

TIME FOR GOD

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A guide to mental prayer

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 Scepter

Originally published as *Du Temps pour Dieu*
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Burtin, France

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ISBN 978-1-59417-066-9

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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INTRODUCTION

In the Western Catholic tradition the term “prayer” covers many different activities. The following pages mainly concentrate on mental prayer: prayer that consists of facing God in solitude and silence for a time in order to enter into intimate, loving communion with him. Practicing this kind of prayer regularly is considered by all spiritual masters to be a privileged, indispensable path that gives access to genuine Christian life—a path to knowing and loving God that empowers us to respond to his call to holiness addressed to each individual.

It is a wonderful fact that many people today are thirsty for God and feel a desire for that sort of intense, personal prayer life; they would like to be able to spend time praying as a regular thing. But they encounter obstacles that prevent them from following the path seriously, and especially from persevering on it. Sometimes they don't receive the encouragement needed to make up their minds to begin, or else they feel helpless because they simply don't know how to start. Sometimes, after repeated attempts, they become discouraged by the difficulties and abandon the regular practice of mental prayer. It's a pity, because perseverance in mental prayer, according to the unanimous testimony of all the saints, is the narrow gate that opens the Kingdom of Heaven to us; it is the only way for us to receive the gifts which “no eye has seen, nor

ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, that God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9). Mental prayer is the source of true happiness. Whoever practices it faithfully will not fail to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps 34). Those who pray will find the living water that Jesus promised: "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (Jn 4:14).

Convinced of this truth as I am, my aim in this book is to provide advice and orientation and do that as simply and specifically as possible. I hope this may help everyone who has goodwill and a desire for mental prayer to set out and persevere on the path of prayer, without being overcome by the inevitable difficulties.

There are plenty of books about mental prayer. The great contemplatives have spoken about it much better than I can, and I will quote them frequently. Nevertheless, it seems to me that today's believers need a presentation of the Church's traditional teaching that is simple and easily accessible, adapted to today's outlook and expressed in today's language. Such a presentation also needs to take account of the pedagogy that God in his wisdom is using today to lead souls to holiness; it is not always the same as in past centuries. These, then, are the reasons which moved me to write this book.