

56. *Second Letter to Jean Pierre*

I was not expecting the strange conclusion you drew from my last letter. "If mental prayer consists essentially in offering oneself, I don't see why you ask me to practice mental prayer every day. Once this offering has been made, in truth and totally, with full knowledge and consent, what's the use of renewing it daily? What's done is done." In reading your letter, I was reminded of what a husband told his young wife, who had just chided him for never expressing his love: "Come now, you wouldn't want to make me look ridiculous by repeating to you every day what I told you once and for all!"

"What's done is done." Your assertion is less logical than it appears to be. A person does not give himself like an inanimate object. When you have given your watch or your pen, that's it. There's no use thinking about it any more. But a living person is given only to the degree that he maintains and perseveres in the act of self-giving. As soon as he departs from this basic attitude of mind, he is no longer given. It's true of human love, and it's true with God.

It is therefore of utmost importance to acquire the *habitual* attitude of self-offering to God. Once it has been acquired, you must defend and nurture it or it will soon lose its vigor and its truth. Now, the privileged means of acquiring, defending, and nurturing this attitude is mental prayer. Only mental prayer helps us to advance toward the permanent gift of self to God. Only mental prayer renews and energizes its dynamism. Mental prayer is the most vital time of a life offered to God.