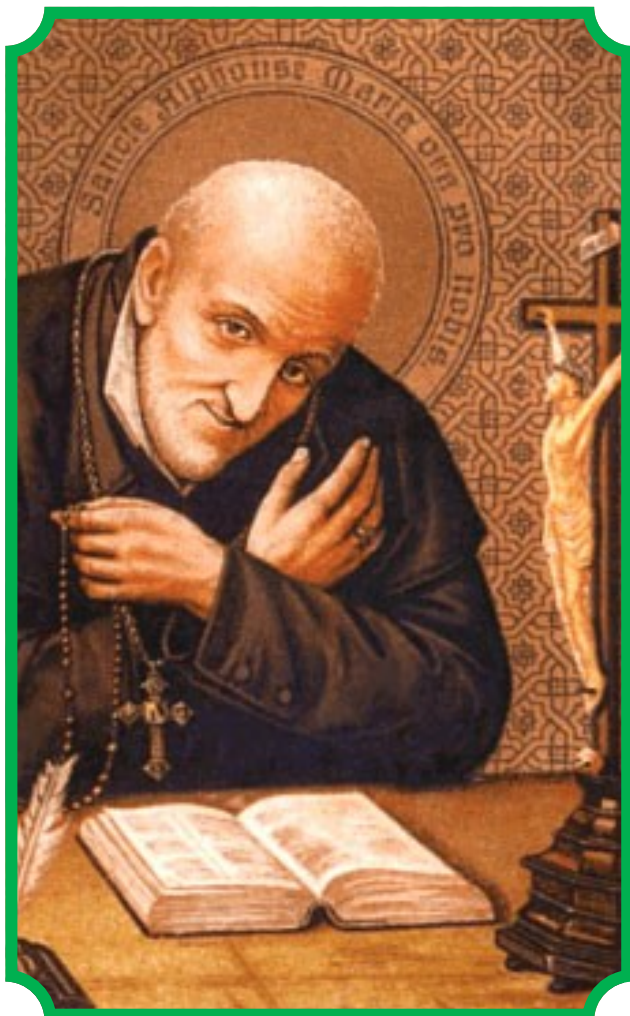


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THE MANNER OF MAKING MENTAL PRAYER

*Adapted from St. Alphonsus Liguori,
Way of Salvation and of Perfection*



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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. Be careful not to allow the mind to wander where it wishes.

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 make our meditation while modestly sitting down.

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.

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 ought to be made with fervor, but should be short that we may pass immediately to the meditation.

II. THE MEDITATION

You may always use some book, at least at the commencement, and stop when you find yourself most touched.

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.

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.

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."

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

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 put into practice the resolutions you have made, as soon as an occasion is presented.

III. THE CONCLUSION

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.

We should remember one or two points in which we have felt particular devotion, in order to excite our fervor during the day.

The short prayers 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.