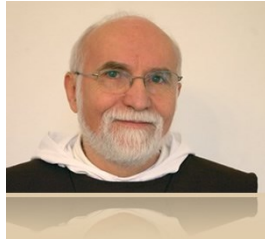


Interior Prayer: Founded on Loving Much

*Interview with Author
Father Jacques Philippe*

By Carrie Gress



ROME, JULY 10, 2008 (Zenit.org) - Interior prayer is not a technique, but an attitude of love that makes our sacramental life more fruitful, says author Father Jacques Philippe.

Father Philippe, of the Community of the Beatitudes, is the author of "[Time for God](#)" published by Scepter Publishing, which is also available in French and Spanish.

In this interview with ZENIT, Father Philippe discusses the simple precepts of interior prayer, common misconceptions and the fruit that can be expected when added to the sacramental life.

Q: You describe mental prayer or interior prayer as something that does not involve technique. How, then, does it work?

Father Philippe: It would be better to say interior prayer instead of mental prayer, because in our modern culture, the word "mental" is associated with thoughts -- as something cerebral -- whereas this form of prayer is more an affair of the heart, instead of reflection. St. Teresa of Avila said that it is not an act of thinking much, but of loving much.

Interior prayer is not a question of technique. It is not a process that can be controlled because it is a meeting with God, who infinitely surpasses anything we can achieve through our own efforts.

What must be essentially understood is that there is no method, but an interior attitude. For interior prayer, there are three principles: a true desire for God; the confidence that God will allow us find that which we are looking for; and finally, humility: To

accept our poverty and to wait for the goodness and love of God in all things.

Q: What is the fruit of interior prayer? And why is it important? Isn't adherence to the sacraments enough?

Father Philippe: Interior prayer permits the sacramental life to be more fruitful, more alive, more intense. It is important because it is there that we see and endlessly deepen the most essential dimension of Christian life: the personal relationship of trust and love that is established between God and each of his children, the reciprocal exchange where we give ourselves to God and where God gives himself to us. According to Pope John Paul II in "*Novo Millennio Ineunte*," this reciprocity is "the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life."

Q: How does mental prayer differ from those who would wish to compare it to yoga or Buddhist practices?

Father Philippe: The fundamental difference is that it is a question of living and deepening the relationship of one person to another with God, and it is not solely to acquire the power to practice an interior or psychic state. The possibility of this interpersonal relationship is not founded on initiative or skill, but on God's desire to reveal Himself and to communicate through love. Moreover, God acts within the Holy Trinity revealed in the New Testament: Through Jesus and thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, we can enter into communion with the Father.

Q: You describe mental prayer as "just spending time" with God, like two people in love would, but this can often feel like nothing is happening. Could something be happening interiorly despite the feeling that there isn't? Or even during times when one is distracted?

Father Philippe: The life of prayer is much deeper than the intelligence or the senses can perceive. Even when prayer is poor and distracted, provided that it is made with sincerity and faith, God can

communicate secretly with the soul. He puts into it the treasures of light and the power of peace that is often made manifest at other times in life instead of just during prayer itself. And if one perseveres despite times of aridity, there will always be moments when God visits and makes his presence felt.

Q: In today's world, many people just don't seem to have time to spend half an hour or an hour in silent prayer. How can it be fit in? Does it always have to be practiced in a church?

Father Philippe: When one activity is considered vital, we find time to do it. The fundamental question is "what are our priorities?" We must be convinced that God will give us a hundred-fold the time that we devote to him in prayer. If we give part of our time to God with fidelity and perseverance, even just a quarter of an hour every day, our life will be more peaceful and more fruitful.

We can pray at a church, as there is a lot of grace when praying in the presence of the Holy Sacrament, but we can also pray in a corner of our room in front of an icon, out in nature, or even on the bus or the subway.

Q: Many people only want to pray when they have an interior prompting to do so. Why is this not helpful both in prayer and in arriving at true interior freedom?

Father Philippe: All love relationships need, in order to grow, a choice for fidelity. If a husband loves his wife only when he feels the spirit to do so, the relationship will remain superficial, on only an emotional level. Fidelity and perseverance allow love to move beyond merely the sentimental and to become something very beautiful and rich, a life shared, a mutual gift of persons, one to another.

In every love relationship there are times of crisis and difficulty, but if we persevere with fidelity, the love will become stronger and truer.