-abasement. As soon as you wake up, try to realize your own worthlessness, and then strive to remain in this feeling all day. Abase yourself even more when facing the Lord in prayer. Who am I, and Whom have I the temerity to address in human speech? Rejoice if you happen to meet with external humiliation that is not of your own seeking. Accept it as a special mercy of God. Make It your criterion that when you are displeased with yourself you are in a good state. But as soon as a feeling of self-satisfaction creeps in, however slight, and you begin to rate yourself highly, know that you are not in a right state and begin to reprove yourself. For the Lord's sake, I pray you, do not forget this. If self-abasement is lacking all the rest is nothing. There have been people who attained salvation by humility alone, without ascetic endeavors. But without humility no one has ever been saved or ever will be saved.*

## DAY 12 (CHARITY)

### **Advice from the Saints: (Read three times slowly)**

*"It is by the path of love, which is charity, that God draws near to man, and man to God. But where charity is not found, God cannot dwell. If then, we possess charity, we possess God, for "God is Charity" (1John 4:8) -- St. Albert the Great*

### **Reflection:**

St Alphonsus in his book Uniformity with God's will says, "*Perfection is founded entirely on the love of God: "Charity is the bond of perfection;" and perfect love of God means the complete union of our will with God's: "The principal effect of love is so to unite the wills of those who love each other as to make them will the same things." It follows then, that the more one unites his will with the divine will, the greater will be his love of God. Mortification, meditation, receiving Holy Communion, acts of fraternal charity are all certainly pleasing to God -- but only when they are in accordance with his will. When they do not accord with God's will, he not only finds no pleasure in them, but he even rejects them utterly and punishes them. To illustrate: -- A man has two servants. One works unremittingly all day long -- but according to his own devices; the other, conceivably, works less, but he does do what he is told. This latter of course is going to find favor in the eyes of his master; the other will not. Now, in applying this example, we may ask: Why should we perform actions for God's glory if they are not going to be acceptable to him? God does not want sacrifices, the prophet Samuel told King Saul, but he does want obedience to his will."* Pope St Clement 1 also says, "*Charity unites us to God... There is nothing mean in charity, nothing arrogant. Charity knows no schism, does not rebel, does all things in concord. In charity all the elect of God has been made perfect.*" St. Aelred of Rievaulx beautifully points out regarding charity, "*Charity may be a very short word, but with its tremendous meaning of pure love, it sums up man's entire relation to God and to his neighbor.*" Our charity towards our neighbor is done entirely for the love and glory of God, the saints also speak about this, St Basil the great says, "*Charity may be a very short word, but with its tremendous meaning of pure love, it sums up man's entire relation to God and to his neighbor.*" St Augustine talks about how we serve God when we serve our neighbor when he says, "*God has no need of your money, but the poor have. You give it to the poor, and God receives it.*" In charity a soul devoted to God goes beyond acts that fulfill the virtue of justice, when charity is present in the devoted person, his soul burns for the love of God, he will do submit to God will in his life simply because this is what God wants for him. A devoted soul who burns with the virtue of charity also seeks fraternal charity for his neighbor, this is what inspired St. John Chrysostom to say, "*Necessity urges us to pray for ourselves. Fraternal Charity obliges us to pray for others. God finds the prayer motivated by charity to be more meritorious than the prayer motivated by necessity.*" Pray to our Lord, that he may increase you in the virtue of Charity and that you may be obedient to his will always.

**\*If you want to continue daily meditations, I highly recommend meditating on the Holy Scriptures and if you want an aid to mental prayer I also recommend "Divine Intimacy" by Father Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen O.C.D.**

