

Reviewing the FOUR "R's" of Meditation (Mental Prayer)2

Saint Teresa of Avila mentioned that without a book written for spiritual reading on her lap, meditation was almost impossible. The following is based on and inspired by the instruction she gave her nuns on how to practice meditation:

Read: Read something written for spiritual meditation. Obvious examples are the Gospels and Psalms. Any book written for the purpose of bringing the soul into communion with God; to sit still with *our being* enjoying *His being*.

Example books: *In conversation with God* by Fr. Francis Fernandez; *Searching for and Maintaining Peace* by Fr. Jacques Philippe; *The Way* by Jose Maria Escriva; *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St Francis DeSales; *Story of a Soul* by St Therese of Lisieux.

Reflect: Read until something strikes you. Then, stop, and put the book down to reflect on what you just read. Why did this passage or word strike you? What might the Holy Spirit be saying to you? Cease being in a hurry. Let yourself be still and peaceful, soaking in this point for as long as possible.

Relate: Relate this passage or point to Jesus. Allow an internal and spontaneous conversation from the depths of your soul to rise up.

Resolution: Resolve to let the grace from this meditation change you. This means to do something concrete and asking the Holy Spirit to change something in you. Another method is to take something from your prayer like a phrase or word that struck you. Repeat that word or phrase throughout the day. This focuses your mind on prayer which focuses your thoughts and heart on God-like actions.

Problems: What happens if I find nothing that strikes me? Just a paragraph and stop, then re-read the paragraph slowly. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you gain insights. It can help to have a pencil to circle a word or phrase that inspires or gives you insight. After circling this word or phrase, you have something on which to reflect.

Tip: Meditation is often called **Mental Prayer** because it involves our imagination. Traditional devotions like the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross are meditation because they engage the imagination, directing our thoughts to the Lord, which opens the faculties of the soul to unite with him in spirit.