

between progress and prayer is not the same for all. Some go far in perfection and, at least, seem to be still in the elementary stages of prayer; while, on the other hand, God may give some of His best graces to souls who are still far from perfection. Prayer is a means to perfection; it is not perfection itself. One thing may be confidently stated: If more souls set themselves to pray, and to keep on trying to pray better, a far greater number of them would come to their due perfection, and that with less difficulty, than if they treated prayer as some mere incidental exercise of their spiritual life—one which, after all, could be done without. In this matter, members of the more active congregations have no right to consider that prayer such as we now are describing is not for them. It is true, perhaps, that in the contemplative orders it should be easier for souls to advance in prayer; it is true, also, regrettably true, that the day's time-table of some religious is so crammed with work, and that the demands on their energies are so extensive, that little time or energy can be found to develop the interior life. Yet it is nevertheless true that the graces of prayer are offered to active religious just as to everybody else, and that the co-operation needed on their part is nothing more than that to which they are already bound by the essential duty of their state. The legitimate "activities" of religious are no barrier to the work of God's grace; in fact, they are an instrument of that grace, and it may be said that if a religious, after many years in religion, has not reached his due state of perfection in prayer, it is, up to a point, not so much because he is a member of an *active* religious congregation, but rather because his activities have not been as supernaturalized and as interior as is required by his chief duty as a religious.

To facilitate prayer, therefore, and to advance in it, there must be great fidelity to God's will. Rules and all other manifestations of God's desires must be faithfully followed, and the details of the common life as well as one's own daily duties have to be carried out with great exactness and watchful purity of intention.

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