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Is Praying Difficult?

A fourteenth-century Byzantine monk, who for a short time was Patriarch of Constantinople with the name Callistus II, answers this question with the illustration of the lute-player.

"The lute-player bends over his instrument and listens to the tune, while his fingers manipulate the plectrum and make the strings vibrate in full-toned harmony. The lute has turned into music; and the man who strums upon it is taken out of himself, for the music is soft and entrancing.

Anyone who prays must set about it in the same way. He has a lute and a plectrum at his disposal. The lute is the heart, the strings of which are the inward senses. To get the strings vibrating and the lute playing he needs a plectrum; in this case: the recollection of God, the Name of Jesus, the Word.

So the lute-player can listen attentively and vigilantly to his heart and pluck its strings with the Name of Jesus. Until his senses open up and his heart becomes alert. The person who strums incessantly upon his heart with the Name of Jesus sets his heart a-singing, 'an ineffable happiness flows into his soul, the recollection of Jesus purifies his spirit and makes it sparkle with divine light' ".

Book reference "Spiritual Classics - Read With The Heart" edited by Richard Foster and Emilie Griffin,

Pages 36 and 37, section: Teach us to Pray by Andre Louf

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