

5-CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

This prayer form is one of the simplest but also most difficult. The word *contemplation* holds many different meanings. It may be:

- 1-Used more or less the same as meditation, i.e., using the intellect and will. It involves *putting things into* the mind.
- 2-Taken as a more prayerful and thoughtful outlook on life, standing before and listening to God in emptiness. Similar to the third form of meditation.
- 3-A type of prayer that involves resting in God without using the faculties of the soul (intellect, memory and will). It involves *emptying things out of* the mind.

This third more specific understanding is being used here.

Contemplative prayer involves simply sitting and resting in the presence of God *not* using the intellect or memory. It consists not in doing but simply in being. The goal is to gently quiet the intellect and rest in the presence of God.

One species of contemplative prayer may involve choosing a word, such as *God* or *Jesus*, and simply repeating it perhaps vocally or simply interiorly. This word is a means not an end. It like an infant's pacifier. The purpose of the word is to quiet the mind. Once in some sort of interior silence, it may be set aside but then used again as necessary.

Some notes:

- 1-It is good to start with a brief scripture passage such as, *Be still and know that I am God.* Psalm 46:11
- 2-The point is to quiet the intellect not suspend the intellect. Only God can do the latter.
- 3-Similarly, interior silence is a relative silence.
- 4-The effectiveness of this prayer is not necessarily determined by what happens during the prayer time.
- 5-As with all prayer, distractions are inevitable. These distractions can even be good thoughts but in either case, the solution is to gently refocus oneself, to repeat the word and again to quiet the mind.
- 6-The goal is union with God by simply resting in God. This can be likened to spiritual sun bathing. While a sense of calm may be the fruit of this prayer, the goal remains union with God.
- 7-It is good to give yourself about twenty minutes to do this, at least when starting out.
- 8-With this type of prayer especially, there is a temptation to over focus on technique. Technique can be helpful is more important to just do it.
- 9-An *outstanding* resource for this is *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *Book of Privy Counseling*.