

Requiem Mass, 6:25 Tues., University of Notre Dame
M. Church for Mother Pauline, Religious Bulletin
former Pres., St. Mary's. January 7, 1935.

Stooge to McGutzky.

Your trouble with studies, McGutzky, is due to your lack of concentration. You laugh at me for sticking to the books, but because you can't sit down day by day to regular, sustained work, you take in your intellectual food in gulps, and you suffer most of the time from a sort of mental indigestion.

When you don't want a thought in your mind it comes to you anyway, and you can't keep it away. And in exams when you do need to recall certain facts, or an author's chain of reasoning, you can't bring it round for the life of you.

People will laugh at your cracks, McGutzky. They'll pat you on the back, and after you get nowhere, they'll be glad to moan with you, "Poor McGutzky!"

You've got the idea that because you weren't born with the ability to concentrate, you'll never get it. You're not built for the books, you say. But you envy certain fellows on the campus, whom you call "the intelligentsia" and you think it all came to them as a birthright. But it didn't. They had to plug for it. If you'd do only half their plugging you'd be plenty smart.

Get this, McGutzky: concentration isn't just sitting on the same chair with the same book before you, even for an hour or two hours at a crack. It's something more than that.

The human mind is so constructed that it can occupy itself only with one thing at a time. It can turn to a whole lot of things in quick succession.

The power of concentration is the ability to choose a single subject and to compel or to cajole the mind into considering that subject to the exclusion of all others. This power, like other powers, is developed through exercise.

Suppose you try every day short spells of say only half an hour during which you think only on one, certain subject. When wise cracks come to you, they're out! After a half hour of that kind of thinking, relax for, say five minutes. Give the mind a break. Let it browse for a short period.

Then go back again to the task for another half hour. You'll be surprised how much you can learn, even in a half hour, providing you think of one thing alone and don't let a dozen other things chisel in on the process.

The same thing holds good in the classroom. You have to go to class anyway. Why not keep mentally alive in the classroom? If you think only about what the Prof talks, you'll be surprised how little outside work you really will have to do. And you'll be surprised how many original angles will occur to you.

This power to concentrate, to control the mind, has important moral implications. How many times the undisciplined mind finds itself incapable of turning away from a certain train of thought. And how often this slovenly habit of habitual surrender to every truant thought, this habitual mental chaos, really causes sin both of thought and of deed.

You have lots of nerve, McGutzky, for many things that don't mean half so much to you as training your own mind. I wonder if you have the stuff to keep at the hard job of developing the power of concentration until you really are the master of it?

PRAYERS: Deceased, Most Rev. Edmond M. Obrecht, O.C.S.O., Abbott, Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, Louisville, Ky.; Mr. Michael Hanley, ex 1897; father of John Levicki (St. Ed's.). Ill, Rev. M. Schexnayder, Chaplain to the Catholic students, Louisiana State University; Carl Michaels, freshman, hurt in auto accident; Charles Storey, friend of Kay Mulvey (Howard); Bob Cummins '26; brother of James Smith (Lyons).
Four special intentions.