

BATTLING TO PRAY AND THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER OF JESUS LESSON 6

March 19, 2018
Joseph F. Kueppers

What prayer is. Prayer means launching out from the heart toward God; a cry of grateful love from the crest of joy or the trough of despair: It is a vast, supernatural force that opens up my heart and binds me close to Jesus. St. Therese of Lisieux

Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God. St. John Damascene.

Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. St. Augustine.

It is in prayer that we take up our crosses daily and follow Christ.

He who humbles himself will be exalted; humility is the foundation of prayer. (No. 2559.)

I. BATTLING TO PRAY

External Obstacles to Prayer. Outside distractions.

- Cable TV
- Internet
- Cell phone
- Ipod/listening to music (or any noise)
- Work
- Hobbies
- Family
- Any activity other than praying

It is always a struggle to remember to pray with a Marian heart. Prayer is a work of the Holy Spirit, "the artisan of the living tradition of prayer". (No. 2672)

One who really tries to pray, very quickly learns that it is indispensable. A true realist, someone who measures his or her own experience and takes note of the effects of prayer in his or her life, will soon recognize an absolute correlation between prayer (and productivity). The time we spend praying expands the time that we spend doing other things, not the reverse.

Interior Obstacles to Prayer:

- Discouragement due to unanswered prayer.
- Dryness
- Acedia - The form of depression due to lack of ascetical practice, decreasing vigilance and carelessness of the heart. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (No. 2733.)
- Distraction - The habitual difficulty in prayer is distraction. It can affect words and their meaning in vocal prayer, it can concern, more profoundly, Him to whom we are praying, in vocal prayer, meditation and contemplative prayer. (No. 2729.)

To set about hunting down distractions would be to fall into their trap, when all that is necessary is to turn back to our heart. A distraction reveals to us what we are attached to and this humble awareness before the Lord should awaken our preferential love for Him and lead us resolutely to offer Him our heart to be purified. Therein lies the battle, the choice of which master to serve. (No. 2729) and Mt. 6:21.

Overcoming Obstacles to Prayer. To overcome our obstacles to prayer (excuses) we must battle to gain humility, trust and perseverance. The Catechism elaborates these virtues under the headings of "humble vigilance", "filial trust" and "persevering love". These are the virtues we need to begin, to keep on, and to endure to the end in our prayers. The Catechism tells us that humility is the foundation of prayer. (No. 2559.)

The Catechism tells us that humble vigilance enables us to face distractions in prayer, selfishness, dryness, lack of faith and spiritual sloth or acedia. These things remind us that prayer is a gift and that we are weak.

Regularly attending the Sacrament of Reconciliation can greatly help our battle in prayer.

Fasting can strengthen us and bring our prayer life to a new level. "Fasting is the soul of prayer". St. Peter Chrysologus. See attached sermon from St. Peter Chrysologus.

II. HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER OF JESUS

The completely remarkable prayer of Jesus found at John:17 is a look into the intimacies of the Father and Son, and is a lesson in itself on the program and power of prayer. It is a model of adoration and praise, and of intercessory or mediatorial prayer.

As the Catechism tells us, it "embraces the whole economy of creation and salvation compressed into a brief colloquy of the love between the Father and the Son". (No. 2746.)

This is the prayer Jesus utters just before he faced his passion and it teaches us how to pray in every situation, especially when we are in the midst of battle.

The high priestly prayer of Jesus sums up the whole economy of creation and salvation. It fulfills the great petitions of the Our Father. (No. 2758.)

The priestly prayer of Jesus moves through a series of spheres:

- a. First the divine sphere of the eternal love between the Father and the Son.
- b. The second sphere is that of the Apostles, the priests whom Christ will consecrate in the truth, through his own sacrificial consecration,
- c. The final sphere is that of the Church to which these new priests of the new covenant will be given "those who believe in me through their word", John:17.