

INTRODUCTION

Silent meditative prayer centers the mind and heart on God and brings calm and healing to the soul. Hence, it is a wise and valued practice that our Society has traditionally incorporated into its Vigils (See Statutes, No. 39).

The recitation of the Office of the Blessed Sacrament constitutes the Nocturnalists' public, external adoration. However, the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* reminds us: "The spiritual life is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is indeed called to pray with the community, but he or she must also enter into a room apart to pray to the Father in secret" (No. 12). The time of silent meditation is an opportunity for intimate communion with God and personal dedication to Christ.

Sometimes meditation comes easily; sometimes it does not. There are times when it does not come at all. Strange as it may seem, the hours of the night can be a contributing factor in each of these situations. The night with its quiet and peace provides an occasion to recollect ourselves and shut out distracting thoughts. However, the night, especially when it follows a day's hard work, may find the mind tired and resistant to the task of serious reflection on God and the things of God. The night, also, brings with it the natural inclination to drowsiness.

Hence, while meditation is theoretically the more profitable way of spending the second half of the Vigil hour, in practice this is not always so. It is in view of this that many among the membership of the Nocturnal Adoration Society have asked that the Society's Prayer Book contain vocal prayers for use during the second half of the hour. These prayers seek to embody the spirit of liturgical prayer by reflecting the four ends of sacrificial worship: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition.

The use of these prayers is entirely optional. Where silent meditation presents no problem to a particular group, the prayers should be omitted altogether or used as particular occasions indicate. Other groups may sense the need, as a precaution against sleep, to intersperse periods of vocal prayer during the time for meditation. These prayers, while retaining a certain unity of thought, may be cut short at almost any point, allowing for a flexible and balanced use of the time that remains after the praying of the Office.