

**CHAPTER I**  
**OF MENTAL PRAYER IN GENERAL**  
**AND OF THE DISPOSITION OF THE SOUL FOR MENTAL PRAYER**

- 1** Mental prayer is an interior activity  
whereby  
the soul applies itself to God.
- 2** It is so called  
1. to distinguish it from vocal prayer  
which is partly an activity of the body,  
since it is produced by the mouth,  
but at the same time is an activity of the mind  
which should be involved in it.
- 3** 2. It is called interior  
because it is not simply an activity of the mind,  
but of all the powers of the soul  
and because,  
in order to be genuine and effective,  
it must take place in the depths of the soul,  
that is to say,  
in the innermost part of the soul
- 4** For if mental prayer takes place in the mind only,  
or in the superficial part of the heart,  
it would easily lie open to human and material distractions  
which would prevent it from being fruitful,  
and this activity of the mind,  
not having penetrated the soul,  
would only be temporary  
and would consequently leave the soul  
in dryness  
and devoid of God.
- 5** Mental prayer is called an interior activity  
because the soul busies itself therein with that which is  
proper to it in this life which is  
to know God and to love Him  
and to take all the means needed  
to achieve both these ends. cf. Jn 17,3: Lk 10,27-28
- 6** But the principal activity of the soul  
in mental prayer that is truly interior  
is to fill itself with God cf. Ep 3,19  
and to unite itself interiorly with Him,

which is for the soul a sort of apprenticeship and foretaste  
through a lively faith  
of that which the soul should do in reality  
for all eternity.

It is for this reason  
that mental prayer is called an interior activity whereby  
the soul applies itself to God.

- 7** There are three parts to mental prayer.  
The first is the disposition of the soul for mental  
prayer,  
and this is properly called recollection.  
The second part is attention to the topic of mental  
prayer.  
The third part is the thanksgiving at the end of mental  
prayer.
- 8** The first part is called the disposition of the soul for  
mental prayer because the mind, being ordinarily attentive  
for the greater part of the day  
to things that are of themselves exterior and material,  
goes thereby,  
in some manner,  
out of itself  
and takes on,  
at least to some degree,  
the characteristics of the objects  
to which it is attentive.
- 9** Therefore,  
when we wish to apply our mind to mental prayer,  
we must begin by withdrawing it entirely from attention  
to exterior and material things  
and by being attentive  
only to spiritual and interior things.  
And it is for this reason  
that we must begin by being attentive to the presence of God  
and that the acts of the first part  
serve to maintain and occupy the mind with it  
while these acts continue.
- 10** It is in this way  
that the first part disposes us for mental prayer,  
inasmuch as attention to the presence of God,  
to which we are attentive  
and which the acts of the first part

help to keep before our minds,  
withdraws the mind from exterior things  
to occupy it only with that object the attention to which is alone  
capable of keeping the mind within itself  
and thus rendering it interior.

- 11** For attention to God has the characteristic  
of being incompatible  
with attention to exterior and material things  
because God is a spiritual being,  
and attention to God is in no way suitable  
even to attention to spiritual creatures  
because God is infinitely above all created things,  
however detached from matter and however perfect  
they may be,  
and the more our mind is attentive to God,  
the more this attention supplants attention to creatures.

cf. Jn 4,24

And by a necessary consequence,  
the more a soul is attentive to God,  
the more it disengages itself from all concern for creatures  
and consequently from whatever attachment and affection it  
may have had for them  
because as one produces the other,  
the elimination of one from the soul  
necessarily causes the elimination of the other.

- 12** And it is in this way  
that the soul imperceptibly filling itself  
with God  
detaches itself from creatures,  
and becomes what we call interior  
by turning away from and breaking off with  
material and exterior objects.

cf. Ep.3,19

- 13** It is also for this reason  
that the first part of mental prayer is called recollection,  
for it serves to empty the mind of exterior things,  
to bring it back within itself and to keep it there,  
and consequently to recollect the soul  
through attention to God  
and to purely interior matters.