

JMJ
+

FS400 Provincial Letter 8 (April 2016)

Prayer, Meditation, Recollection, Short Sharp Prayers

Dear Young People, Dear Lay Mission Partners, Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Salesian Family,

The peace of the Lord be with you always! Happy Easter! As we saw last month, for our Patron St. Francis de Sales, Purification or Conversion is the first step on the way of Devotion. The next step is to nurture an uninterrupted and deep daily communication with God, our Creator and Redeemer, through his Beloved Son Jesus Christ Our Lord.

We communicate with God by means of **prayer**. Prayer is nothing but communication with God. In today's language, prayer is WhatsApping God, is Facebooking God. Let us listen to what St. Francis has to say about prayer and some of its basic forms (Philothea II 1.2.12.13) "Prayer places our understanding in the divine brightness and light. Prayer exposes our will to the warmth of heavenly love. There is nothing like prayer that so effectively purges our understanding of its ignorance and our will of its depraved affections". The two main forms of prayer are vocal prayer and mental prayer. Regarding both forms of prayer, St. Francis gives us a practical "rule of thumb": "Begin all your prayers, whether mental or vocal, in the presence of God. Abide by this rule without exception and you will soon see how profitable it is to you". How to place oneself in the presence of God? "Placing oneself in the presence of God consists in a lively and attentive apprehension of God's absolute presence. That is, God is in all things and in every place. There is not a place in the world in which He is not most truly present. [...] He is, in a most particular manner, in your heart and in the very centre of your spirit."

St. Francis stresses the pre-eminence of mental prayer, what we now usually call **meditation**. "Above all, I recommend to you mental prayer, the prayer of the heart, and particularly that which concerns the life and Passion of our Lord. By making Him often the subject of your meditation, your whole soul will be filled with Him. You will learn His ways and frame all your actions according to His model. He is 'the light of the world' (John 8:12)."

By practicing **recollection** throughout the day we strive to "live in the presence of God". For St. Francis, recollection is "one of the most assured means of spiritual advancement." How is it done? This is his answer: "In the course of the day recollect as often as you can that you stand in the presence of God. Consider what He does and what you are doing. You will find His eyes turned toward you and perpetually fixed upon you with an incomparable love. Then say to Him: 'O God, why do I not always turn my eyes toward You, as You always look on me? Why do You think so often of me, O my Lord, and why do I so seldom think of You? Where are we, O my soul? Our true place of rest is God, and where do we find ourselves?'"

The most efficacious way to foster recollection is the practice of "**short sharp prayers** [ejaculatory prayers]". "Make frequent aspirations to God, Philothea, by short but ardent movements of your heart; admire His beauty; implore His assistance; cast yourself in spirit at the foot of the Cross; adore His goodness... Ejaculatory prayer was strongly recommended by the great St. Augustine to the devout Lady Proba. There is no difficulty in this exercise, as it may be intermixed with our other affairs and occupations. These interior aspirations do not prevent but rather assist us in the work we are doing."

"The great work of devotion consists in the exercise of spiritual recollection and short sharp prayers [ejaculatory prayers]. The lack of all other prayers may be made good by these two; but the loss of these two can scarcely be repaired by any other means. Without them we cannot properly live the contemplative life, and we can but poorly lead active life. Without them repose is but idleness and work vexation. Therefore, I exhort you to embrace them with your whole heart without desisting from their practice."

Wishing you and me a happy Easter Season lived in constant union with the Lord Jesus who suffered, died, and entered his glory for us, in Jesus Mary Joseph StFrancis DonBosco, I am, Yours affectionately,

Fr. Lanfranco M. Fedrigotti, Provincial