

# VAIN REPETITIONS

*"When you pray, do not use vain repetitions...."*  
Matthew 6:7

Have you ever wondered what "vain repetitions" mean? Does it sometimes seem as if our own prayers might just be repetitions if we are mentally distracted while we say them?

Use your encyclopedia or the internet to find out something about repetitive prayers in different cultures:

- How do Tibetans believe that prayer flags work?
- Why do some eastern monks keep prayer wheels spinning?
- What do the beads of a rosary mean to a Catholic?



What do you think you need to do in your own praying to avoid "vain repetition"? Discuss this with a friend, or write about it in a journal.

If we try to focus on the meaning of the words or even just the meaning of one specific phrase, such as "Thy will be done" or "Lead us not into temptation," we may be surprised to find the prayer becoming more meaningful to us day by day. At other times, we may not focus on the specific words but pray to the Lord with great feeling in our hearts. In this way, the Lord's Prayer can become much more than "vain repetition".

But what happens if you say the prayer without thinking about it or while thinking about something else altogether? Prayer without thought is of little value to the person who is praying but of great value to the angels. However, saying the Lord's Prayer with genuine understanding and thought is of the greatest value to both.

The discussion of the effects of praying without thinking about our words is based on a chapel talk written by the Rev. Ormond Odhner about prayer.