

The Way of St. Joseph



OBJECTIVE: The Way of St. Joseph is a three-month training regimen that helps men "To Order All Things to Christ" by devoting themselves wholeheartedly to living a life of virtue and holiness as an offering to Christ our Lord. Under the direction of their parish priest, men will grow strong in mind, body, and spirit by developing habits for holiness. This month, we will focus on the most important part of our rule of life, namely, being strong in spirit.

Podcast Schedule

- Episode #9 – Strong in Spirit
- Episode #10 – Vocal & Mental Prayer
- Episode #11 – The Efficacy of Prayer
- Episode #12 – Pray Without Ceasing

Strong in Spirit

1. A firm commitment to a prayer regimen every day, 7 days a week.
2. Strong in Spirit: A firm commitment to a daily prayer regimen
 - a. Morning Prayer – The Morning Offering of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel & *Lectio Divina*
 - b. Mid-Day Prayer – The *Memorare* of St. Joseph & the Rosary
 - c. Evening Prayer – Examination of Conscience & Act of Contrition
 - d. Friday Penance

Episode #9 – Strong in Spirit

I. Introduction

1. Last month, we discussed the importance of growing strong in mind. This month, we are going to turn our attention to the most important part of our rule of life, namely, being strong in spirit.
2. Last week, we finished our reflection on being strong in mind by looking at the necessity of acquiring knowledge of God and self to develop a rich interior life. As Adolphe Tanquerey explains so well, “Since perfection consists in the union of the soul with God, it becomes evident that in order to effect this union, we must be acquainted with its two terms, God and the soul” (*The Spiritual Life*, 213). This week, we will discuss how to be strong in spirit by examining the nature and forms of prayer.

II. Strong in Spirit

1. Justification:

- a. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 – Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- b. Ephesians 6:10-12 – Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

2. What is prayer?

- a. Prayer is “an elevation of our soul to God to offer Him our homage (worship) and ask His favors (petition), in order to grow in holiness for His glory . . . the sanctifying power of prayer is such that the Saints never tired of saying that he lives well who prays well.” (Tanquerey, 243, 251-252)
- b. Elevation
 - i. “The effort we make to detach ourselves from creatures and from self in order to fix our thoughts on God” (Tanquerey, 502).
 - ii. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “Prayer enables us to carry our cross in the light. It reminds us of the reason for this cross, makes us carry it with love, and obtains from God the grace of resignation” (*Knowing the Love of God*, 144).
- c. Religious Homage – Giving God the reverence, respect, and love that he deserves.
- d. Present Our Requests
- e. The Glory of God

3. A.C.T.S

- a. The twofold end of prayer is worship and petition which clearly identifies its necessity. The necessity can be expressed through the acronym ACTS:
 - i. **Worship: Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving**
 - ii. **Petition: Supplication**
- b. **Prayer of Worship**
 - i. **Adoration** – “The first sentiment that imposes itself when we raise our soul to God is that of adoration, that is to say, an acknowledgement of God’s supreme dominion and of our absolute dependence” (Tanquerey, 503).
 - ii. **Contrition** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
 - iii. **Thanksgiving** – “God is not merely Our Lord and Master, but our great Benefactor, to Whom we owe all that we are, all that we have, whether in the order of nature or of grace” (Tanquerey, 505).
- c. **The Prayer of Petition**
 - i. **Supplication** – “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Luke 11:9-10).
 - ii. **Is asking God for things selfish?** – “Asking of God for what we need is itself homage rendered to Him, to His power, to His goodness, to the efficacious operation of His grace; it is an act of confidence that honors Him to Whom it is offered” (Tanquerey, 246).

III. Application: What should we ask for in prayer? – Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (*The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, Vol. 1)

1. “The common teaching of theologians is “that true prayer, by which we ask for ourselves with humility, confidence, and perseverance the graces necessary for our salvation, in infallibly efficacious (429).
2. “The end to which Providence has ordained prayer as a means, is the obtaining of the gifts of God necessary to sanctification and salvation; for prayer is a cause which has its place in the life of souls, as heat and electricity have their place in the physical order. Now the end of life of the soul is eternal life and the good which direct us to it are of two kinds:
 - a. **Spiritual goods, which lead us to it directly; and**
 - b. **Temporal goods, which can be indirectly useful for salvation in the measure in which they are subordinated to the first” (435).**
3. **Strong in Spirit: A firm commitment to a prayer regimen every day, 7 days a week.**

Episode #10 – Vocal & Mental Prayer

I. Introduction

1. Last week, we discussed how to be strong in spirit by looking at the nature and forms of prayer. We discovered that the twofold end of prayer is worship and petition, which clearly identifies its necessity. The necessity can be expressed through the acronym ACTS:
 - a. Worship: Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving
 - b. Petition: Supplication
2. This week, we will examine the differences between vocal and mental prayer and consider how we can start practicing both more effectively.

II. Vocal & Mental Prayer

1. Vocal Prayer – Tanqueray (511-516)
 - a. St. Alphonsus Liguori – “Vocal prayer, or prayer pronounced by the lips, is very pleasing to God because by it the endless Majesty of God is acknowledged and glorified” (*The Twelve Steps of Holiness and Salvation*, 169).
 - b. Adolphe Tanqueray – “Vocal prayer may be private or public, according as it is offered in the name of an individual or of society. . . . [and] It is important that Christians should often join in common prayer and worship” (512).
 - c. The Our Father – “Among all the prayers we recite, private or public, there is none so beautiful as that taught us by Our Lord Himself – the *Our Father*” (Tanqueray, 515).
2. Mental Prayer
 - a. Scripture Foundation – “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:5-6).
 - b. What is mental prayer?
 - i. Adolphe Tanqueray – Mental prayer is “a silent elevation and application of our mind and heart to God in order to offer Him our homages and to promote His glory by our advancement in virtue” (664).
 - ii. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “Mental prayer is the elevation of the whole being to God. In it knowledge and love must be merged into a gaze of love that is none other than the contemplation of God and of Our Savior and model, Jesus Christ” (*Knowing the Love of God*, 165).

- iii. St. Teresa of Avila – “Mental prayer is nothing else, in my opinion, but being on terms of friendship with God, frequently conversing in secret with Him who, as we know, loves us” (*The Book of My Life*, chap. 8).
- c. Is mental prayer necessary for salvation?
- i. Adolphe Tanquerey – “Systematic meditation is a highly effective means of sanctification; however, it is not necessary for the salvation of most Christians. What is necessary is prayer by which we render homage to God and obtain grace” (672).
 - ii. Alphonsis Liguori – “Without mental prayer we shall never practice the prayer of petition as we ought, and this prayer of petition is absolutely necessary for salvation” (179).
 - iii. Adolphe Tanquerey – “Meditation, however, is most useful and most profitable to all for salvation and perfection; to beginners, as well as to more advanced souls. It may even be said that it is the most effective means of assuring one’s salvation. . . . [because] it enlightens us as to the malice of sin . . . strengthens our will . . . [and] makes us also practice all the great Christian virtues” (673, 669-670).
- d. What is the object of mental prayer?
- i. The Triune God – His nature and infinite perfections.
 - ii. Creatures – Insofar as they reveal God to us.
 - iii. Our Life – Guided by the will of God to produce in us the image of our Jesus Christ.

III. Application – Strong in Spirit

1. How should we practice vocal prayer? In order “that vocal prayer may tend to God’s glory and our own salvation, it must be accompanied by attention and devotion” (Liguori, 170).
2. How should we practice mental prayer? Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (*Knowing the Love of God*)
 - a. “Remote preparation is none other than mortification of our passions and the detachment from the world and from ourselves through humility” (161).
 - b. “Proximate preparation must dispose the intelligence and will. . . . Unless our attention is fixed on something precise, we run the risk of not thinking about anything. It would be preferable to choose a subject from the life of Our Lord since He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the expression and beauty of God which has been given us. He is our model for as long as we are wayfarers on this earth” (161-162).
3. Strong in Spirit:
 - a. A firm commitment to a prayer regimen every day, 7 days a week.
 - b. The Rosary as vocal and mental prayer

Episode #11 – The Efficacy of Prayer

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: Does prayer even work?
2. Last week, we examined the differences between vocal and mental prayer and discussed how we can start practicing both more effectively.
3. This week, we will discuss the efficacy of prayer. The efficacy of prayer refers to the fact that prayer can produce a certain desired or intended result.
 - a. Luke 11:9-10 – Jesus said, “And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”
 - b. John 16:23-24 – Jesus said, “In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”
 - c. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “Prayer is not, then, a weak force with its first principle in us. The source of its efficacy is in God and the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. It descends from an eternal decree of God; it springs from redeeming love, and it reascends to the divine mercy” (*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, 202-203).

II. The Efficacy of Prayer

1. Can we even change God’s mind?
 - a. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “When we pray it is not a question of persuading God, of inclining Him, of changing His providential dispositions; it is simply a question of raising our will to the level of His will so as to will with Him what He has decided to give us, the good things useful to our sanctification and salvation. Prayer, instead of tending to bring down the Most High to us, is an elevation of our soul to God” (*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, 203).
 - b. Jordan Aumann – “The prayer of petition is not, therefore, an extrinsic cause that moves or determines the will of God, for this is impossible. It is a cause only in the sense that God has related some things to others in such a way that, if certain causes are placed in certain effects will follow” (*Spiritual Theology*, 237).
2. Prayer Produces Three Effects – Adolphe Tanqueray (518-521)
 - a. Prayer detaches us from creatures
 - i. “This effect of prayer follows from its very nature as an elevation of the heart to God. In order to be raised up to God we must first loosen the bonds that fasten us to creatures” (518).

- ii. “We hate mortal sin more and more, for it would turn us away altogether from God. We detest venial sin because it would impede our ascent towards Him, and we deplore even imperfections, since they would cool our intimacy with Him” (518).
 - iii. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “Mortification prepares for mental prayer, and the latter, in its turn, facilitates mortification. Mental prayer and mortification influence one another. . . . prayer enables us to carry our cross in the light. It reminds us of the reason for this cross, makes us carry it with love, and obtains from God the grace of resignation” (*Knowing the Love of God*, 144).
- b. Prayer makes our union with God more complete and more perfect day by day.
- i. Prayer makes our union with God more complete by engaging our mind, imagination, memory, emotions, passions, and even our body by helping us mortify our outward senses.
 - ii. Prayer makes our union with God more perfect because our prayers are acts of faith, sustained by hope, and animated by the love of God.
- c. Through prayer, the soul is gradually transformed into God
- i. We offer to God worship and our petitions, and he stoops down and offers us grace.
 - ii. “The more we honor Him, the greater is His concern in sanctifying a soul that seeks His glory. We can ask a great deal, provided we do so with humility and confidence. He can refuse nothing to humble souls who care more for His interests than for their own” (521).

III. Application – Strong in Spirit

1. What should we pray for (see Rule of Life Episode 9)? – Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange
 - a. Spiritual Goods – “Prayer is all-powerful in obtaining for a sinner the grace of conversion, and for a just man the actual grace necessary for the accomplishment of his duties as a Christian. Prayer is supremely efficacious in obtaining for us a livelier faith, a more confident hope, a more ardent charity, and a great fidelity to our vocation” (*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, 204).
 - b. Temporal/Material Goods
 - i. Augustine – “It is lawful to pray for what it is lawful to desire” (*ad Probam, de orando Deum*, Ep. cxxx, 12).
 - ii. “Prayer cooperates powerfully in the plan of divine Providence. It can obtain anything whatsoever, on condition that we ask God first and foremost to love Him more and more (see Mt. 6:33) . . . If we do not obtain temporal goods, it means that they are not necessary for our salvation” (*Knowing the Love of God*, 151-152).
2. Strong in Spirit: A firm commitment to a prayer regimen every day, 7 days a week.

Episode #12 – Pray Without Ceasing

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: Is it possible to pray without ceasing?
2. Last week, we discussed the efficacy of prayer, which refers to the fact that prayer can produce a certain desired or intended result. We talked about whether we can change God's mind, the three effects of prayer, and what we should be praying for.
3. This week, we will discuss whether we have to pray without ceasing and then attempt to discover some ways we can persevere in a life of prayer and transform all our actions into prayer.

II. Pray Without Ceasing

1. Do we have to pray without ceasing?
 - a. Jesus Christ – “[You] ought always to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1).
 - b. St. Paul affirms this by word and example when he told us to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and when he told the Thessalonians that “We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers” (1 Thessalonians 1:2).
2. How can we attain a life of prayer and persevere in it? – Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (See Rule of Life Episode 10)
 - a. Prepare the Soul – “Remote preparation is none other than mortification of our passions and the detachment from the world and from ourselves through humility” (*Knowing the Love of God*, 161).
 - b. Persevere – “If we are to persevere, we must, first of all, hope in our Lord who calls all devout souls to the living waters of prayer . . . In the second place, we must humbly allow ourselves to be led along the road which our Lord has chosen for us” (*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, 219).
3. How can we transform our actions into prayer? – Adolphe Tanquerey
 - a. Spiritual Exercises – “In order to foster a life of prayer, first of all, a certain number of spiritual exercises are necessary, the extent and duration of which will vary in accordance with our duties of state” (523)
 - i. Morning Prayer
 - ii. *Lectio Divina* – Prayerful reading of Scripture
 - iii. Mid-day Prayer & Essential Catholic devotions like visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Rosary
 - iv. Evening Prayer with an examination of conscience

- b. Turn Ordinary Actions into Prayer – “What shall we do, however, to fill in the time between these various exercises and to transform all our actions into prayer?” (Tanquerey, 527)
 - i. St. Paul
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 10:31 – “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
 - 2. Colossians 3:17 – “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
 - ii. St. Thomas Aquinas – “Man prays so long as he directs his whole life toward God” (Commentary in Romans, c. I, lect. 5).

III. Application – Strong in Spirit

- 1. Practical Advice – Adolphe Tanquerey
 - a. Perform all our actions in union with Christ – “It is love that directs our whole life towards God. The practical means of giving all our actions this direction, is to offer each of them to the Most Blessed Trinity in union with Jesus Christ living in us, and in accordance with His intentions” (527).
 - b. Renew your commitment via mental prayer – “When our actions endure for some time, it is useful to renew this offering by an affectionate gaze upon our Crucifix, or better, upon Jesus living within us, and to raise our soul to God through oft-repeated prayers. In this manner our actions, even the most commonplace, will become a prayer, an elevation of the soul to God, and we shall thereby comply with the teachings of Jesus” (528, see Luke 18:1).
- 2. Strong in Spirit: A firm commitment to a prayer regimen every day, 7 days a week.
 - a. Morning Prayer – The Morning Offering of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel & *Lectio Divina*
 - b. Mid-Day Prayer – The *Memorare* of St. Joseph & the Rosary
 - c. Evening Prayer – Examination of Conscience & Act of Contrition