

SULPICIAN MEDITATION

IN THE *CATÉCHISME CHRÉTIEN POUR LA VIE INTÉRIEURE* IN 1656 AND AGAIN IN 1657, IN THE *INTRODUCTION À LA VIE ET AUX VERTUS CHRÉTIENNES*, FATHER OLIER ARTICULATED A SIMPLE AND PRACTICAL METHOD OF PRAYER FOR HIS PARISHIONERS. BASING HIS REFLECTIONS ON THE GREAT *SHEMA ISRAEL* (DEUT 6:4-9), HE OUTLINED A METHOD OF MENTAL PRAYER WHICH HE THOUGHT COULD EASILY BE FOLLOWED BY ALL WHO WISHED TO FOLLOW THE PATHS OF PRAYER AS THE MEANS OF FINDING UNION WITH GOD. A DESCRIPTION MAY ALSO BE FOUND IN THE *LETTERS*.

Predisposing ourselves to prayer. Before beginning this method of mental prayer, Father Olier recommended that we dispose ourselves to it. By taking a moment to recognize our absolute dependency upon God we find ourselves able to attach ourselves to Jesus Christ. We present ourselves to our Lord as poor mendicants—deprived of everything but longing for our perfection.

The first step: Adoration. Jesus before my eyes. Having thus placed ourselves in a conscious attitude of dependency we begin to pray by adoring God in Jesus Christ. For Father Olier, all prayer has as its end the goal of honoring and glorifying God. He alone suffices. Thus, I contemplate some attitude or attribute of Jesus – his words, his actions, his sentiments. Seeing these clearly before us, we spend some time in silence before him, in the same dispositions and religious sentiments in the depths of our soul.

The second step: Communion. Jesus in my heart. Here we take ourselves deeper into the attitude of adoration, incorporating ourselves (or better, being incorporated) into the same adoration Jesus has for his Father. In this stage of the prayer we participate in the gifts God has particularly given us by the intimate action of the Spirit. Having seen the disposition of Christ, we now ask that we be so disposed as well. In this stage of the prayer, we unite ourselves by all the devices of love (to the virtue expressed in Jesus)

that we wish to come and live in our souls, that we might be conformed unto Jesus Christ, that we might give ourselves to him so that we might be possessed and animated by his virtue. We also spend time asking for whatever else we may need and pray for the needs of the Church.

Once again we enter into silence, in humble confidence we remain attentive to the divine action within us. The soul in prayer should hold itself in repose and silence to receive all it has heard and understood concerning the gifts and communications from God, without desire to act of its own accord nor making any effort which might disturb the pure and holy actions of the Spirit within it.

The third step: Cooperation. Jesus in my hands. Having heard and understood the action of God, we spend time thanking him for the many graces he has given us in the course of our reflection. We ask for his continued grace that we may cooperate with these gifts throughout our day. We select some thought or phrase which impressed us during our reflection that we may recall it and reaffirm our commitment to cooperate with the graces we have received throughout the day. We then conclude our prayer by recognizing our helplessness and by abandoning ourselves totally to the Holy Spirit who is our light, our love, and our virtue.

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