

# ENCOURAGEMENT

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## Distraction...s?

Just a minute, I'll be with you in two ticks, I'll do that later. These are delay tactics which we use in our very busy lives. This is particularly so when we are already multi-tasking. We have to ask ourselves, sometimes, what are the most important things that we *have to* attend to, and which ones we can leave. We live in an 'instant society' where speed and delivery are a measure of competence and success. Interestingly we never see or hear of Jesus being in a hurry!

Distractions to any task are almost inevitable and a part of daily life, whether at work or at home. It is hard sometimes to deal with them. We have to remember as well, that sometimes, what seems to be a distraction, is in fact calling us to do something else that may be more urgent. It may even be a kind of advance notice of another issue. Sometimes charity requires that we attend to maybe a visitor or friend in need when we thought we could get other jobs done.

As St. Thérèse of Lisieux stated, "I have many distractions, but as soon as I am aware of them, I pray for those people, the thought of whom is diverting my attention. In this way, they reap the benefit of my distractions." Talking to Him in a very loving and comfortable way, just as we would with any other friend or loved one, can be a helpful means of overcoming distractions."

A thought of someone can be a real call to pray for that person...

Distraction however, in prayer, is something that nearly all of us experience even the greatest Saints, who try to attend to these and seek counsel from others. The great St Teresa of Avila suffered from distractions in prayer for over eighteen years. She had dryness in prayer and all manner of trials and tribulations resulting from them.

She realised that the essence of prayer in the end is loving more and being open to Gods presence in simple communication.

When we speak of prayer we often think of repetitive and formal prayers and these often lead us to distractions. Prayer is a raising up of the mind and heart to God, as the catechism states. This means that we open our heart and minds and pray as we are. Thus, we bring all our thought and troubles, our joy and sorrows and petitions and yes, even our anger and struggles and speak to God as a loving Father whom we can trust. Somehow, we lose this as we get older and so end up struggling more with prayer in general.

It is interesting that the Lord often picks children and very straight forward people to reveal himself to. This is because they put up no barriers and remain as they are, faults and all. When Francesco the little Saint of Fatima was fidgeting and struggling during the apparitions he was never reprimanded.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church offers us some helpful advice in the section entitled "Facing difficulties in prayer"

"To set about hunting down distractions would be to fall into their trap, when all that is necessary is to turn back to our heart: for a distraction reveals to us what we are attached to, and this humble awareness before the Lord should awaken our preferential love for him and lead us resolutely to offer him our heart to be purified. Therein lies the battle, the choice of which master to serve."

Here we also have a secret for in remaining steadfast and never giving up we learn what is actually important to us and where we can make changes which enables us to be centered on God. Distraction can reveal much to us. It is much easier to pray if we are in simple conversation but either way the essence is persistence and no matter what never stop, because

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When you have distractions, don't distract yourself still more by stopping to consider the why and the wherefore.  
St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina

It is also important to remember that each one of us is different and so will our prayer be. It is also essential to grasp that prayer is essential to our wellbeing and that putting God first enables us to grow spiritually. We have an excellent example of Jesus himself being tempted and the devil trying to distract him with better offers.

Distractions can also come in various disguises, each carrying different consequences. In this season of Lent, it is perhaps useful to look at the reason that we give in to distractions and what the nature of these are.

When it is choice of prayer or some other charitable action, or even a specific mission, do you find yourselves evading this and finding every excuse not to do it. An example of this may be to not follow a 'call' and filling our lives with other seemingly 'better' things which are enjoyable and of themselves not bad, simply as not to have to face the choice that is being put before you. Many a person has experienced this only to regret the delay or reflect on their own evasion in years to come. This is also true when we distract ourselves from making changes which would be beneficial to our faith journey or to live in a better environment for faith to develop...

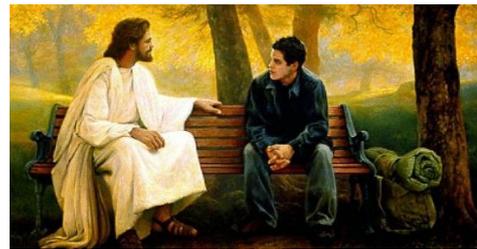
This may be to leave a relationship that is harmful and dangerous to us. It may be to drop habits that lead to addiction of one kind or another. It may be to change the way we live which causes us issues with health both physically or mentally. Any change requires a great deal of courage but is of benefit in the long run.

We admire people who have done this, but oh how many excuses we use to delay that change.

It is these distractions that can be the costliest. How clever we are at justifying our non-action. How often they are prefixed by... maybe tomorrow, next year, or I cannot do it, often substituted by won't try. This is also true in our spiritual lives when an extra effort, action or commitment is offered, and we resist with seemingly quite superficial reasons so that we can continue on our merry way. Another distraction is sheer busy-ness. We run around doing so many things that appear to us useful and helpful, but all the time stop listening to that still small voice which asks us to stop and reconsider.

"Sometimes they fill the air with lamentations and complain that they have no time for prayer, but they are expert in deceiving themselves and they do not realise how insincere their lamentations are. They not only allow themselves to be involved in more and more work but actually ask for more jobs." Thomas Merton says it so clearly in 'Seeds of Contemplation' ...So maybe during Lent stand back and listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Have a conversation with the Lord about what distracts you from Him and try to change what needs to be altered.

Halina Holman ©



### **Pope Leo XIV**

**Dear brothers and sisters,**

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life. Rome Feb 2026

**"Come let us go to the body of that light. Let us live in the cleanliness of the song. Let us throw off the pieces of the world like clothing and enter naked into wisdom. For this is what all hearts pray for when they cry :**

**"Thy will be done "**

**Thomas Merton**

### **Feast Days in March**

**1<sup>st</sup> Second Sunday of Lent**

**7<sup>th</sup> Saints Perpetua & Felicity**

**8<sup>th</sup> Third Sunday of Lent**

**9<sup>th</sup> Saint Frances of Rome**

**15<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday of Lent: Mothers' Day**

**17<sup>th</sup> Saint Patrick**

**18<sup>th</sup> Saint Cyril of Jerusalem**

**19<sup>th</sup> Saint Joseph**

**20<sup>th</sup> Saint Cuthbert**

**22<sup>nd</sup> Fifth Sunday of Lent**

**25<sup>th</sup> The Annunciation to Mary**

**29<sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday the Passion of The Lord**

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