

Each time you are dissipated and immersed
for a long time in other thoughts,
raise your eyes to Him and express yourself like this:

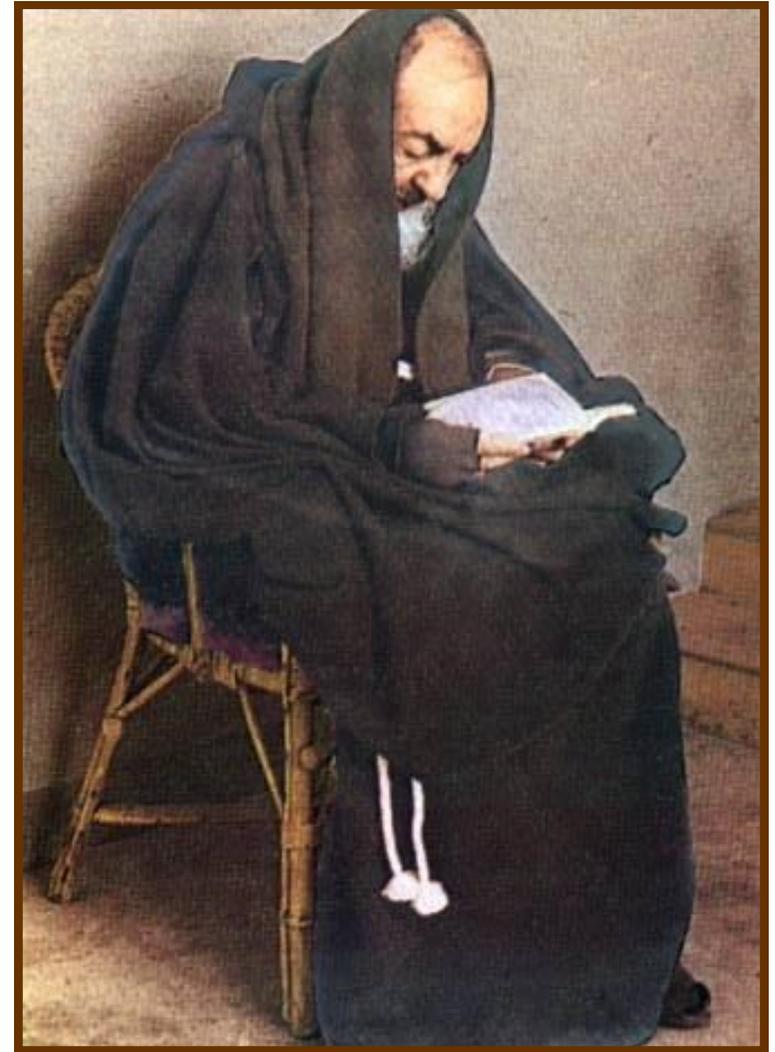
***“ HOW CAN I FORGET MY BELOVED, INFINITE LOVE,
WHO NEVER FORGETS ME, AND THINKS OF ME,
SMILES AND ALWAYS SUSTAINS ME IN A MOST GENTLE WAY?
OH, MY GOD, TRULY MY DELIGHT AND MY ALL,
GRANT THAT I MAY NEVER LEAVE YOU
AND I OFFER YOU MY HEART IN A CONTINUOUS SACRIFICE OF LOVE!***

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Padre Pio and Spiritual Formation

Article 8

Digression



Padre Pio and Spiritual Formation

Padre Pio described his spiritual director, Padre Benedetto Nardella, as the man who "formed" him. Here are some of Padre Benedetto's teachings on the Christian life.

Article 8

Digression

The spirit lives off habits and education, like children. If you give a walking aid to a child and always give in to his whims you cannot expect him to become quiet and polite all at once. The spirit is the same. Let it wander and misbehave during the day absorbed in every impression without direction and warnings, and it cannot do other than to become impertinent and restless in due course. Saint Philip says that just as it is impossible to collect all the water in a glass after having poured some of it out, so is it impossible for the mind to be attentive after having voluntarily kept it dissipated.

Alcohol evaporates from an open bottle and the spirit from a mouth filled with chatter, eyes that look at everything and ears that are attentive to every sound.

The saints did not have adventurous souls and always restrained their unruly tendencies.

Active Life Fed By The Inner Spirit

Do not say that the duties of state authorize you to be content with just exterior religious practices. If this were true, you would not be agitated, appealing to me, urged by a nagging reproof of conscience and hoping that I will calm your conscience.

No, I do not justify you and I do not want to deceive you. You are guilty, guilty as was Martha and like busy people who give up the interior life. They lose the taste for it and want to excuse themselves by accusing the work for their spiritual breakdown. Do not think that I am bitter, because the most gentle of saints (St Francis de Sales) says the same thing. Listen to what he has to say to Filotea:

"Remember to always recollect yourself often, while physically you are seeing to your affairs and during conversations. Nor can this mental solitude be disturbed by the many people who surround you, because if they are around us, they are not inside our hearts, which can remain all alone in God's presence. This was King David's practice in the midst of his many occupations as he alludes to in many of his psalms, for instance: 'And I am always with Thee'—Psalm 72, 23; 'I set the Lord always in my sight' — Psalm 15, 8; 'To Thee have I lifted up my eyes, who dwellest in Heaven' — Psalm 122, 1; 'On Thee have I waited all day long' — Psalm 25, 5. Besides, our

occupations are not usually so serious that we cannot from time to time withdraw our minds from them to lead them to God in this heavenly solitude" (*Filotea or Introduction to the Devout Life*).

Therefore, St Francis de Sales also says that it is not just a question of possibility, but of willingness to give more importance to the only business which is important.

Lovable God

If you really persuade yourself of the necessity of interior recollection, if you esteem it to be the most beautiful treasure of your soul and insist for a month to preserve it gently and patiently, you would acquire the habit and find great delight in it.

But do not think and seek God the way a wrong prejudiced spirit would seek him, discontented, bad-tempered, cold, indifferent and insensible to the groaning's, protests, to the longing and efforts of your poor heart turned to Him and longing for Him. In my opinion this is one of the reasons, if not the first, why so many willing souls either languish or go backwards in holy pleasure and, give up the intention of living the intimate life. This is not your case. You consider Him as He really is, you rush to Him with short but ardent movements of the heart, you admire his infinite beauty, you ask for his help, you remind him of his quality of Father rich in everything and you stretch out your hand to him as a poor and needy child. Repeat to Him often the gift of yourself, your whole self, convince that your life is only for his glory and when you are aware that you have usurped his place by giving in to your ego, your honor and personal satisfaction and glory, correct yourself gently and say: "When will I give up my miserable ego?"

Each time you are dissipated and immersed for a long time in other occupations, raise your eyes to Him excusing yourself and begging Him to forgive you; then seeing that his gaze is always turned towards you with ineffable love, you will admit your frivolity and express yourself like this: "How can I forget my Beloved, Infinite Love, who never forgets me, and thinks of me, smiles and always sustains me in a most gentle way? Oh, my God, truly my delight and my all, grant that I may never leave you and I offer you my heart in a continuous sacrifice of love!"

I hope you will rest on the heart of Jesus like a bird in its nest.