

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	3
WHERE DOES MEDITATION COME FROM?	4
1 – Roots in the Bible	4
2 - Father Caffarel	5
3 – The great Saints	6
WHY MEDITATION?	8
1 - To obey and to trust	8
2 - Listening	10
3 – Meeting the Lord	10
HOW TO MEDITATE?	11
1 – Making time	11
2 – How much time?	11
3 – Settling	12
4 - Introduction to Meditation	12
5 – Content of Meditation	12
6 – End of Meditation	13
7 – Testimonials from Team members	13
8 - Methods proposed by the great Saints	15
DIFFICULTIES	17
1 – Finding time	17
2 – Laziness and lack of desire to pray	17
3 - Distractions and lack of concentration	17
4 – Fear of silence	17
5 – The feeling of sterility	17
6 - Temptations of the evil one	18
7 – Lack of perseverance	18
8 - Ignorance of the fruits of meditation	18
THE FRUITS	19
1 – Growth in love of God and neighbour	19
2 – Listening to God	19
3 – Marvelling at the action of God in our lives	19
4 – Growing serenely in peace	19
5 – Understanding ourselves better	20
6 – To better face the challenges of life	20
7 – Deepening our communal prayer	20
8 – Boosting the other Endeavours	21
CONCLUSION	22
KEY WORDS	23
FURTHER RESOURCES	24

INTRODUCTION

For Father Caffarel, «**meditation is a face-to-face with God, a heart-to-heart with God**». As we will see, great leaders of the Church have also defined meditation. It is an intimate relationship of friendship, filial love, with God. This could be perhaps a conversation with Him, or a simple glance of love to Him. We stand in His presence, we contemplate Him. The Holy Spirit is the interior Master of such a prayer.

We must ask God for the grace of meditation, with perseverance and with humility. Humility is the foundation of prayer. God is vis-a-vis the primary mover. Meditation is the work of God with the cooperation of man and woman and not the other way around.

Meditation is also a journey. This is a permanent act of faith. **Thus, it follows that meditation is a fundamental endeavour.**

The Charter of the Teams of our Lady recommends ***encountering the Lord daily in silent prayer***. This is not a rigid rule; each person chooses what suits him or her best (when, where, how). The most important thing in developing this deep union with God is not the setting; it is perseverance and regularity.

Training the laity in regular prayer was an important challenge in the life of Father Caffarel. This is why he created the «notebooks concerning meditation», and why he led weeks of retreat called «schools of meditation» in Troussures in France.

«Meditation is the secret of a happy, fruitful and full life. We must feed ourselves in God through meditation before our apostolic mission».

(Padre Caffarel)

I. Where does meditation come from?

1 - Roots in the Bible

Practical suggestion: these texts could be used to support meditation

1 The Old Testament

Prophets from the Old Testament prayed in anticipation.

As soon as God calls him, **Abraham** leaves **“as the Lord had told him”** (Gen. 12, 4): his heart obeys. Listening with the heart is essential to prayer. Abraham’s prayer expresses itself also through actions: a man of silence, he builds, at each resting place, an altar to the Lord.

Moses’s prayer is both a poignant intercessory prayer and a contemplative prayer. Here once again, God comes first. He calls Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3, 4). In fact, if **“the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob calls”** his servant Moses, it is because he is the Living God. Moses **“speaks”** often, and at length, with the Lord, climbing the mountain to hear Him and implore Him, coming down to the people to repeat to them the words of God and to guide them



2 The New Testament

Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between the Trinitarian God and man.

God waits for us: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.” (Rev. 3, 20).

When we turn to God, we discover that He is waiting for us to embrace us, as the father welcomes his prodigal son (Luke 15, 20). He desires to dwell in us. **“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.”** (Jn. 14, 23).

The appropriate response to God’s call is to approach Him: **“Let anyone who is thirsty, come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me...”** (Jn. 7, 37).

To pray is to turn freely, entirely, to God. Prayer is an act of love that affects the whole person. **“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.”** (Mk. 12, 30).

5). Man does not pray by himself. God acts within him through **the meditation of the Holy Spirit**: **“The Spirit helps us in our weakness; we do not know what we ought to pray for; but**

the Spirit Himself intercedes for us.” (Rom. 8, 26). “The one who remains in Me, and Me in him, will bear much fruit; because without me, you cannot do anything.” (Jn.15, 5).

2 - Father Caffarel

Father Caffarel explains:

«Prayer is an act of the whole person: body, soul, mind, intellect, will and emotion. The essence of prayer lies neither in the stability of attention, neither in the “I feel” neither in the “I think”. It is in the adherence of my will to the will of God in

“I want”. It is a direction that I voluntarily steer my “inner heart”, to the “new heart”, which I was saying to you during our first meeting. I want you to grasp what I mean by “I want”, since that is the essential ».

Father Caffarel spoke at length about the need for «inner prayer»:

«getting there requires patience and calm. What God wants is that silence per-

meates our soul so that we can communicate with the Father.»

If we do not pray each day, it is not for lack of time, but maybe for lack of Love. Father Caffarel says:

«The Christian who does not dedicate daily 10 to 15 mins of his time (1/96th of

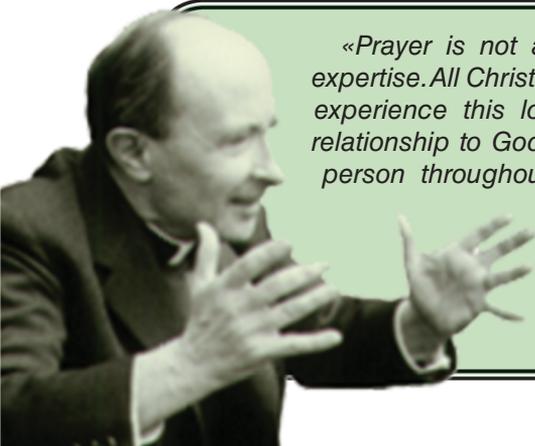
one day) to this interior meditation will remain infantile, or worse still, will regress»

Meditation is both reflection and internal prayer; it is a time of loving contemplation. We seek harmony with God, with His love and His will. There must always be a calm time for God to have the opportunity to speak to us.

«Prayer is not a matter of expertise. All Christians should experience this longing, this relationship to God, person to person throughout their life.

We are not capable of

it by ourselves. The practice of prayer is God’s work, God’s gift. But it is also a work of man. Man must cooperate with perseverance. It is a science, which thus has laws and techniques. It is an art, like painting, like playing the piano. And as in all the arts, we cannot be content with only learning the theory, we must learn by practising».



3 - The great Saints

- **Saint Augustine writes:** «you made us for you, and our heart remains restless, until it rests in you». The human heart is made for abundance, which comes from its relationship with people. But only God can fill the human heart. The means to extinguish this thirst for the infinite is prayer. «Human beings need to encounter God in prayer because we are beggars before God».



- **Saint John Vianney, Cure of Ars** says: «Man has a beautiful mission, to pray and to love. You pray, you love: here is the happiness of man on earth! When one has a heart, pure and united to God, one feels a balm, a sweetness that intoxicates, and a light that dazzles. My children, you have a small heart, but prayer enlarges it and renders it capable of loving God. Prayer is a foretaste of heaven, a conduit from paradise. It never leaves us without sweetness».



- **Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus** has said «I felt that the only thing necessary was to unite myself more and more to Jesus and the rest would be given to me besides. Mental prayer is, in my opinion, an intimate friendship vocation where one often talks alone with that God, who, we know, loves us. The words in prayer are not speeches but kindling that feeds the fire of love. There is not much to do or to give, but rather receive and love much».



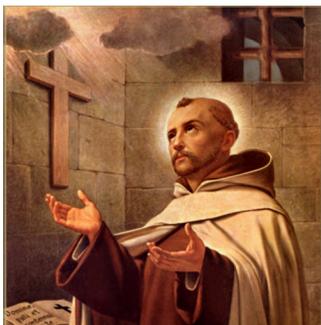
- **Saint Theresa of Avila**, a deeply mystical Spanish nun, defines the term to pray as «a friendly exchange with God». She interiorizes prayer, knowing that God resides at the centre of the human soul: «to seek God internally... do not think that it could be done either through acquired knowledge or through our imagination... because the quest for God is based on the truth, which is in us. A human being must turn his/her soul into the «house» of Christ.»



- **Saint John of the Cross**, is a Spanish mystic, who conceptualized detachment in connection with Eastern spiritualities.

He tells us: «God is God; it is the only reality. We can find Him only within the soul», a pathway accessible through love.

St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa desire a prayer of silence, stillness, experience of love in the depth of the heart, rather than being satisfied with the perception of prayer.



- **Saint Ignatius of Loyola** explains: «A friend is one who speaks to a friend, who knows how to remain silent to listen to him».

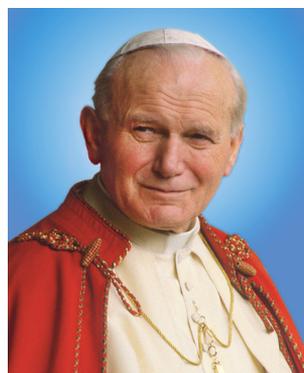


- **Blessed Charles of Foucauld** defines: «Prayer, this is a conversation with God; this is a scream from your heart to God. It therefore must be something absolutely natural, absolutely authentic, the expression of the depth of your heart: it is not your lips that must be doing the talking; it is not your mind that is your volition. Your volition manifesting itself and pouring it-

self out to your Father in its entire truth, its nakedness, its sincerity, its simplicity, and presented by you to Him, that is what prayer is».



- **Saint John-Paul II** says in conclusion: «Prayer is the first expression of the interior truth of man, the first condition for an authentic freedom of the spirit. It gives sense to the entire life, at each moment, in all circumstances. Only a prolonged covenant with the Lord will be able to transform each of us internally into His disciple».



II. Why MEDITATION?

We must pray because we are called to holiness (Gaudium and Spes, Paul VI) and because the path to sainthood begins with prayer.

1 - To obey and to trust

Obedience and trust in God:

We obey the invitation to prayer, which stems from our faith in God. The root of the word to obey sheds light on its deep meaning: “ob audire”, to know how to listen, or, as Saint Benedict said, to listen attentively. Silence must be created in order to hear what God tells us. Because “God, the Master, calls man”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church). We pray to unclutter our lives of all that impedes our relationship with God. Meditation and life go together. Thus, meditation suffers from that which unduly clutters our life. It inspires us to embrace a simpler and more evangelical life. That is the work of asceticism.

«A life without prayer is a life that ignores an essential dimension of existence. The value of prayer lies in discovering, affirming and living the fact that everything has an eternal dimension.»

**(Dom Antoine Bloom,
Orthodox Bishop).**

Humorous digression: “A small village suffered a drought for a long time. The vicar asked the villagers to pray to God to bring rain. But, the day after, the vicar was upset with them for their lack of faith. “Why were you upset when we came to pray?” inquired the villagers. “Because you did not bring umbrellas with you”.



Asceticism: The word frightens us if it is misunderstood. From Greek origin, it means « exercise», similar to in sport. People train their bodies so it can remain supple and respond to the height of their expectations. Christian asceticism aims at the same goal for the spiritual person: to

keep it supple and disposed to the actions of the Holy Spirit, setting aside that which is a barrier to love, for that which is health and vigour for the soul. Such is the positive target of asceticism at the service of a loving relationship with God.

Testimony:

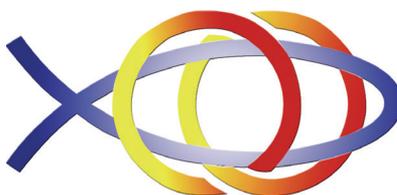
«We greatly need to be closer to the Lord God, our Father. So, it happens that, when we pray to the Lord, He fills us with strength and courage! He leads us along paths, which we did not even know existed. We struggle to increase our faith and it often happens that our prayer is very simply this: «Lord, invigorate our heart and our life, with your light, your wisdom and your love». Often, we do not know how to move forward, how to find the strength to pick ourselves back up tomorrow, how to summon courage to face life in front of us. And the Lord tells us, every one of us: «The Holy Spirit will come upon you! Have trust!».

Obedience to the Movement of Teams Of Our Lady (END):

END invites us to meditate to « encounter the Lord daily in silent prayer». Willingness to obey this rule may help us to find the moti-

vation to meditate. «During prayer I am fixed (adhered) with all my will, with all my heart, to Christ», says Father Caffarel.

Teams couples strive to accept that challenge



Teams Of Our Lady

2 - Listening

There is no meditation without Listening. As early as the Old Testament, the relationship between man and God was characterized by listening: **“Speak Lord, your servant is listening”** (1 Sam. 3,9).

In this plunge into ourselves, we dis-

cover who we really are. Not what others think or what we think of ourselves, but the man or woman that God sees and loves. As we see through the loving eyes of God, we can discover and welcome God’s plan for us and for our lives.

Once more, Father Caffarel tells us: «What He desires is that silence settles in our soul, to enable dialogue between the Father and His Son. Have faith; persevere in meditation and Christ will pacify and bring to Him all your separate capabilities».

3 - Meeting the Lord

This beautiful hymn composed by Father Caffarel and inspired by a Tamil prayer, calls us to intimate prayer: **“Oh You, who are at home in the depths of my heart, let me meet you in the depths of my heart”**; that is to say by plunging inside of myself, I find the Lord, who lives there.

Time dedicated to meditation, “sacrificed” (in the high religious sense: offered as a sacrifice of love and praise) is the symbol of a life that we want to be entirely “consecrated” to God.

Father Caffarel taught us that prayer is a necessity of our human condition, that

is to say, an anthropological impulse. In his “Letter to an Unbeliever,” he advises his correspondent to address God in his own intimacy: **“get within yourself and discover an impetus within you, which is an implicit prayer”**.

He also said that Christian prayer is powerful because it is reinforced by the action of Christ and that the baptized participate in His divinity. As we all need regular meals to nourish our bodies, so we need regular prayer to nourish our souls.

Prayer allows us to be in God as Saint John tells us: “Remain in me as I remain in you” (Jn. 15,4).

Testimonial:

«We pray because we need meditation. We need to talk with the Lord and above all to listen to Him inside our heart. Meditation helps us, each of us, to be faithful to the Lord, to endure difficult times a little better; it helps us also not lose hope to achieve improvement».

To meditate, is to put into practice the proverb: «Blessed are those who think before they act and who pray before they think».

III. How to meditate?

We do not learn how to meditate by reading a book, but by practicing it.

1 - Making time

Be regular: ideally always keep the same schedule. Discipline is helped by regularity. For many, the best time is in the morning to start the day, not at night when fatigue impedes meditation.

We can prepare in advance by choosing a Word of God to serve as a support.

One does not meditate when one has time, one schedules time to meditate



Testimonial:

« For me, the hardest part was having the discipline to choose a time and place for meditation. I made my first attempts without real conviction, and without really taking the time. It only resulted in frustration. During a team meeting, our spiritual advisor told us every day he needed to reserve at least half an hour to meet God. Otherwise he could not manage his workload. Our spiritual advisor is very busy, constantly called upon, much more than me. So it made me think. I decided that the best time for me would be morning and the best location before the Blessed Sacrament. It was not easy, some days I pray later in the day, even if it less effective because of my fatigue. It has become an essential part of my day ».

2 - How much time?

In Rome in 1979, couples were exhorted to dedicate at least a modest minimum time of 10 minutes every day. Like appetite, which results in eating, the length of the meditation increases with practice to exceed that minimum. Whatever the dura-

tion, it is important to keep to the allotted time. We must fight against all temptations to shorten it either because there is something more urgent to do, or because we are bored, or because we experienced sterility.

We must have the firm determination to be faithful and to persevere

3- Settling

The **place** can be a quiet place in our home, with a statue, an icon, a candle. It can be in a church or chapel, in the countryside, on public transport or even during a time of waiting. Irrespective of the place, a fixed location is required.

Posture: Put your body in a deferential but not uncomfortable position, that expresses your filial relationship to God: standing, kneeling, sitting. You can refer the

to booklet by Father Caffarel «the Body and Prayer».



4 - Introduction of meditation

Put yourself in the presence of God: slowly make a sign of the cross, and say a short prayer with mindfulness, such as “Glory be to God, and to the Son and to

the Holy Spirit,” or an invocation to the Holy Spirit, saying simply “Here I am.” **«You who are present in the depths of my heart »** as prayed Father Caffarel.

5 - Content of meditation

Simply talk to God, to Christ, as your father or your brother, like a child who needs to talk with his father every day, to be accountable to him, to ask him for help and advice. Confide in Him. Ask him for more faith, a special grace, more perseverance in meditation...

There exists a very strong connection with lectio divina: Reading the Word of God can be an important part of meditation, that itself becomes a starting point.

God says to us: “My son, give me your heart!” **Respond to Him with acts of faith and love:** let us reply with brief sentences or prayers that gradually induce a sense of peace and stillness within us.

And above all listen and be quiet!

Make an effort to be silent so you can listen to God who speaks to you. Open your heart to God so He can cultivate it deeply with His Love and His Word. Since meditation is essentially a relationship of love in faith, it is necessary to keep the focus of our “heart” on God who is there, deep within ourselves, who loves us and wants to communicate with us. Delivering to us His commands.

We can also rely on the texts of Father Caffarel or those of great mystics like Saint Teresa, Saint John of the Cross...

Do not say nor think: «My meditation is bad». **Father Caffarel says:** «Lord, I want from this meditation exactly what You want from it».

6 - End of meditation

Finish with a prayer, such as the Our Father.

we try to accomplish it concretely in our life.

Although meditation ends, prayer should not be completely finished. **Meditation should lead to practical resolutions:** we have perceived what the Lord expects of us. With the help of His grace,

One can repeat a phrase from the reading, which aides our meditation, writing it down to re-read during the day, like a buoy lifting us above our absorbing tasks and giving them their true meaning

7 - Testimonials from Team members

«I discovered the practice of Christian meditation, where the constant repetition of a “mantra” in the silence of my heart and the focus on the only sound in my head of the four syllables “ma- ra -na -tha “(Come, Lord Jesus), allowed me to gradually ignore distracting thoughts and concentrate my mind on the sound of the syllables. Distractions are always there, but they have less control over my thoughts».

Testimonials from a couple: « Our journeys of faith are very different from each other and also our practice of meditation».

Him: «Myself, I like to start my meditation with a traditional period of prayer, because I have difficulties in concentrating and isolating myself from external distractions. I recite the rosary, asking for the intercession of Our Lady with her Son. This repetition of prayer enables me to move gradually towards a more spontaneous phase. Sometimes it happens that during that time, my mind wanders, “like a butterfly in a field of flowers that jumps from flower to flower“... But it can be a way to free myself, little by little, from the external hubbub, and focus on the main objective – approaching God. Then, reading the Bible has a different meaning for me and sometimes allows me to discover a message that God wants to pass on to me».

Her: « I think everyone has their own way of getting closer to God, to successfully enter into dialogue with Him, sometimes due to those around us. I can meet Jesus in others, as Jesus himself tells us: “I was naked and you clothed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink ...”

I can then see in the other the true face of Christ (because otherwise, as Pope Francis said, it would be nothing other than philanthropy).

My prayer is a solitary encounter with God. I can manage to do this, often at

night in the silent house. I remain alone with images of Jesus and Mary arranged on our small "altar" with the Bible. And I talk at length with Him. In a spontaneous prayer that springs from my heart, often to thank Him for the day that has passed, I praise Him for all the wonders He has done. And I ask Mary to continue to intercede with her son Jesus to guide our family, our children. We sometimes hold long conversations, where I hand over many of my worries into the hands of Jesus. I also pass long moments in silence, trying to perceive what Jesus specifically wants to tell me. Or I try to imagine what he would do if he were in my place...

I may also pray for someone, begging Jesus to do what is best for this person. After these minutes of praise, of thanks and intentions, I ask God to help me correct my faults and understand what He really wants from me...

Before I read and meditate on a short passage from the Bible, I ask the Lord to send me His Holy Spirit so that I can really understand what he wants to tell me in this particular text. Previously I opened the Bible at random and read a passage. Now I read the Gospel of the day.

Sometimes, I continue on with the Rosary in honour and glory of Our Lady, thinking particularly about the Holy Father and our priests.

This is a prayer scheme that I discovered draws me closer to God, that gives me immense inner peace and a feeling of great closeness to God.

There have been times in my life when it was more difficult for me to pray due to a great sterility, and I put off beginning meditation ... There were moments of confusion because I was missing moments of intimacy with the Lord.

But I can give you my testimony about the value of these precious moments in our day, when peace comes over us and fills our heart, through the power of intimacy with God. For me, these moments of meditation are fundamental to making a better start to the following day!

8 - Methods proposed by the great Saints

Method of Saint Ignatius of Loyola



- 1 – Meditate; **place yourself in God's presence** (kneeling, sign of the cross...). Ask the Lord that our prayer be directed towards His service and His praise.
- 2 – **Read a Gospel text** and imagine the scene. Ask the Lord for grace in relation to the Gospel scene we contemplate
- 3 – Re-live the Gospel episode, **meditate on it**. Understanding it, immersing oneself in it and assimilating it, drawing practical conclusions in order to shape our life to those. This meditation will awaken in us what St. Ignatius called "affections": increase of faith, of hope and of charity, feelings of adoration, of admiration, of praise and of thanksgiving, of acts of self-offering, of confidence, of shame and of repentance.
- 4 - Conclude with a **dialogue**, that is to say, a conversation with Christ: confidences, petitions for favour, admissions of fault, doubts, difficulties, hopes, plans, and resolutions. Entreat His advice, His comfort, and His strength.
- 5 - Finish with the **Our Father**.
- 6 - **Consider** how your prayer went. Give thanks, repent if there were deficiencies, make resolutions for the future, make a note of any inspirations received.

Method of Saint Francis de Sales



- 1 - **Put yourself in God's presence** and ask Him for His help.
- 2- **Preparatory prayer:** Worship God, ask for the grace to serve and worship during meditation, invoking your guardian angel and the saints. Being obedient to God's will, retain a sense of joy, even if there are distractions
- 3 - Offer in your imagination an **episode from the life of Christ** as if you were witnessing it.
- 4 - **Meditate**, which increases appropriate actions (« affections »): love of God and neighbour, a longing for heaven and glory, imitation of the life of our Lord, compassion, wonder, fear of God, trust in his goodness and mercy...
- 5 - Make **resolutions** and practise them immediately.
- 6 - **Conclusion:** thanksgiving, offering to share (our "affections" and our resolutions), supplication. Ask for the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the angels and the saints. Say an Our Father.
- 7- After meditation, receive a «**spiritual bouquet***», then move on without fuss to the occupations of everyday life, by applying the resolutions you made.

* The spiritual bouquet of Saint Francis de Sales: « Leaving a beautiful garden, we often want to take some pretty flowers that we would keep on our table all day. We can do the same. To carry away from our meditation a few ideas that will come back to mind and will perfume our day».



Method of Saint Alphonse-Marie of Liguori



- 1 - **Be silent**, externally and internally. Make an act of faith in God's presence. Make an act of humility. Request insight for a fruitful meditation. Add an invocation: «Glory be to the Father and to the Son ... », «Hail Mary ... », prayer to a saint ...
- 2 - **Meditate on a text** from the Bible or other text. Meditate on it slowly.
- 3 - «**Raise your heart to God** and offer Him good actions of humility, trust, gratitude, but especially contrition and love.
- 4 - «Add **requests for grace** with humility and trust: ask for insights, patience, perseverance, and above all the gift of His holy love»...
- 5 - Make **practical resolutions** for your conversion and sanctification. Continue to keep this resolution until significant progress has been made.
- 6 - **Conclusion**: Thank God, make a commitment to keep the resolutions made, ask the Lord to help you and entrust your brethren to Him. Finish with the «Our Father» and «Hail Mary»
- 7 - After meditating, collect a «spiritual bouquet», as Saint Francis de Sales says

Carmelite method



- 1 - **Approach God** with humility and confidence. Put yourself in God's presence, to be attentive to the presence of the Trinity in our soul, received at baptism.
- 2 - **Represent the mystery** upon which we want to meditate through imagination or by reading a story in the Bible.
- 3 - **Meditate** to comprehend and love the Lord. Saint Teresa of Avila said, « meditation, it is not much thinking, but much loving ».
- 4 - **Dialogue** with God: fix our gaze and our heart on the meditated mystery. Express our love for God by admiration, praise, self-offering, and conformity to His will ... Peaceful dialogue interrupted by silences to listen to God, to receive His graces. Aim to accomplish the will of the Lord always and in all things.
- 5 - **Conclusion**: thanksgiving, offering of ourselves and the efforts we want to make with His grace and intercession. One can heed what has been experienced and been discovered

IV. DIFFICULTIES

1 - Finding time

In our daily busy lives, it is easy to forget the importance of prayer. As with sustainable conjugal love, prayer is a decision rather than a feeling

2 - Laziness and lack of desire to pray

Our relationship with God must be active and not passive. God is always ready to welcome us with open arms, but it is for us to go to Him to receive this welcome, as in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

3 - Distractions and lack of concentration

Our heads are filled with thoughts and it is difficult to control them. Saint Theresa of Avila tells us that « it is very important not to be afraid of our own thoughts ».

Father Caffarel says: « *The value of meditation is not measured by the constancy of attention. Prayer can be good without that stability; this is not essential.*».

Saint Francis de Sales also comforts us: «*If the heart wanders or is distracted, bring it back sweetly and put it tenderly in the presence of its Master. And even if you do nothing during the time other than to bring your heart and place it in the presence of Our Lord, even though it drifted off again whenever you brought it back, your time would have been well spent.*».

4 - Fear of silence

We live in a world filled with noise. We are not used to silence, which can be daunting. Being alone with ourselves can make us fearful. However, it is essential to be quiet to hear God speaking to us in the silence of our hearts.

Saint Theresa of Avila says: «**It would be crazy to think that we can enter Heaven without going inside ourselves**».

5 - The feeling of sterility

Once a discipline of daily prayer is established, it may be that we encounter periods of sterility, when God seems distant. These periods are inevitable; they should not discourage us. All the great mystics,

who have had this experience, persevered until God rewarded their perseverance. This can be a test of faithfulness to our prayer life

6 - Temptations of the evil one

Our prayer frustrates the evil one undoubtedly because it is an encounter with God. So, to get us away from God he uses all kinds of temptations, of which the Desert Fathers were very well aware.

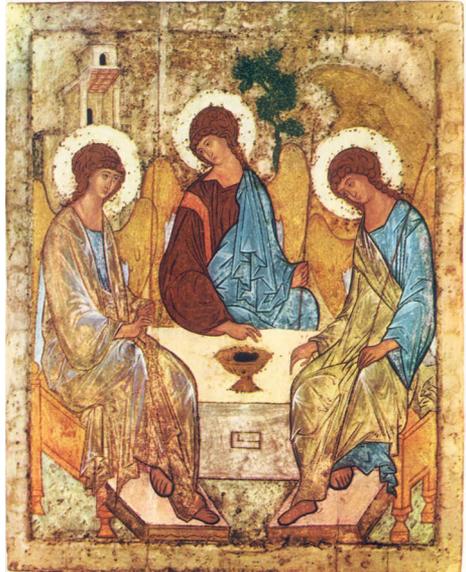


7 - Lack of perseverance

Sometimes we are tempted to give up. We may think that we are not made for this kind of prayer and feel we waste our time. Father Caffarel says: « Persevere in prayer and Christ will calm you and focus your mind on Himself as a shepherd playing the flute to gather his flock ».

8 - Ignorance of the fruits of meditation

Meditation adds a dimension to our lives that we can know only by living it personally. We can listen to others talk about the fruits they received from their meditation and be encouraged with these words. «**Prayer and life are completely inseparable: a life without prayer is a life that does not know an essential dimension of life, a life that is happy only with what is visible, with a physical proximity by which we cannot discover the immensity and eternity of our destiny. The value of prayer is to discover, affirm and experience that everything has an eternal dimension**» (Dom Antoine Bloom, Orthodox bishop for the young in Taizé).



V. THE FRUITS

1 - Grow in the love of God and neighbour

When we meet God in prayer, we seek to know Him better and love Him more. Father Caffarel said «**prayer is an active search for knowledge of Christ**».

This growth in the love of God leads us inevitably to a greater love for our neighbour. The way we treat our neighbour is, as St. Teresa of Avila said, the true measure of our love of God.

The relationship with God has two phases: that of privacy (meditation) and that of action (living according to God's will). The two inform and feed each other. Meditation strengthens our will to respond to the love of God for us; action is expressed as a very concrete love of our neighbour

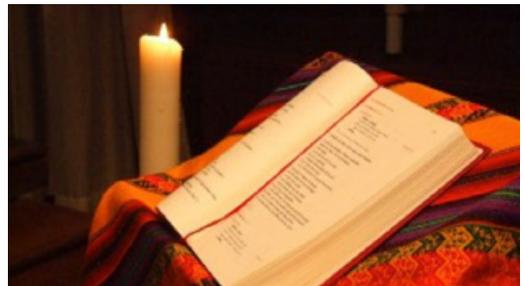
2 - Listening to God

God speaks to us through the situations that we experience, through the reading of the Word of God, through what others say regarding us. God speaks to

us regularly in our daily lives, but we do not always manage to hear Him. Spending time in His presence is a way of «being attentive to Him».

3 - Marvelling at the action of God in our lives

Contemplating God, we become aware of His greatness, His majesty and His power. We can then, with the Psalmist, exclaim in praise and worship: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Ps 19).



"O Lord, our Lord, How glorious is your name throughout the world!" (Ps 8).

4 - Growing serenely in peace

Remaining still and in silence before God engenders a sense of calm and peace, which, over time, turns into a deep

inner joy. We await this moment with impatience.

Testimony:

The World Community for Christian Meditation teaches prayer for children in primary school: only 2 or 3 minutes of meditation at first, eyes closed, slowly repeating the mantra « ma- ra -na -tha » (Come, Lord Jesus). Then, they increase the time of daily meditation, 1 minute per year of age of the children. This practice was held a class at a time, for staff and children. Schools, where daily meditation was practised for some time, reported very positive results. The children are calmer, their concentration improves, they are nicer to each other, less aggressive in the playground and even request a longer time for meditation.

5 - Understanding ourselves better

In our personal encounter with God, we slowly learn to see ourselves as He sees us and understand how much He loves us despite all our faults and weaknesses

«Seeing ourselves through the loving eyes of God, we can discover and welcome God's plan for us and for our lives. We give thanks for the wonders that He has made us. We also discover the areas where we need transformation. And on returning from our introspection, we bring with us the decision to change and how to effect it ». (From the reflections on the Endeavours and the Sharing)

6 - To better face the challenges of life

Faced with the difficulties of life, we can let ourselves be overwhelmed and struggle to continue. Remaining faithful to our daily prayer, we can step back and we can experience the presence of God beside us. Saint Paul tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God:

«What can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction, or hardship? Can persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... But in all these things we are more than conquerors through the one who has loved us ». (Rm. 8, 35, 37)

Meister Eckhart, the 13th century German theologian, wrote

« For a friend of God, suffering and unexpected disasters can bear fruit because everything, including sin, contributes to good ».

7 - Deepening our communal prayer

The more couples practice meditation, the richer and more profound the prayer in the team will be. The more we are "trained" to a personal encounter with the Lord, the more naturally we experience this encounter in community. We can recognize more easily the presence of God who speaks to us in the prayer of others. The silence will be deeper and the words will be simpler.



8 - Boosting the other Endeavours

Personal prayer is of utmost importance because it awakens and develops the inner life. By meeting with Christ daily in prayer, we can meditate on the Word of God, choose a rule of life with greater

awareness of aspects of our lives to improve, pray more deeply with our spouse, interact more openly during the sit-down and more profoundly experience our annual retreat

CONCLUSION

Meditation is breath to the Christian. It is a fundamental endeavour.

Meditation is the dedication of time to God. It is a personal and essential act of love, which is the best means of entering into communication with Him. Meditation is a dialogue with God where we listen to Him more than we speak with Him.

There is no single way to meditate. Several examples have been given so that each of us can enrich our own experience, or, to put it simply, to motivate the desire to live a life of meditation. Training is often necessary, to become accustomed to this time of intimacy with our Creator.

Meditation leads us to peace and happiness. It allows us to see our life and our relationships with the perspective of God.

Many say that they do not know how to meditate, but there is no good or a bad meditation, the important thing is to open your heart to enter a relationship with God.

Spiritual appetite comes with praying!

KEY WORDS



Conversation, contemplation, friendship,
intimacy, will, perseverance, meditation,
harmony, encounter, regularity, patience,
kindness, respect, adoration, trust, praise,
thanksgiving, asking for forgiveness,
supplication, intercession

FURTHER RESOURCES

Bibliography for English speakers:

“Contemplative Prayer” - Thomas Merton, Published by Darton Longman and Todd

“Using the Jesus Prayer” (Steps to a simpler Christian Life) – John Twistleton, Published by Bible Reading Fellowship

“Prayer” (Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God), Timothy Keller, Published by Hodder and Stoughton

“With Open Hands” – Henri Nouwen, Published by Ave Maria Press

“Sister Wendy on Prayer” – Sr Wendy Beckett, Published by Continuum

