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PRAYING: THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

FR. AARON PIDEL, SJ



[23] First Principle and Foundation

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created.

Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

HOW TO STRUCTURE A TIME OF PRAYER

1. **The hour of prayer consists of five parts:**
 - a. **[75] Find the Presence of God:** I will stand for the space of an *Our Father*, a step or two before the place where I am to meditate or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me, etc. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.
 - b. **[46] Preparatory prayer.** Ask grace of God our Lord *that all your intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.* (3-5 min)
 - c. **Preludes.**
 - i. **[47] Composition, seeing the place.** Imagine the place where the narration or meditation might happen. This will vary according to the scene being contemplated. If meditating on Job, one might imagine oneself in a storm. If meditating on Genesis, one might imagine a formless void or a garden [3-5].
 - ii. **[48] Ask for the grace** that you seek in this hour. In this case, to know experience both reverence and gratitude toward the Creator (5 min)
 - d. **[50-52] The points of the text.** Divide the biblical passage into a few main focus points and meditate upon each, moving from memory (calling to mind a truth or event) to understanding (drawing out the implications of the truth or event *for me*) to will (rousing the affections to respond with increased contrition, gratitude, desire to serve, etc.) Read, imagine, feel, see, hear, taste, think, and read again. Become involved in the scene (30 min).
 - e. **[53] Colloquy.** The colloquy is made by speaking exactly as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant speaks to a master, now asking him for a favor, now blaming himself for some misdeed, now making known his affairs to him, and seeking advice in them. Close with an *Our Father*. (10 min).
2. **[77] Examination of Prayer:** After an exercise is finished, either sitting or walking, I will consider for the space of a quarter of an hour how I succeeded in the meditation or contemplation. If poorly, I will seek the cause of the failure; and after I have found it, I will be sorry, so that I may do better in the future. If I have succeeded, I will give thanks to God our Lord, and the next time try to follow the same method.

SUGGESTED BIBLICAL PASSAGES FOR PRAYER

Job 40:2-42:6

“Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? . . .”

Genesis 1:1-2:7

“In the beginning God created . . .”

Ps 8

“What is man that you care for him? . . .”