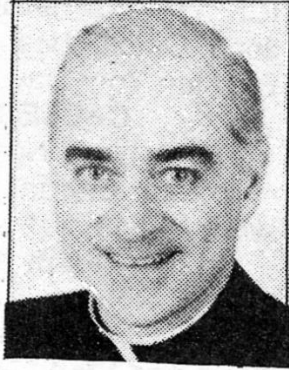


Father John Catoir

Thoughts on Prayer

The following thoughts on prayer are based on the writings of Abbot John Chapman (1862-1932). I found them very helpful in my own life and offer them to you as you begin a new year. (For those interested, the source is a Sheed and Ward publication entitled, "John Chapman.")



Pray as you can, and don't try to pray as you cannot. Take yourself as you find yourself.

The only way to pray is to pray; and the way to pray well is to pray much. The less one prays the worse it goes.

Begin wherever you find yourself. Make any acts you want to make and feel you ought to make, but do not force yourself into feelings of any kind.

If you don't know what to do when you have a quarter of an hour alone in church, then shut out everything else and just give yourself to God. Beg Him to have mercy on you and offer Him all your distractions.

You can't get rid of the worries of this world or the questionings of the intellect, but you can laugh at them. Laugh at yourself and then think of God.

Pure prayer is of the will; it is pure

intention without words. Do not worry about what you should think or feel; if your intention is to cling to Him, you're praying well. Feelings are useful for beginners, but they are not to be depended on. Do not mind if you do not feel love of God or if you feel commotion of rebellion. Just pray that you may give yourself to God as you are; and try to want what He wants.

Minimize what happens in your own soul and maximize God's love for you. Do not think that distraction, dryness and desolation are merely stages on your way to perfection. Jesus suffered temptation and desolation to show us that they are not incompatible with perfection, but in fact are part of it. Progress will be made when we become more and more indifferent as to what state we are in.

Do not try to be simple, God does that for you. Your part is: a) to think of others; b) to be with God; c) to despise thinking about your own "spiritual state." Simply be what God enables you to be at this moment.

And if you must bear some form of suffering, physical, emotional or mental, do not get down on yourself. Suffering is often intolerable, and it's okay to tell God that it is intolerable. Only try with the highest part of your soul to trust Him and be willing to suffer as long as He chooses. He will give you the necessary grace, you can be sure of that.