



Catechetical Corner

THE BATTLE OF PRAYER

“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 (liturgical or personal), meditation, and contemplative prayer. 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: for 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.” —CCC, no. 2729

Prayer requires time, attention, and effort. We need to discipline ourselves for what spiritual writers call “spiritual combat.” They cite problems such as *acedia* (a form of sloth or laziness) that arises from a lax ascetical behavior, a laxity that needs to be corrected. The Tempter will try to pull us away from prayer. Distraction and dryness will discourage us.

The remedy is faith, fidelity to times for prayer, constant conversion of heart, and watchfulness. The Catechism’s section “The Battle of Prayer” (CCC, nos. 2725-2745) answers many questions that beginners are likely to ask. Its advice is practical and experiential. For example, the section addresses the issue of distraction, a major obstacle for most beginners. Distractions interfere with all forms of prayer. The temptation to fight them entraps one; all that is needed is to turn back to the presence

“Prayer requires time, attention, and effort. We need to discipline ourselves for what spiritual writers call ‘spiritual combat.’”

of the Lord in our hearts. A distraction reveals our attachments, but a humble awareness of this can move us to offer Christ our hearts for the needed purification.



After doing the short reading, take time to reflect on these questions.

Why do you pray? When do you pray? How do you pray?

If you practice some form of meditation regularly, how would you describe it? What means

have you taken to persevere in meditation?

What are you doing to deepen your prayer life? What are you learning from spiritual reading to help you with your prayer?