

10. Mental prayer, a gift from God

God asks me to believe, and I try to; to love my neighbor, and I strive to; to be pure, and I struggle to succeed in it. This is the spontaneous reaction of many Christians. It is touching, and is a proof of good will and generosity. And yet, it is very simplistic, the sign of a faith that is still puerile. It is ignorant of the truth, present in all of Scripture, that without God's help, man is powerless to please him or come up to his expectations.

Belief in Christ is impossible, if God does not intervene. *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him"* (Jn 6:44). Love is impossible for us, unaided. St. Paul tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who pours charity into our hearts. Purity, too, must be received from the Lord. *"A clean heart create for me, O God"* (Ps 51:12). The same is true for prayer. Do you think about that?

You understood that you had to make a place for mental prayer in your life. You are practicing it, but you are not succeeding very well. And so, you blame yourself for lacking in skill, in will, and in perseverance. Should you not rather blame yourself for lacking an adult faith? Don't you depend entirely too much on yourself alone? You want to engage in mental prayer? Then ask God for the grace of mental prayer. Yes, indeed! Let your prayer consist in asking for prayer. Prayer, the flame that rises up within us toward God, is something we must ask for, just as Elijah called down fire from heaven on the wood he had just stacked up. Ask with perseverance and humility. Ask impatiently and importunately. Do not forget that Christ praised the importunate friend, the man who does not give up until he has won his case.