

ST. THOMAS ON MENTAL PRAYER¹

"BE YOU THEREFORE PERFECT, AS ALSO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT." MATT. 5:48.

"St. Thomas Aquinas has illumined the Church more than all the other Doctors. A man will make more progress during one year in his books than in a whole life-time spent in the writings of others." Pope John XXII, Avignon, 1318.

Table #1: Natural and Supernatural Organisms

GOD

(as He is in Himself)



OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

(Invisible Head of His Mystical Body—the Catholic Church)



SUPERNATURAL LIFE OF GRACE

Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Infused Moral Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude.



NATURAL LIFE

Rational Life of Intellect and Will



Sense-Life

¹ Main source material: *Mental Prayer According to the Teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Rev. Denis Fahey, C.SSP., DD., D.PH. [1927]

Table #2: Ages of the Spiritual Life

BEATIFIC VISION OR ETERNAL LIFE

UNITIVE LIFE: Mystical phase—predominance of supernatural infused prayer

↑[third conversion; passive purification: dark night of the spirit] ↑

ILLUMINATIVE LIFE: Transitional phase—beginning of supernatural infused prayer

↑[second conversion; passive purification: dark night of the senses] ↑

PURGATIVE LIFE: Ascetical phase—active purifications—predominance of supernatural non-infused prayer

↑[first conversion] ↑

SPIRITUAL DEATH

Table #3: Kinds of Prayer

- **Prayer of the infused moral virtues or “meditation”**
 - 1) Preparation
 - 2) Reading of material
 - 3) Meditation
 - 4) Resolution
- **Method of Theological Prayer:** Simple look, ardent love.
- **Prayer of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost:** there is no method since this prayer is totally passive, but we can dispose ourselves to contemplation: “To advance in the spiritual life and fit oneself for the grace of contemplation, we must make use of the great means the Church gives to all: reception of the Sacraments, assistance at Holy Mass, frequent Communion, love of the Blessed Eucharist, devotion to the Holy Ghost, filial recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Blessed Virgin.”² But, to make use of the means which the Church holds out to all, certain interior dispositions are necessary. Spiritual writers usually name five: 1) purity of heart; 2) simplicity of mind; 3) profound humility; 4) love of recollection and prayer; 5) fervent charity.

² Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Christian Perfection and Contemplation*.