

On Gaining and Keeping Purity, X

cence Thou gavest us before, so that, with perfect liberty and clean hearts, we may sacrifice to Thee an offering of praise: having saved us by Thy grace, do Thou save us now by Thy forgiveness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, forever and ever.

Postcommunion: O Lord, our helper and protector, come to our aid; in the vigor of modesty and newness of chastity let both heart and flesh blossom afresh, and let this sacrifice offered to Thy lovingkindness cleanse us of all temptations. Through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, forever and ever.

Here is another prayer for purity which I really like. It's by Dom Mark Kirby, O.S.B., prior of Silverstream Priory in Ireland.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, I open to thee the door of my heart and welcome thee into every part of my life. Enter in, shine thy immaculate brightness into every dark corner; let the fragrance of thy purity dispel the fetid vapors of my sins; change into pools of sweetness the pools of bitterness that have for so long poisoned the deep places of my heart. Too long have I tried to live without thy virginal beauty to fill my eyes, without thy maternal solicitude to wipe away my tears, and without thy good counsel to guide me in the way of peace. Abide with me, O Immaculate Conception, O Queen assumed into heaven, O Joy-of-All-Who-Sorrow, that I may begin, at last, to prefer nothing whatsoever to the love of Christ, to spend myself in adoration of His true Body, and to find in all that obedience asks of me the will of Him Who, in His inscrutable wisdom and inexhaustible mercy, has called me to this life, in this place that be-

longs to thee, with these other sons of thine, the fathers and brothers whom thou hast chosen for me. To all of us, show thyself a Mother and, at the hour of our death, be to us life's final consolation and heaven's open gate. Amen.

Keep in mind that it is not necessary to recite all these, or more than these. If the essence of these prayers sprang from the bottom of our hearts, then so much the better. But if you're like me, very often I can't recall the essence, so having these at hand is very helpful.

And for these prayers of the immediate preparation before meditation, it should be said that if they are fruitful – disposing us to wonder and admiration of God and the virtues; disposing us to contrition or gratitude or some good inclination – then it is perfectly acceptable to use these or other prayers even to the close of the time you had set aside for meditation.

We can meditate frequently on the grandeur and majesty of God, which leaves in the soul a profound adoration filled with reverence and humility. We can accustom ourselves to converse with God with filial confidence filled with reverence. We can meditate frequently on the infinite malice of sin and thus arouse a great horror for sin. We can be meek and humble in dealing with our neighbor and beg frequently of the Holy Ghost a reverential fear of God. We can cultivate a love of solitude, recollection and faithful practice of mental prayer. We can be vigilant in keeping custody of the senses and making acts of love of God. We can do these things for the salvation of souls and the glory of God.

Back to mental prayer; how should we choose the subject of meditation? It should be chosen in accord with the needs of our soul. If for example I am beset by temptations of anger, then meditating on the peace of our Lord's home at Nazareth is a good subject. If I am beset by temptations against purity, then meditating on the pure, unfeigned love of Christ for sinners is a good subject, as when He forgave the woman caught in adultery.

It is very useful to meditate repeatedly on the same subject too. If we take a subject like the Prodigal Son, 40 meditations on that parable would serve only as a beginning. That parable (like all the parables) is extraordinarily deep.

But choosing the subject ought to be done the day before, if possible. For example, if you make your meditation in the morning, then the evening before is a good time to choose the subject (and stick with it!). I got in the habit of making my meditation in the afternoon, around 3 PM, and usually in my room. This is a habit I acquired while in seminary years ago, and I choose the subject in the early morning. It works for me, but for others, night is better, but for most, morning is best, while the mind is uncluttered from the day. Whenever the choice is made however, it is best to stick with it. Having the habit of mental prayer is essential.

In the previous insert, I wrote about the remote and proximate preparation; the above completing that part. Now let us consider the immediate preparation. When we have chosen a place to make the mediation, and kneel down (or sit as

suits us best), then there are a few things which should be done right off the bat.

1. Say a prayer to God the Holy Ghost for guidance; to the Blessed Virgin to keep you from error; to your Guardian Angel for assistance, and then to some saints such as your patron or the saint of the day.

2. Make the traditional Act of Faith. "O my God, I firmly believe that Thou art one God in Three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. I believe that Thy Divine Son became Man, and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, Who canst neither deceive nor be deceived."

3. Add any other prayers that you might need for this time; they might be acts of humility or contrition. But since the subject for this series of inserts is for the gaining and keeping of purity, it would be good to use the Votive Collects for Continenence from the Mass. These may be added to a Mass on occasion, but make excellent prayers outside of Mass. Here are the collects:

Collect: Burn our thoughts and affections, O Lord, in the fire of the Holy Ghost, so that we may serve Thee with bodies made chaste and please Thee with hearts made clean. Through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, forever and ever.

Secret: Break Thou, O Lord, the fetters of our sins, and give us back the inno-