

Reading the Catholic Classics Together
Introduction to the Devout Life

Dates	Chapters	Pages
September 13, 2021	Introduction to the Author, Text and Spirituality (Preface as review)	

PART 1

EXERCISES AND SACRAMENTS

Counsels and Exercises for the Guidance of the Soul from Its First Desire After a Devout Life until a Full Resolution of Pursuing the Same

September 20, 2021 **Preface, Part 1, Chapters 1-22** **Pages 1-36**

PART 2

SACRAMENTS AND PRAYER

Counsels as to Uplifting the Soul to God in Prayer and the Use of the Sacraments

September 27, 2021 **Part 2, Chapter 1-21** **Pages 37-68**

PART 3

PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

Counsels Concerning the Practice of Virtue

October 4, 2021 **Part 3 Chapters 1-10** **Pages 69-96**

October 11, 2021 **Part 3, Chapters 1-24** **Pages 96-123**

October 18, 2021 **Part 3, Chapters 25-41** **Pages 123-157**

PART 4

AVOIDING THE ENEMY

Counsels Concerning Some Ordinary Temptations

October 25, 2021 **Part 4, Chapters 1-15** **Pages 158-187**

PART 5

WITHDRAW AND REFRESH

Counsels and Practice for Renewing and Confirming the Soul in Devotion

November 1, 2021 **Part 5, Chapters 1-18** **Pages 188-206**

September 27, 2021

The Necessity of Prayer

- Prayer is the best way to purify the mind from ignorances and the will from perverse affections. Healing and washes away imperfections.
- Mental prayer is best as like a child who learns from listening to his mother, we learn to live like Christ when we listen to him in mental prayer.
 - Preferred to vocal
 - If in vocal and you are moved to mental prayer, go there.
 - Mental prayer is more acceptable to God and benefit to your soul
- No way to God except through prayer.
- Hour each day before lunch, morning is when the mind is less burdened, no more than an hour
- Prefer the church, interrupted at home
- Whatever you do for prayer, you should start with an act of presence of God.
- Say fewer words with your whole heart is better than many words that have no meaning and very fast
- If you can do mental prayer, let it take chief place in your prayer life
- If you miss prayer in the morning, do it after lunch but not after you eat because you will be sleepy. If missed it the entire day, say brief prayers and reading something spiritual.

A Short Method of Meditation in the Presence of God: The First Point of Preparation

- How: 1) place yourself in the presence of God and 2) ask his aid
- He is everywhere but like the blind man, we do not see always and so forget
- OR Recognize that he is very specially in your heart to enkindle reverence within your heart for God who is closely present to you
- OR Think of him looking down on you in prayer
- OR Think of him sitting there with you like a friend
- When in adoration, he is there, not longer imaginary

Invocation: The Second Point of Preparation

- Invoke his aid
- Ask for grace to serve and worship him in this meditation

Representing the Mystery to Be Mediated to Your Imagination: The Third Point of Preparation

- Not always necessary but beneficial
- Use your imagination to place yourself in the scene of the story in which you are meditating. Calvary, death, hell,
- More advance people speak about abstract thought but this is hard for beginners, so use this

Consideration: The Second Part of Meditation

- After imagination we move to understanding
- You will form reflections or considerations after the pattern of the meditation
- If one of the considerations are beneficial stay on that one longer and move on if one does not give you any benefit

Affections and Resolutions: The Third Part of Meditation

- Do not stop at affections only, they must move you to resolutions for your own correction
- You must bring it to practical resolution. I will not.... Or I will...
- General resolutions take a slow and uncertain effects. I will try to be more patient.

The Conclusion and Spiritual Bouquet

- End acts with three things, 1) thanksgiving, 2) oblation or offer the results to God 3) petition, ask God to give you a share of his merits and blessings on your resolutions
- Spiritual Bouquet – pick a few points from the meditation that might be helpful throughout the day

Some Useful Hints on Meditation

- Retain your thoughts and resolutions and practice them throughout the day. Easy to puff yourself up with all the things of meditation but they do not go anywhere
- Go slowly back to the world. From prayer to the daily activities, keeping the benefits of prayer as long as possible. Do not rush to daily activities
- If you happen to have great prayer before finishing the considerations, do not stop but move with the spiritual. The outline is not hard and fast but was a way to be open. If you find yourself open sooner, to there and follow the spirit.

Concerning Dryness in Meditation

- If there is dryness, and not taste for meditation, return to vocal prayer and actions of prayer like kissing his image, kneeling down
- Go to a book or acts of prayer
- Do not worry if you have no consolations, just be there and it pleases God.
- You must not quit but know that if God chooses to give consolations, great if not that is fine too.
- Consider it a privilege to be in his presence and it be seen by him.

Morning Prayer

- Foremost is morning prayer of the 5 shorter kinds of prayer after meditation
- Morning prayer order
 - Thank God for making it to morning
 - Call to mind the day that is beginning
 - Consider the work that needs to be done today that lets us serve the God

- Humble yourself before doing knowing that everything is done by the grace of God and we could do nothing on our own without him
- Done briefly before you leave your room and not omitted

Evening Prayer and Examination of Conscience

- Pray and remind yourself of the morning resolutions before evening meal
- Examination of Conscience
 - Thanks God for the day
 - Examine how you have conducted yourself through the day
 - Offer thanks to God for any good and forgiveness for any wrong
 - Then commend your body, soul, church and friends to God
- Never omit morning and evening prayer

Spiritual Refreshment

- Place yourself in God's presence throughout the day
- Find a resting place in the life of Christ throughout the day
- Retire in the solitude of your own heart in the midsts of the business and social activities of the day
- Make a sacred solitude even in the business of the day, interior oratory in the mind, Catherine of Sienna

Aspirations, Brief Prayer, and Holy Thoughts

- Say brief prayers throughout the day
- Connect the things you see throughout the day to God
 - The ocean, rocks, shells,
 - Break into a psalm
- De Sales gives a number of examples of taking daily life situations and reflecting the gospel, Jesus' teaching and the faith
- Turn all things you experience throughout the day into your spiritual profit
- Without these, you can never be devout or lead a true contemplative life and there is nothing that makes up for these practices,

Holy Communion, and How to Receive it

- The Eucharist is the sun of all spiritual exercises, it is at the center point of our Christian religion. The heart of all devotion, the soul of piety, ineffable mystery that embraces the whole depth of divine love
- Prayer and Eucharist together has untold power.
- Daily Mass as much as possible
- If you can not, take part in it spiritually
- How to join actually at mass or mentality
 - Good preparation before mass by placing yourself in God's presence and confessing your unworthiness
 - Until the Gospel, dwell in the coming of the Lord in the world
 - Gospel to the creed, dwell on Jesus' teaching and resolve to live it

- Then focus on offering of self and uniting yourself to the passion of Jesus as the Sacrificing is happening
- Up to Communion focus on the longing and desire to be one united with Jesus forever
- Communion to the end give thanks for it all, coming, life death passion and resurrection, humility in receiving
- You could also follow your daily meditation on special mysteries during the Mass and not interrupt that.

The Other Public Offices of the Church

- God prefers the gathering of people for prayer so the office and other communal prayers are more beneficial than private prayer
- In prayer, you strengthen your brothers
- (Compline with the priests each night)

How the Saints are United to Us

- We can unite ourselves to the saints, through communion with them, we can learn to pray better
- Honor and revere the Blessed Mother
- Know and love the angle, especially the Guardian angel of the diocese, your friends' guardian angels and your own, join in their songs of praise
- Choose a patron saint, your saint name, baptismal name

How to Hear and Read God's Word

- Cultivate a special devotion to the Word of God
- Listen to it with attention and reverence, strive to profit from it
- Always have a good devout book at hand, saint book, and read a small portion of it daily like reading a letter from them
- Read the lives of the saints, imitate them according to your circumstances, many things they did may not be practical for those who live in the world, some are for imitating, some are for admiring

How to Receive Inspirations

- Receive inspirations from God like a bride who receives a wedding proposal,
 - Man Proposes – God suggests some act of love within us
 - Entertain the proposal - We receive that inspiration
 - She gives her consent - We consent to it
- Just like we fall into temptation by three movements
 - Temptation
 - Delectation – Pleasure and delight, originally to charm
 - Consent
- Ascent to virtue
 - Inspiration,
 - Delectation in God's proposal
 - Consent to one instead of the other
- It is to find pleasure in God's external proposals

- Consent perfects the good action. If we are inspired of God, take pleasure in that inspiration but refuse our consent, we are being offensive to him.
 - The bride, loved the voice of the beloved, she made trivial excuses and delayed opening the door for him, he withdrew it and was gone.
- Accept whatever inspirations God has for you heartily, give your consent and let it be full loving steadfast consent to his holy inspiration.
 - God proposes something (help at soup kitchen), you entertain the thought but never give your consent.
- Check with your spiritual director to guard against self-deception
- Once you consent, be careful to carry out the intended fruits.

Confession

- He recommends weekly Confession and before communion
- Even without mortal sin, you receive absolutions for venial sins and more importantly grace to avoid sin
- In confession you express four virtues, Humility, obedience, simplicity and love
- Be sorry for sins no matter how small and resolve to correct them in the future
- Some people confess venial sins out of habit without effort to correct them
- It is an abuse of the sacrament to confess any sin, mortal or venial without intending to change
- Beware of unmeaning self-accusations, I have not loved God as I ought, prayed with as much devotion, loved my neighbor or received sacrament with reverence as I ought. THIS ARE USELESS, everyone would say that, even the saints
 - Examine closely the reason you have for accusing yourself, accuse yourself simply and plainly
 - I did not help this person I saw who was in need.
 - Avoid generalities. (I am impatient, I was angry)
- Go to the motive of the cause for any venial sin
- He reminds them that they are not bound to confess venial sins, but for a devout life, one is careful of what makes one spiritually sick, however small to the spiritual physician to be healed.

Frequent Communion

- It is the food of life – those who stay away and spiritually die have not excuse why they did that voluntarily
- You do not have to go every daily to Mass but must receive on Sundays
- You may receive less daily for the weak of mind (Spouse/boss) who may be uneasy at your frequent communion. Not less than monthly
- Be discreet on the day and kind so that you are not hindered in receiving communion, so that they are not inconvenienced because of your daily mass
- Must be free of mortal sin and attachment to venial sins. Bigger responsibility for those who go to daily mass.

How to Communicate

- Prepare for communion the night before by prayer going to bed earlier so that you can get up earlier.
- Wake and with joyful expectation of the blessing you home for in communion
- Right before communion, say I am not worthy, which we do at Mass
 - Like a bee who has received earth sweetest juices from the flower and returns to the hive
 - Adoration of Jesus
 - Give him the best reception you possibly can and act like it is evident that god is with you
- If asked why you go to communion so often, tell them that you want to learn to love God, be cleansed of imperfections, set free from trouble, comfort in affliction and strengthen in weakness