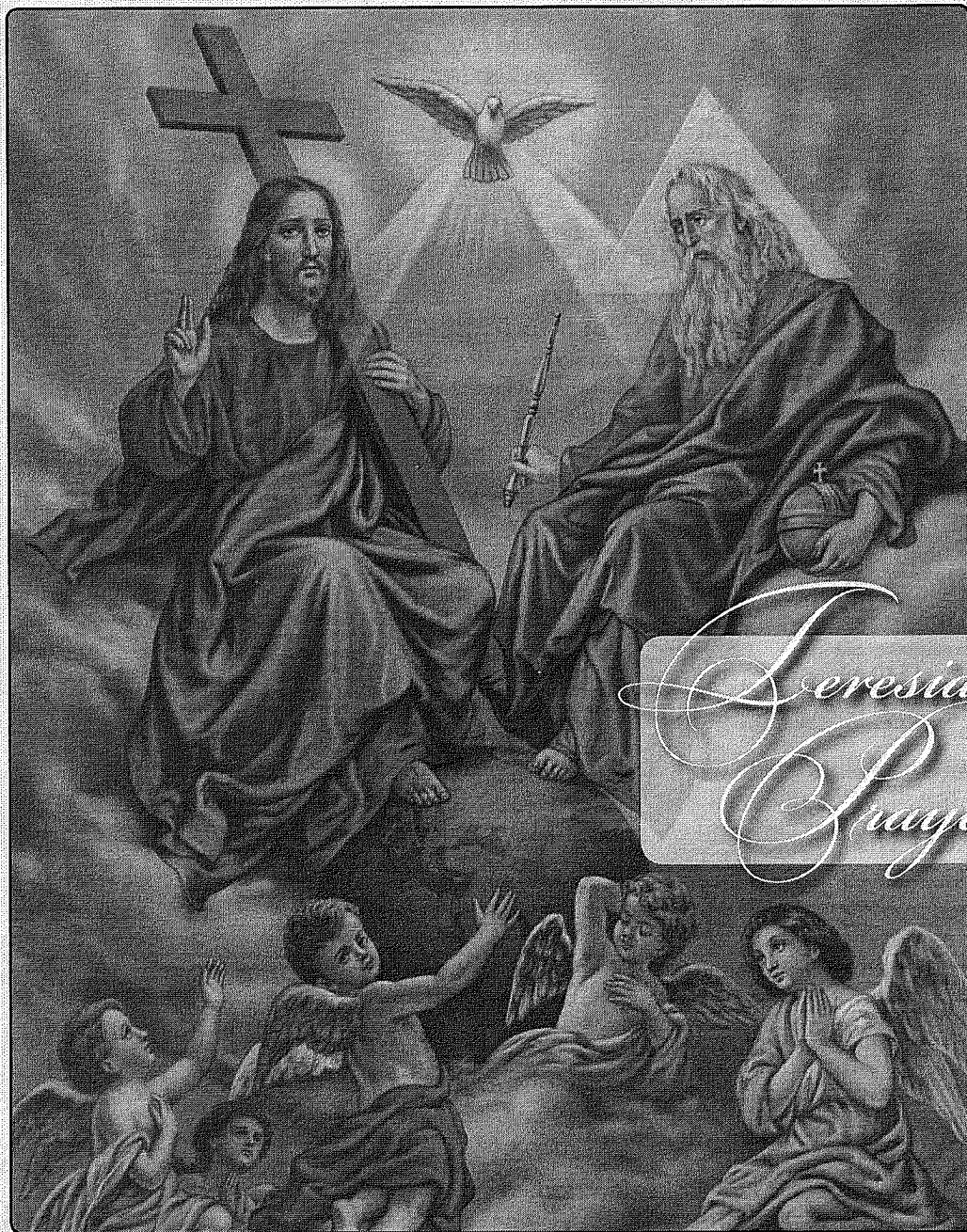


CARMEL CLARION

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2011 † VOLUME XXVII, NO. 3



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Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

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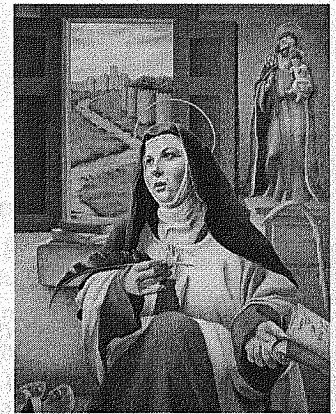
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Editorial

This entire *Clarion* is devoted to an article by Fr. Jerome Lantry, OCD, a member of the California–Arizona Province. Father, a native of Ireland, now in his nineties, has held many offices in his province, is a well-known author, and has ministered to the OCDS for many years. He was ordained on July 14th 1946 and is presently Associate Pastor of the Carmelite parish in Alhambra, CA. I am sure that you will find his thoughts and insights into St. Teresa's commentary on the *Our Father* very helpful as you study and reflect on Holy Mother's writings.



This coming year the Order has asked us to study and reflect upon her *Foundations* as part of our preparation for the 500th centenary of St. Teresa's birth. ICS Publications has recently published a study guide edition. This book by Fr. Marc Foley, OCD should be of great help in your study of this work.

I am very pleased to announce a special gift is being sent to members of our OCDS communities. A patron, deeply moved by the "Prayer to Saint Teresa of Jesus" published in the January – March 2010 issue of the *Clarion*, is providing a donation so that each of us may receive a beautiful prayer card with the picture commissioned for St. Florian's. It is his hope that we will keep it close and pray it together as we strive for renewal and strengthening of our Carmelite vocations as Fr. General has asked of all friars, nuns and seculars. They will be arriving with this year's Roster packet.

On a more practical level I want to remind you that providing updated information for your membership on the 2012 Community Roster is an opportunity for your new leadership to work together. As previously stated in Fr. Provincial's October 15, 2009 letter, we are asking for a \$5.00 increase in Provincial Dues, from \$35.00 - \$40.00. The cost of the annual subscription to the *Clarion* will remain the same at \$10.00 and all are encouraged to have one. OCDS members (from the time everybody receives the Scapular) should submit \$50.00 to their community treasurer. Please see Local Community Finances [cf. Const. #55] on pages 44 and 45 of our legislative booklet; specifically #6 regarding aid to the needy of your community if they are financially unable to pay.

In January of 2012 the Province will begin the process of electing new members to serve on the OCDS Provincial Council. After the approval of the OCDS *Constitutions*, the Provincial appointed members to this Council, which advises him on matters pertaining to the OCDS. Now the STATUTES call for a Province-wide election of members who will serve in this capacity. More information will be forthcoming on the time-line and process of this election later this year.

The Carmelite Bishops who attended the recent Extraordinary Definitory (a world-wide meeting of Carmelite Bishops and Provincials with our Superior General and Council) have asked our Holy Father to declare 2015 a year of prayer in honor of St. Teresa's birth.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, I would ask you to remember in your prayers the members of several communities who, for a variety of reasons, have had to disband. This has meant that members of these communities have been asked to transfer to other communities or, in some cases, become extended members. Please pray that this transition may not be too painful for them.

Fr. Regis, O.C.D.



Carmelitani Scalzi
Corso d'Italia, 38
00198 Roma

6 January 2011
The Epiphany of the Lord

My dear Fathers and Brothers, and, in a special way my dear brothers and sisters of the Secular Order, The Order is in the time of celebrating Provincial chapters. Some few have already taken place, but most will be celebrated sometime over the next six months. At the beginning of this new year I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the place and importance of the Secular Order in the world we are facing as we go forward.

In December of 2006, Father Luis Arostegui sent to the Provincials a document on the Pastoral Assistance of the OCD Friars to the Secular Order. In the preface to that document it stated the following:

"The Secular Order of the Mendicant Orders is not just an associated laity. Through the connection to the friars of the different Orders, the Secular Order communicates the spirituality of the Orders to the world around it."

In other words, the reason for the permission given to the Mendicant Orders to have Secular members is to bring the spirituality of those Orders to the homes and lives of people who identify with the Order.

Indeed, the greatest difference between the Secular Order and other movements or groups of associations that might be attached to a convent, monastery, parish, or particular friar is that while those in the latter groups are dedicated to the spirituality of Saint Teresa, or Saint John of the Cross, or Saint Thérèse, etc., the members of the Secular Order have made a commitment to the Order, to its life and its mission as well as to its spirituality. They have expressed this commitment through the Promise which they made.

In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, paragraph 54, Pope John Paul II wrote: *Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.*

Many congregations of religious are today searching for ways to invite lay persons to identify with the life and mission of those congregations. The Holy Father used precisely what the Mendicant Orders have had for centuries, namely, Secular Orders, as the model or example for what they might do.

The relationship that exists between the friars and the seculars is a grace and a responsibility for both branches. The grace is found in the mutual enrichment of the vocation that each person lives. The relationship of the friars with the seculars reinforces the friars in their desire to live seriously their commitment as consecrated religious. The relationship of the seculars with the friars helps them to live the demands of a serious spiritual life in the midst of a secular environment which is not always friendly to religion.

The responsibility of the friars to the seculars is exercised in two ways, governance and formation. These two ways must go together for either one to be effective. When governance and formation go together it is an experience of guidance, not control. Guidance illuminates the mind and makes the burdens of the Christian life lighter to bear. Indeed, the greatest emphasis in the renewal of the Secular Order since the Second Vatican Council is that of the responsibility for an adequate formation of mature members of the Church and Order. This emphasis is inspired by both *Apostolicam Actuositatem* of Vatican II and *Christifideles Laici* of Pope John Paul II. In many parts of the Order this renewal in the area of formation has been well on the way. In other parts it is still in planning stages. In every part of the Order it is necessary.

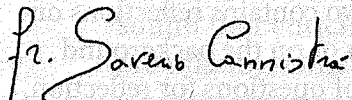
The responsibility of the seculars in relation to the friars is exercised in the availability of the seculars to collaborate with the friars in planning the mission of the provinces. The 54th paragraph of *Vita Consecrata* quoted above stated that “the laity are invited to share more intensely in the spirituality *and mission*” of the religious. This also applies to us as an Order. It is necessary to recognize the place of our lay members of the Order in the development of our presence not only because of demographical changes taking place in certain places, but because the very nature of lay participation in the Church has developed to a new state. The presence of competent and well formed secular members of the Order may be a great help in planning eventual new structures of our presence.

It has already been the custom in many Provinces to invite members of the Secular Order, usually represented by the OCDS Provincial Council, to participate in the Provincial Chapters, dedicating some time to dialog about the relationship that exists between the friars and the seculars. This highly recommended dialog is increasingly important in planning the future projects of our Provinces and addressing the needs and desires of the seculars as we together as an Order seek to make our presence more effective in bringing the message of the Discalced Carmel to the world around us

The spiritual relationship that exists among the friars, the cloistered nuns and the secular members of the Order is a source of great riches to each of us as individuals and as an Order. It also is a source of grace and energy to the Church we serve and to the world in need of the knowledge of the presence of God.

I ask the Provincials to please communicate this letter to the Secular Order members in your Province.

Fraternally in Christ our Saviour,



Saverio Cannistrali, OCD

Superior General

October 15, 2011 to October 15, 2012

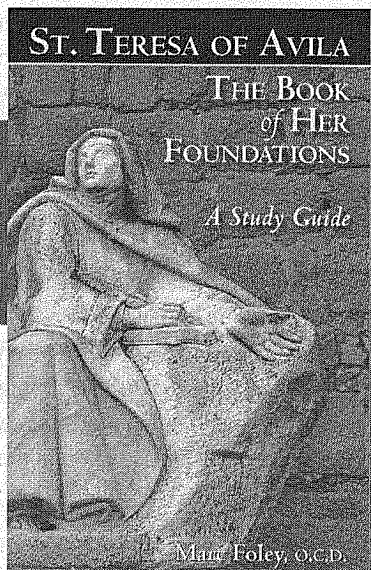
All friars, nuns and seculars are asked to read together

The Book of Her Foundations

ICS Publications announces

A Study Guide of The Book of Her Foundations

of St. Teresa of Avila, prepared by Marc Foley, O.C.D.



Of all St. Teresa's major works, *The Foundations* is the most relevant for people living day to day in the work world, for it reveals how she grew in holiness in the marketplace, as much, if not more, than in the cloister. This study guide shows how St. Teresa grew in holiness not in spite of obstacles such as lawsuits, disputes over dowries, bureaucratic red tape, unscrupulous businessmen and the political in fighting of the Church, but because of these difficulties.

This study guide, which contains the complete text of *The Foundations*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., is designed for both private reflection and group discussion. Each chapter is divided into three parts. Part one is titled "Summary and Background". It consists of a summary of the chapter, supplemented by historical information derived from various sources. Part two contains reflections on either passages found in the chapter under consideration or on the background material referred to in the summary. Part three consists of questions for reflection.

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Saint Teresa on Prayer

By Jerome Lantry, OCD

Introduction

In our times, so many, many people are turning to prayer in one form or another. This is great news and there are lots of clear indications that it is not just a passing trend, but something real. There is a search on today for something spiritual that is genuine and permanent. We have gone through so much change that we are wondering what is permanent, on what can we depend. St Teresa did some careful thinking on all that too and had a few thoughts that she wrote down and kept as a bookmark to keep her thinking straight. It said:

Here we have some of the basic ideas that occur and re-occur in her writing. So that she had clearly decided that nothing is permanent and changeless but God himself. Customs and laws, plans and structures can change, adjust or even disappear when they have served their purposes. New ideas grow old and give way to newer ones. People come and go and even the indispensable ones move on. It takes time and thought to come even to a vague awareness of what St Teresa has written on her bookmark. So the people who find God in their lives find the one permanent thing there is and come to realize little by little that God

fulfills all their needs, that God alone can do that. It is this thought or intuition that draws people to pray. At first they crave for some sense of God that can be felt, to which they react in an emotional way, in sorrow or joy or a blending of both. In time they learn to be aware of God in a much quieter and deeper way. It becomes a new world of truth and freedom, of light and love. This is human life in full flower. People who find this way develop a great emotional balance, a deeper insight into life and even a clearer intellect.

One other basic thing in St Teresa's life was her love for the Church. This may not sound that enticing to us if we have grown confused about the Church. If so, we are missing something very important and basic. The Church is not a building, not a highly structured and rich organization. The Church is the people. The Church came into being at Pentecost. The people chosen by Christ as the first members of the Church, the apostles, were all present but incapable of doing anything until the Holy Spirit came; then they were new people, who preached fearlessly and continued to bring the faith to thousands in spite of being jailed, beaten and even banished. This early group of Christians came to speak of themselves simply as the assembly and the word 'Church' is just a translation of that. This assembly was more than the group of people who were members of it. By a special gift of God, they were given a share in the very life of Christ, so that they were united to him just as parts



Let nothing disturb thee;
Let nothing dismay thee;
All things pass;
God never changes.
Patience attains
All that it strives for.
He who has God
Finds he lacks nothing:
God alone suffices.

of a human body share the human life that is in them; just like branches of a tree share the life of the tree. This was brought home dramatically to St Paul at his conversion. When Jesus spoke to him, he said, "Why do you persecute me?" He did not ask why he was persecuting his followers. He did not make that distinction. So, when we come to Jesus Christ in prayer, we come to all people. When we learn to pray, we are with God our Father and with his Son, who is not just my Redeemer and yours but the Redeemer of all people. Prayer is something we frequently do alone, just as Jesus did, but in prayer we are not turning our back on people. Rather, we reach out to them. Their welfare is our concern because it is God's concern.

St Teresa's awareness of God involved her more and more in the cares of the Church, but we must bear in mind that her notion of the Church was very personal. It was Christ. In the members of the Church she saw Christ praised, served, persecuted, shamed, let down or glorified. Many times she spoke of a great wish to give her life and to give it a thousand times to save one human being from the consequences of sin. And this is exactly what Christ's life and death were all about so that we can in a way see the love of Christ for us reflected in the life of the Saint. If prayer brings us close to God and helps us to grow in our love for him, then his will becomes our will and his will is that people, all people, should come to him. By knowing him and by knowing what he has done and is doing for them, they come to know their own worth and dignity. This is the way to peace and unity, the way to end crime and injustice and war. St Teresa was aware of these things and was not turning aside but coming to help when she spent long hours in silent prayer, alone with God, her God and our God.

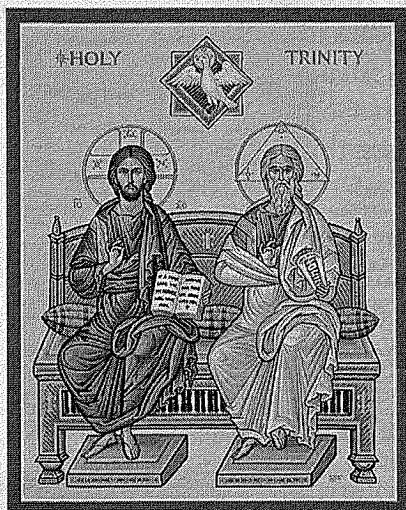
St Teresa did not stop to make distinctions between Christ and the Church. Her love of Christ was a really beautiful thing. It comes out in the way she speaks of him. It is so very prayerful and human; sometimes-mingling complaints with humor, joy with sacrifice, which you keep on reading to see what she will say next. She talks of him as a friend and companion, a loving teacher, a poor suffering man who must not be left alone, a great victorious king who has conquered a kingdom and wants to give it to you. Many times her instruction or narrative is broken and she is writing prayer, sometimes praising, sometimes pleading but always so close to reality and so close to God. It must have been this awareness of God's majesty and our littleness that gave her such a great sense of humor. It made her realistic about people, holding up to them the highest ideals and yet insisting on good sense and acceptance of limitations. She is certainly a most lovable saint and she seems to be saying so often, so persuasively, "*If it happened to me, I cannot see why it would not happen to you.*"

Our Father

To pray is to come face-to-face with God in all honesty and humility, yet in confidence as one coming home to his parents. From this position it is easier to call God 'our Father'. This is the very beginning of prayer as Jesus taught it and St Teresa has her own comment. Many excellent things have been written on the subject of God, our Father, beginning with the Bible and they continue through today. The theology here is deep

and will never be complete. St Teresa's comments are not those of a theologian or a scholar. They come from her own living experience and this is a very helpful guide to us in developing our personal relationship with God, our Father. Those who, like St Therese of Lisieux, had a special relationship with their own father are off to a good start, but even those who were not so fortunate can find here immense compensation developing unused resources in themselves.

History shows that God has revealed his fatherhood in the lives of all sorts of people. He can do all things. What we think we are or have been is no obstacle to him. So you look at what St Teresa has to say with a readiness to believe that while it is personal to her there is something in you that is ready to respond too to God, your Father, if you give yourself the time and opportunity.



Prayer begins when we come to ask who God is and the first word in the answer is Father. The word is a revelation of what God is like and how he feels about us. It certainly is an invitation to come to him and to stop acting like a stranger. It is an invitation into heaven itself. And that is Teresa's first reaction. She also sees how much it tells about Christ who, as Son of God, is now made a brother to us and comes to live with us no matter what our state. The very thought of this turns her from her ordinary style of writing into a prayerful address to Christ in which she goes on marvelling at what he has done: giving us everything at once, joining in the prayer of us sinners, and so obliging his Father to accept us as his children, to pardon our sins, to comfort us in trials, to sustain us as fathers do, but more than they can; and finally to share with us the right to inherit all his possessions.

This is a beautiful passage that brings to mind some words from St Matthew: "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11:25-7). St Teresa does not refer to this scripture passage, and yet her very first words of comment on the Our Father are certainly in close harmony with it: "O my Lord, how thou dost reveal thyself as the Father of such a Son, while the Son reveals himself as the Son of such a Father, blessed be thou for ever and ever" (WP, 27). And there is one more point worth noting. When she turns to speak to Christ on this same matter of telling us to call God our Father, she is amazed and delighted that he should "descend to such a degree of humility as to join with us when we pray" (WP, 27).

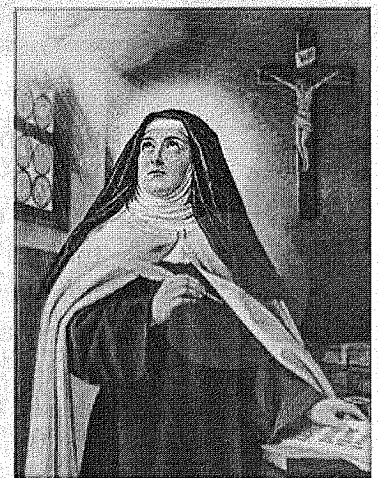
Immediately after the passage from St Matthew just quoted, we find Christ saying: "Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Mt 11:28). St Teresa goes on talking to God, marvelling at the fact that he is giving us so much by making us his own children and finding no explanation except that he loves so much to give that no obstacle can stop him. Another reflection of hers says he is doing this to make us love to learn what he is teaching us. Finally, she says that rather than write more about it, she will leave it to ourselves to think about.

It is a matter deserving repeated attention at length. Here is the very center of your life, the home from which you go and to which you return. Of its very nature, this relationship with God, your Father, links you to Christ, your Brother, and to all people as your own family. St John grasped all this very clearly when he was telling us of what we have seen and heard so that we would share it all with him and be together with him in union with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Since St Teresa finds in the opening words of the Our Father a real revelation of what God is like, it seems appropriate here to quote the opening of the Vatican II document on Revelation as it too lets us see the loving way in which God makes himself known to us: "In his goodness and wisdom, God chose to reveal himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man has access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and comes to share in the divine nature. Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of his love speaks to men as friends and lives among them so that he may invite and take them into friendship with himself" (Dei Verbum, 2). Yet it remains for each of us to come before God and feel out our own relationship, and get it right, so that it may grow, and all we think and do will be firmly rooted in this eternal bond.

The words of the Our Father 'Who art in heaven' bring St Teresa to deal directly with the subject of Recollection, the practice of withdrawing our attention from outward things to focus on God within us. So she very logically concludes that we have no need to go to heaven to find him, nor to speak in a loud voice to be heard by him; but we need only find a place where we can be alone and just look at him who is present within us. He is within me in the house of my heart and I can come in humility and confidence and talk to him, ask him for things, tell him my troubles, beg him to set things right for me and yet not fail in my reverence for him.

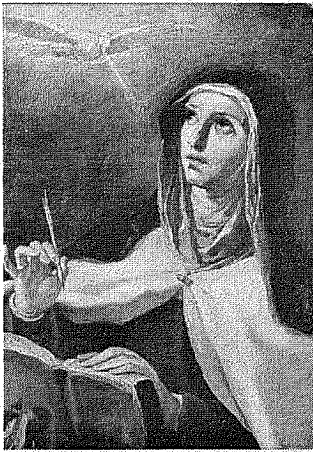
Here St Teresa has something to say about people who will not come close to God on the grounds they are not worthy and tells us to avoid this foolish thinking. She does not say so but such an attitude may contain an unwillingness to come close to God because this, of necessity, makes us aware of our sinfulness and calls on us to repent. And St Teresa encourages us to face this by letting us know that he will teach us how to please him. This message is clear, the Lord is within us and we should be there with him. This being within ourselves with him is what she calls the Prayer of Recollection, "because the soul collects together all the faculties and enters within itself to be with its God" (WP, 28). A special advantage she sees for the soul in this type of prayer is that "its Divine Master comes more speedily to teach it, and to grant it the Prayer of Quiet, than in any other way" (WP, 28).



St Teresa herself experienced prayer of a kind that cannot be achieved by our own dedication, or by techniques, but only by a special grace of God. While she tells us time and again that we cannot reach such states of prayer by our own effort, she is particularly anxious that we dispose ourselves for this special grace. Indeed, she seems as sure as she can be that we will receive this special grace if we make a habit of recollecting our mind in prayer and persevere in the practice. She says this is like travelling by ship with a favourable wind as compared to walking. You get there so much faster.

Genuine recollection can be known by the effects it has on our way of living. It brings

out in us a serious effort to do things God's way. All of which is based on the Gospel teaching that where the treasure is there the heart goes. As the heart turns more and more to God within, it ceases to be drawn by things that had attracted it before. As the habit grows, the eyes are closed in prayer as an outward expression of where the interest is centered. The effort to be recollected has to be a strong persevering one, but with practice it becomes much easier, or perhaps it is more correct to say it gets stronger as the habit grows. The wish to enter into recollection comes to harvest. This is the world in which the will to sin weakens and the fire of divine love is enkindled because we are alone with him and he is close to us. Some people are confused as to how to imagine God close to us - before us, beside us, within us or just close to us. St Teresa does not see any problem. The place she speaks of as 'within us' is a vast space, a palace of great beauty, incomparably more precious than anything we can see. In it is a special place reserved for our Guest and this is our heart.



St Teresa uses a combination of urgings and instructions to help us acquire the habit of recollection. First, she emphasises the importance of desiring it since it is not something we have to wait for but something we can acquire by our own repeated efforts. She does not expect a lot of us in the beginning: "If I can recall the companionship I have within my soul for as much as a moment; that is of great utility... we should know and abide with the Person with whom we are speaking... the whole mischief comes from our not really grasping the fact that he is near us, and imagining he is far away" (WP, 29). It is so very obvious every time she comes back to this that there is work to be done. We must make the effort to get our mind off other things and on to him who is near us. It is only with frequent trying that this practice will grow into a habit. It is one more example of

the truth of the axiom that where there is a will, there is a way. It is a matter of wanting the greatest thing we can have and of being wise enough to want it badly. One sure result is that we will come, in time, to realize he is aware of what we are saying and listening to us as we pray. This makes us say our prayers more slowly, and even stop saying them to just be there, aware of him and knowing he is aware of us. This may not last for long. But it is the goal we are trying to reach, and to arrive, even for a little while, is a great achievement.

From these moments of awareness things we once knew from our own meditations take on a new light as if they had just been taught to us in a new way. He teaches us to be still and know that he is near, that he loves us and he invites us to respond. So, by saying our vocal prayers well, we can grow in awareness of God within us, loving us, caring for us; this God who made us, God who redeemed us, God who changes us until we are like him. This is a simple sure way with little room for error. Do it often and do not give it up. The habit may be acquired in a year but we should be willing to work longer. The very effort has its own rewards.

The emphasis on effort, gentle but persevering is very much a vital part of Teresa's teaching. For those who have experienced the benefit of recollection, the reason for this is clear; but for the beginner, it may not be so obvious. St Teresa's purpose, her objective, is union with Christ. He is the one she is seeking and he is so important to us that the desire to reach him, to come close to him should be so strong as to be worthy of him. In the beginning, when the person trying to pray has so little to work on, it is important

to be convinced that at the end of this search is the most precious treasure we can possibly find. Prayer is where God reveals himself to us individually and his greatest revelation is his Son, Jesus Christ. He is God's final and clearest Word. All other forms of revelation get fresh light from Christ. We get to know the Father through him; it is his Spirit who is sent to sanctify us. So in the world in which we live, he is the one to attend to. The Father said: "Hear ye him". We 'hear' and 'listen' and attend by coming to him in recollection.

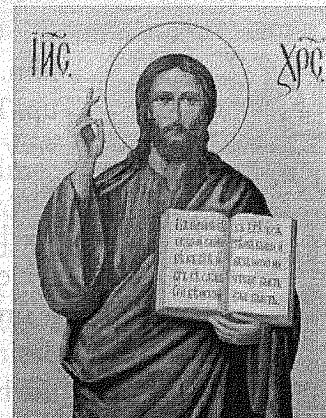
The impression of Jesus Christ that we get from St Teresa is one of immense good, a Person who is loving, merciful, generous, humble, patient and yet strong and unafraid. All this may be distant from the beginner, but it becomes clearer as he practises recollection. We may have nothing to say save the words of prayers we have learned, but if we say these slowly, they begin to relate to our life, and then to his. It may not be easy to focus our attention on him. We may have to try to picture him in ways that will make it easier to keep our minds on him. But, if we are convinced that here is our wealth, our goldmine, we will go on and not give up. So the strong desire of the heart to come to him is vitally important. A habit of prayer is something to strive for through a lifetime. It is God's greatest gift to the soul. Prayer consecrates a man, makes him holy and pleasing unto God, makes him walk the earth with a freer swing, not a slave of the world, but as a free man in Christ.

“Prayer is where God reveals himself to us individually and his greatest revelation is his Son, Jesus Christ. He is God’s final and clearest Word.”

Hallowed Be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come

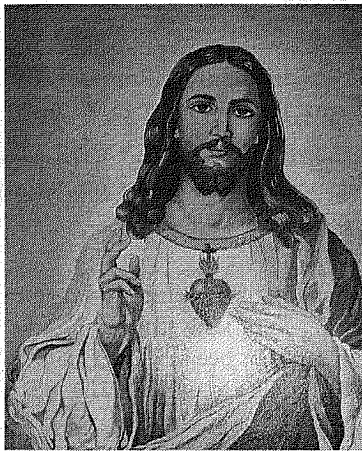
This serves as fair introduction to St Teresa's commentary on the petitions of the Our Father, "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come". Her comments on these words gives us a fine example of what she means when she tells us to think of what we are saying when we pray. In this case, she reflects on what we are asking for in our petitions. For a start, she even recommends that we ask for light so that we see the implications of what we are petitioning. Then she sees these two petitions as inseparable. Unless God's kingdom comes in us, how can we ever rise to praising his name. She argues from what we hope to be doing in heaven, the Perfect Kingdom, to what we should be doing now, in this kingdom: "To me, then, it seems that, of the many joys to be found in the kingdom of heaven, the chief is that we shall have no more to do with the things of earth; for in heaven we shall have an intrinsic tranquillity and glory, a joy in the rejoicings of all, a perpetual peace, and a great interior satisfaction which will come to us when we see that all are hallowing and praising the Lord, and are blessing his name, and that none is offending him. For all love him there and the soul's one concern is loving him, nor can it cease from loving him because it knows him. And this is how we should love him on earth. . ." (WP, 30). This may be regarded as a personal interpretation of a scripture text but it leaves no doubt but that prayer, attention to God, is no academic exercise but a real act of loving God personally, committed and free from contrary attractions.

The experiences of interior prayer are an invitation to the eternal vision of God. What St Teresa is saying can be more readily understood by bearing in mind that the 'Kingdom of God' as we know it in the Synoptic Gospels, can be said to



apply to heaven - the Perfect Kingdom to which we look forward in hope - and to the kingdom among us which we identify with the Church, the new people of God. The kingdom among us, which we also call the Mystical Body of Christ, is found in people. We say Christ is the head of the Church, his Body, because it is his life in us that makes us members of the kingdom here and heirs to the Kingdom we seek. Because of this fact that we share in some real way in the life of Christ, he is made present to us to the extent that we can know him by faith, and love him with a degree of the same love, which comes to perfection in heaven.

By recollection, we become aware of his presence in us sometimes by a passing experience that lets us feel his action in us; but much more frequently by faith which lets us know he is here even when what we feel does not convey such a message. This presence of God as experienced, mainly by faith alone, is what St Teresa has in mind when she thinks of the kingdom we want to come. This is not a departure from the usual meaning which sees the petition as a prayer that asks for all people to come to believe in Christ because for St Teresa interior prayer touches the heart of the Church and is very definitely apostolic and contributes in a vast way to the spread of the Gospel.



As God reveals himself to us in prayer, he is making his kingdom come in us and is enabling us to praise his name. When we say these petitions, then, we are not just asking that other people in far away places come to do as we do, but that we wake up to what God is doing, and make room for him to live in us in a way that we will be more aware of him so that he can reveal himself to us more and more. This calls for dedication and unselfish love and, at first, a willingness to be upset by his presence, which can make us uncomfortably aware of our own faults.

This growth of awareness of God within us brings St Teresa to describe a state of prayer in which God intervenes in our efforts to focus on him and gives us an awareness of himself that we cannot bring about by our own efforts.

Do we pray so that God can come into our lives and change our hearts?

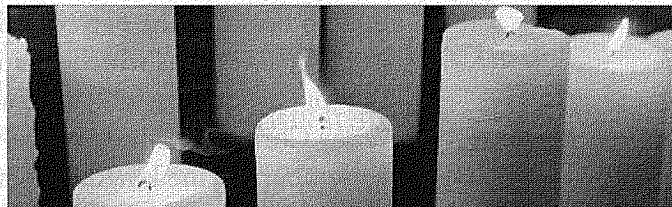
Do we make time to let Him do His Will with us?

This does not happen suddenly, but in a very subtle way. So the first signs of it we notice are not things that happen in an instant, but things that come gradually; and amount to a change in our way of praying. If we have developed recollection as a habit of prayer, then we come to a practice, with some variations, whereby we bring ourselves to an awareness of God as someone close, a friend who listens, a good companion even in silence. Then this awareness begins to change until the method that makes us sure he is with us leaves us with a sense of his absence. We try again with the same result. We cannot get the reaction we got before. We cannot pray as we did. This happens even when there is a great desire to communicate with God and have no wish to fix our attention on anything else. Not that our thoughts may not wander to other things. They may, but even then there is an anxiety because God is somehow 'absent', 'gone away'. This 'absence' goes on and on for a long, long time and is accompanied by a fear that we may have caused it. This gives rise to a great desire to do anything God wants and not to offend him.

It is a difficult time and yet a very beneficial time. The only kind of prayer we are capable of now is a kind of attention to God that is very real but impossible to describe as there 'is nothing in it'. It is a kind of blind attention without detail of any kind that

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In Remembrance



The Community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa of Jesus in Brighton MA reported the loss of two members. Long time member **Gertrude Miller, OCDS**, who in recent years has been excused from coming to monthly meetings due to illness, began eternal life in June 2011. **Elizabeth Marie Senecal, OCDS**, who was born in 1923, began eternal life on July 12, 2011.

Patricia, Veronica of the Holy Spirit, Tulp, OCDS, who made Definitive Promise on March 4th 1990, began eternal Life on July 7, 2011. She was a member of the Des Plaines IL Community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Teresa of Avila.

The Community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Teresa in Ellicott City (formerly Baltimore) MD reported the loss of four members. **Myrtle, Therese John of the Blessed Trinity, Baker, OCDS**, who served her community in a variety of leadership positions after she made Definitive Promise in 1936, began eternal life on October 6, 2009. **Obdulia, Benedicta of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Holloway, OCDS**, who made Definitive Promise on June 13th 2004, began eternal life on March 28, 2011. **Alice, Veronica of the Holy Face, Todd, OCDS**, who made Definitive Promise on November 13th 1966, began eternal life on April 28, 2011. **Teresa, of Jesus and Mary, Waldron, OCDS**, took vows on October 17th 1999 and began eternal life on August 31, 2011.

Mary Ann Rogers, OCDS, who made Definitive Promise on November 15th 1998, began eternal life on February 5, 2011. She was a member of the Mary & Elijah Community in Elmira NY.

Julia, Mary Anthony of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Ogoy, OCDS, took vows on June 5th 2010 and began eternal Life on May 13, 2011. She was a member of the Mary Immaculate and St. Mary Magdalen Community in Flemington NJ.

Katie, Teresa Benedicta of the Cross and the Trinity, Zeigler, OCDS, who made Definitive Promise on January 5th 2008, began eternal Life on July 8, 2011. She was a member of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Community in Fredericksburg VA.

The Saint Joseph Protector Community in Harrison Township MI reported **Alice, Rita of the Suffering Jesus, Ferguson, OCDS**, who made Definitive Promise on April 8th 1984, began eternal life on June 8, 2011.

The Saint Joseph Community in Havertown PA indicated **PATRICIA SGRO, OCDS**, who made Definitive Promise on November 15th 1999, began eternal life on August 13, 2011.

Madeline, Mary Teresa of the Holy Family, Morice, OCDS, who is a member of the Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity Community in Rome NY, took vows on October 10th 2003 and began eternal life on June 18, 2011.

Cleo Frances Crayton, OCDS, a long time member of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus Community in Roxbury MA, who in recent years has been excused from coming to monthly meetings due to illness, was born in 1921 and began eternal life September 3, 2011.

Northeast Region 2011

October 28-30, 2011 District III:

OCDS Weekend Retreat given by Fr. George Mangiaracina, OCD at Christ the King Retreat House, 500 Brookford Road, Syracuse, NY. Cost \$165. Contact Joyce Ponserella: cell phone 518-248-4291; email: secualrcarmelit@aol.com

November 4-6, 2011 District II:

"Foundations for a Spiritual Life" by Fr. Paul Fohlin, OCD weekend retreat at **Mt Carmel Retreat Center** in Niagara Falls Ontario, Canada For questions, and registration, please call: **Tricia Cwiklinski** cwik772005@yahoo.com

November 12, 2011 District V:

Day of Recollection at the Marian Center [Betania 2] in Medway, MA; 9 AM to 4:30 PM. Cost: \$30. Contact: Julie DiScipio, 180 Marlboro Street, Wollaston MA 02170 -3412 Phone 617-479-3987.

Question of the Month

Can OCDS from other Districts or locations in the Province attend these retreats?

Yes, if space is available. Please contact the persons listed for each retreat

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we can describe. Yet it gradually brings its own satisfaction. At first it brings the awful fear that we are doing nothing and this is a very testing time. But, if it brings the fear of offending God and an agonising wish to 'find' him again, then it is most important we keep it up – just attending to this 'absent' Lord in loving attention that is dark, blind, devoid of feeling or thoughts that tell us anything. We have been given a new and higher way of communicating with God and our first impressions for quite a while are just an awareness of the old ways that have gone out of action. But a new light has come and our silent, anxious, attentive fidelity will turn the winter into spring and the first snow-drop will lead to a garden of flowers. This transition from a way of prayer we had established with long patient practice and some earnest work on doing things God's way to a way we had not known about is a difficult time and one that needs help and direction. But it is good to know of it and to be ready to persevere in it if God grants it to us.

St Teresa is so frequently exhorting us to persevere in prayer that it is obvious that the life of prayer by its very nature must call for this resolution to continue at least at certain times. And this is one of those times when continued practice of one way of praying is vital.

Prayer is so definitely a gift of God that it is most helpful and conducive to real knowledge of ourselves to be left helpless at times. If we jump from one way of praying to another, we do not stay long enough in one way to experience long enough our real inability to pray. This experience over a lengthy period develops in us an awareness of our spiritual poverty that will not be forgotten when the Lord grants us higher things and this is vitally important. What we gain from this experience is real humility. In spite of what we think, we get proud of our success in prayer. We give up things, discipline ourselves, and come to some success in that we are able to pray and have a sense of achievement. But when it all changes, we want to switch to something else that will give back that sense of achievement and of being in control of the situation. St Teresa insists that it is by humility that God is led to give us the new way of prayer, which we cannot bring about without a special intervention on his part. While we hope and pray that God will grant this to us, while we strive to prepare and dispose ourselves for it, we must not strive to produce it, or to 'practice' it. Our hope must never rest on our worthiness, which would be building on sand. But on the loving goodness of God, the rock on which the wise one builds.

So much for the importance of boundless trust and unfathomable humility. We keep our mind on God whom we do not see. The pilgrim's journey is one of faith. Even when certain things reassure us of God's presence, we must not cling to them but always focus on God, whom we do not see as long as we live. When faith and trust and humility have grown as evidence of our sincere generous love, then God lets us know that he is there in the dark. The 'absence' is found to contain the 'presence'. The new awareness comes very delicately at first and more discernibly later. The first stage is often called Passive Recollection in the sense that it is a form of recollection in which our attention is somehow 'caught' or controlled by God.

In the *Interior Castle*, written later in life after experiencing further growth in her own prayer, St Teresa says that when persons are fully convinced of the importance of prayer and have been practicing recollection, "the Great King, who dwells in the Mansion within this castle, perceives their good will, and in his great mercy, desires to bring them back

to him. So, like a good shepherd, with a call so gentle that they can hardly recognize it, he teaches them to know his voice and not to go away and get lost but to return to their mansion; and so powerful is this shepherd's call that they give up the things outside the castle which led them astray, and once again enter it." (IC, IV,3)

This is St Teresa's description of the first awareness of God's special gift of what we call infused or passive prayer. She goes on to comment further. "Do not suppose that the understanding can attain to him, merely by trying to think of him as within the soul, or the imagination, by picturing him as there. This is a good habit and an excellent kind of meditation, for it is founded on a truth -- namely, that God is within us, but it is not the kind of prayer I have in mind" (IC, IV, 3). This is very interesting and comes very naturally from the main truth that we are dealing with something we cannot produce -- either by thinking or imagining. Even for those who never come to this stage, it still provides great insights into God and gives a glimpse of how far his ways and thoughts are above ours. We sometimes feel great fervour in our prayer, at least on special occasions; such as, retreats, pilgrimages, greater feasts. This emotion could also be aroused by a national event or the return of a friend or a dramatic performance. The fact that it is directed to God in prayer is a great thing but that does not make it anything more than a lovely human feeling brought about by human means in a religious atmosphere. The Shepherd's call is different in its cause and source. "It happens only when God is pleased to grant us this favour," says St Teresa and she gives us some guidelines on how to react. One obvious thing is to praise God for so great a gift. Then we should not strive to reason it out, to master or grasp it with the mind, "but to be intent upon discovering what the Lord is working in the soul." She speaks here of attention to and awareness of God. We attend to person and action, not to thought. To get the idea that we should 'go blank' in order to let this prayer develop is not correct. "Let us try, without forcing ourselves or causing any turmoil, to put a stop to all discursive reasoning, yet not to suspend the understanding, nor to cease from all thought, though it is well for us to remember that we are in God's presence and who this God is" (IC, IV, 3). Again, this piece of advice is very valuable to all of us. If at this stage, when God's special action is already evident, we do not try to 'help it on' by blanking out our mind, then it makes no sense to do that at an earlier stage in prayer. There are a number of things we can do to create the right atmosphere for prayer and dispose ourselves for a proper loving attention to God. But the whole purpose of all this -- giving our attention to a loving God -- is ruined if we just go mindless.

Another observation by St Teresa is of interest. At this stage, people experience a great freedom of spirit. Because of the new way of loving God there is less fear of God combined with a strong resolve not to offend him. This resolve finds expression in the careful avoidance of even the danger of offending him. There is a certain confidence of coming into his eternal presence, an anticipation of his welcome that draws us away from whatever is unpleasing to him. And for anyone engaged in meditation such thoughts are valuable, the kind of thoughts that coax us to pray.

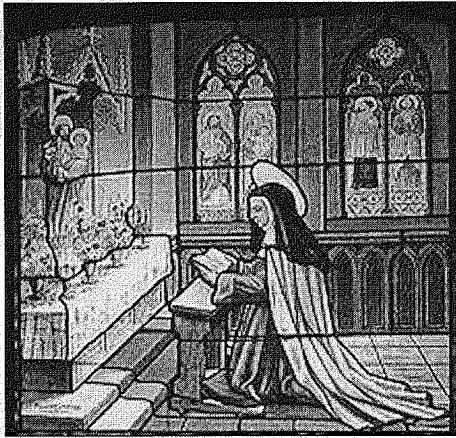
Now to return to the Shepherd's call. It is the first signal that the person is coming into a stage or area of prayer that is called the Prayer of Quiet. In *The Way of Perfection*, St



Teresa and John both experienced times in their lives where God did not feel close... We too must strive to be patient and faithful when God gives us times that He is distant...

Teresa is somewhat hesitant to talk about this as she senses that some of those for whom she was writing would not believe that it would ever happen to them. She comes to this in the thirtieth chapter where she is commenting on the petitions of the Our Father: 'Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come.' She gets into her subject carefully and we might say slyly. She says that unless God's kingdom comes within us, we will not be able to praise his name. So she takes a quick look at what it must be like in heaven so as to get across the point that we must work for and expect some change within us if we are to aspire to that blessed stage. Then she admits the objection that one would need to be an angel to reach that state and answers by telling the story of a person who knew no other way to pray than to say the Our Father and yet, through that, was led by God to pure contemplation. So, the conclusion is obvious; if we are going to say the prayer he taught us with the care it deserves, it is possible that he will teach us things we could never have learned on our own.

And so the Prayer of Quiet. All the phrases she uses bring out the fact that it is a gift of God: "The Lord begins to show us that he is hearing our petition: he begins to give us his kingdom on earth... a supernatural state, and, however hard we try, we cannot reach it for ourselves... the Lord gives us peace through his presence" (WP, 31). The person praying realizes God is very close, feels great reverence, experiences the greatest delight and keeps still. Giving us a closer look, St Teresa says that the functions of the mind are changed. She says that the understanding, imagination and will are stilled, quietened to the point where they are more attentive than they could ever have become by their own effort. The understanding and imagination enjoy a greater realization of God's presence but they are still free to attend to other objects. The will is captivated, not to the point of losing its freedom, but by giving itself unreservedly to God. "It is the will that is in captivity now; and, if while in this state it is capable of experiencing any pain, the pain comes when it realizes that it will have to resume its liberty" (WP, 31).



Persons in this state like to remain motionless, speaking is distressing, they spend a whole hour on a single repetition of the Our Father. No more is necessary now. God is so close any little sign expresses all their love. Sometimes tears come but without sadness. Joy, delight, praise of God -- this is everything. This 'captivity' of the will sometimes shows itself outside prayer time. For a day or two the person in this state can work and attend to business without being fully involved because the strong new bond with the Lord goes on even outside prayer. St Teresa says the person is like Martha and Mary at one time. She follows her description of the Prayer of Quiet with a warning that we cannot bring it about and an anxiety to hold on to it could disturb the peace it brings and so upset it. Yet it does help to use a word or gesture to renew it if it is weakening. She then tries to show that this is not the highest form of prayer. She says this is like a child being fed and having nothing to do but swallow its milk. The Prayer of Union is like having the milk placed in the child's stomach with no effort at all on its part.

Again, this kind of prayer, even when we just read about it, tells us a lot. While the will is firmly clinging to God, it is possible for the thoughts and imagination to run wild. So in our ordinary prayers, the will to pray may be quite strong while the mind will not settle

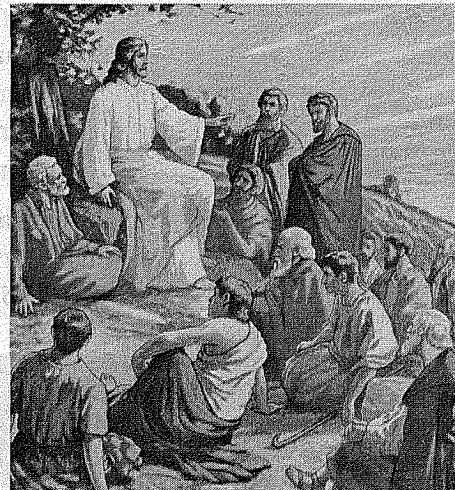
and we suffer continuous distractions. What we regard as good prayer or successful prayer is usually the prayer that brings us satisfaction. Such prayer is beneficial but the final test is in the degree to which it pleases God, how it binds our will and heart to him and this is known only to him. Prayer that brings consolation should be pleasing to God, our Father. Prayer that tests and increases our generosity is always a delight to him.

Thy Will Be Done

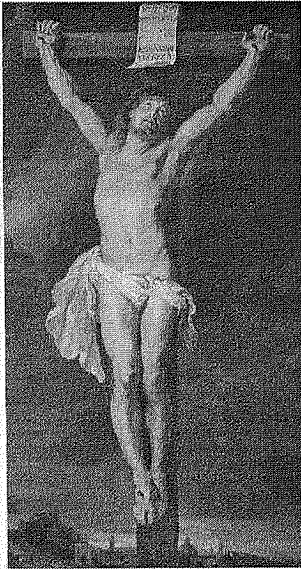
What we can learn from St Teresa's descriptions of the Prayer of Quiet is that what the heart and will are about is more important than what is going on in the mind or emotions. And this brings us easily to the next petition of the Our Father: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

In a way this is typical of her. St Teresa starts out telling us not to be afraid, to offer ourselves to God, and to let his will be done in us. In her own humorous way, she also reminds us that in the end, his will is going to be done if we are to come to any good. So, we are not all that generous in telling God to do it his way. "It amuses me that there should be people who dare not ask the Lord for trials, thinking that his sending them depends on their asking for them" (WP, 32). People may shy away from asking for trials out of humility. They know themselves and realize they are too weak to bear trials. This is very honest as far as it goes, but God gives strength to bear the trials he sends. And the source of this strength comes from our Saviour who, in order to give us this strength, suffered more than he will ever ask of any one of us. This is the way to eternal life and we save ourselves a lot of anguish and time if we face it firmly and put our hearts into our prayer when we say: "Thy will be done". This is not just resignation, it is real willing generous love of God. This is where love sprouts and grows. To do God's will, to stay with his commandments and let the pain involved happen in silence, even to seek ways of giving up things for him, to be ready to suffer in silence is a secret way of loving God - this is the wisdom of the Saints.

This is the heart and soul of prayer and in loving God. What our heavenly Father did to his beloved Son is impossible to understand. He sent him to a painful death. No human father would think of such a thing. God's ways are not our ways. And his way of suffering is God's way of loving something in our sin-laden condition which makes it necessary that it should be so. God's mercy is his greatest work, but his justice must be satisfied so that our dignity is restored. It is good to recall the case of Abraham who was told to sacrifice his only son. And he set out to do just that. Abraham was a revelation of God the Father. It was as if God said, "Can you do what I have to do?" And Abraham's readiness made him worthy of this call. He did not have to make the sacrifice, but he had to be ready. He had the wisdom to know that God's will must be done. We can see how St Teresa showed the same insight: "So you see what God gave his best beloved, and from that you can understand what his will is. These, then, are his gifts in this world. He gives in proportion to the love he bears us... He gives in accordance to the courage which he sees that each of us has... I believe that love is the measure of our ability to bear crosses, whether great or small" (WP, 32).



So prayer is not just another of the games people play. We cannot make a mockery of God by just promising what we do not mean to perform. Deeds must match words and failures must lead to new effort. This is what makes for sincerity, for honesty, integrity and real love. This petition also leaves us open to all God may send us. When we find his love in adversity - and it is often more difficult to find in small things - it is more refined and more lasting. This, it seems, is the secret wisdom of the Saints.



So the gift of our will to God is the real key to very deep prayer. "What power this gift has! If it be made with due resolution, it cannot fail to draw the Almighty to become one with our lowliness and to transform us into himself and to effect a union between the Creator and the creature... the more resolute we are in soul and the more we show him by our actions that the words we use to him are not words of mere politeness, the more and more does our Lord draw us to himself. . . in order to prepare us to receive great favours from him... his Majesty never wearies of giving. Not content with having made this soul one with himself, through uniting it to himself, he begins to cherish it, to reveal secrets to it, to rejoice in its understanding of what it has gained and in the knowledge which it has of all he has yet to give it. He causes it gradually to lose its exterior senses so that nothing may occupy it. This we call rapture. He begins to make such a friend of the soul that not only does he restore its will to it but he gives it his own also" (WP, 32).

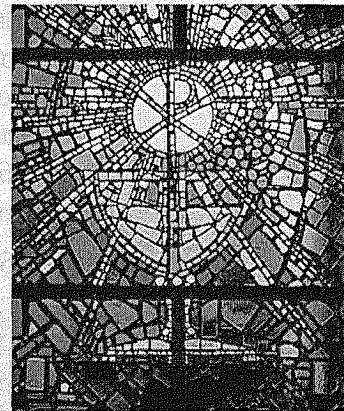
This is about as far as St Teresa goes in describing the development of Passive Prayer in *The Way of Perfection* but she covers this whole area at length in *The Interior Castle*. Those who need such knowledge can study it there. Here she passes on having warned us that we cannot come to these heights by our own effort and that attempting to do so achieves nothing but to spoil the kind of prayer that we are able to make. . . "You would turn what devotion you had quite cold. You must practise simplicity and humility, for those are the virtues that achieve everything" (WP, 32).

This Prayer of Union is a long way from the simple beginning where we give a little thought to the prayers we say and ask ourselves who it is to whom we are speaking, who we are and what we are saying. Yet it is no more than a God-given deepening in love of that original position. Anyone can see how wise St Teresa is in telling us to begin prayer - and continue it - with a simple awareness that brings us face to face with God. It is so different from trying to act in a way that will impress others or attempting to create any special reactions within ourselves. God alone teaches us to pray and we let him do that by giving him our attention. We are, after all, responding to him, to his love, to his revelation of himself, which is his Son, Jesus Christ.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

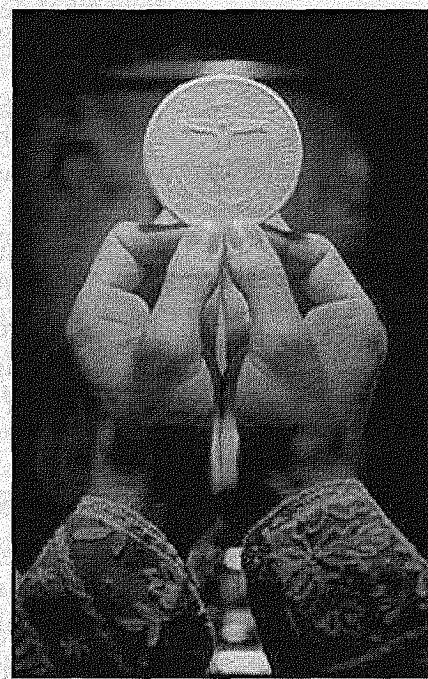
That commentary on the union of our will with God's is magnificent but perhaps too high for us. And St Teresa realized this too. So, in her commentary on the next petition of the Our Father: 'Give us this day our daily bread', she says that our Savior knows our weakness and how difficult it is for us to keep our promise to do his Father's will. Keeping this promise is vital and so he must find a way for us to do so in spite of our weakness. The way is simple and yet too great to expect. He will stay with us himself and he will be our strength. He is our daily bread, given to us each day by his Father, by our Father. While this is true of every way in which Jesus is present to us, St Teresa applies

it here to the Eucharist in particular. She is amazed at this evidence of God's love for us. The manner of his presence hides all his power and leaves him at our mercy. He can be despised, forgotten, insulted and yet is there and will stay as our food to give us the strength we do not have - to be our strength so that we who could do nothing of ourselves can now change our ways and do the Father's will because of his Son who strengthens us. When we ask God for our 'daily bread' we must not waste our time over passing needs but ask for the highest gift God is offering, his divine Son, that he may live in us and enable us, with him, to do his Father's will. To do all things to please God, not to please ourselves, is real freedom. It allows us to put all our anxieties and worries into God's hands and rely on him to take care of them for us. This may come easily to some but for many, it has to be renewed daily.



When St Teresa gets down to the specific help we get from the Eucharist, she begins with the Blessed Sacrament's healing powers. "Do you suppose that this most Holy Food is not ample sustenance for the body and a potent medicine for bodily ills? I am sure that it is" (WP, 34). She goes on then to tell about a person she knew who was immediately cured of serious illness and great pain. This is of special interest in our time when the belief in healing through prayers has revived. We have the special case of the anointing of the sick. Here we seek a cure rather than asking for a happy death. A part of this sacrament is that we place hope for cures through prayers and trust in God. All such cures come through the power of God, the same power that Jesus used in the Gospel and that Peter invoked to heal the cripple at the entrance to the temple. The fact that we are left a sacrament of healing means that this is a standard part of the Church's ministry. So it is proper for us to expect such effects from the greatest of the sacraments, the Eucharist.

Next to this, St Teresa speaks of faith coming through the Eucharist. Today we are familiar with what we call the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. This is the use of scripture readings and reflection on them to strengthen our faith and so prepare us for the Eucharist. This is the way that Teresa went too because she "tried to strengthen her faith, when she communicated, by thinking it was exactly as if she saw the Lord entering her house, with her bodily eyes, for she believed in very truth that this Lord was entering her poor abode, and she ceased, as far as she could, to think of outward things, and went into her abode with him" (WP, 34). This brings us right back to recollection, to finding God within us. It is obvious that we should think of God being within us after we have received him in Communion. But not only can we do that at this time, but we can recall the memory of it at any time, and be helped to become familiar with the fact that God lives in us. St Teresa goes on to say, "She tried to recollect her senses so that they might all become aware of this great blessing or rather, so that they should not hinder the soul from becoming conscious of it. She imagined herself at his feet and wept with the Magdalene exactly as if she had seen him with her bodily eyes in the Pharisee's house. Even if she felt no devotion, faith told her that it was good for her to be there" (WP, 34).



This makes the Eucharist a sure way to contemplative prayer. The subject brings St Teresa back to some points she made previously, especially one that tells us God is here and not away off in a distant heaven. "This is something which is happening now; it is absolutely true, and we have no need to go to seek him a long way off... He will work miracles when he is within us, if we have faith" (WP, 34). And, of course, the important miracle is to get us the courage to do God's will. But he is so approachable now in this humble disguise that we do not have to lose courage at the sight of repeated failures, but can always begin again. Even the two-time loser can have a fresh start. He is here for our benefit and is willing to begin with the very weakest. It is important to bear in mind that Christ is present to us in the Eucharist in a special way. We call it sacramental and a sacrament is a visible sign given power by Christ to produce in us some spiritual effect we could not produce by ourselves. Baptism has a sign of being drowned and rescued or of being dead and coming to life and its effect is to give us a new kind of life for the first time, a sharing in some way in the very life of God. The other sacraments increase this and, if it is lost, Penance restores it. Now the Eucharist is a sacrament under the sign of food -- bread and wine -- so that its product is a strengthening of existing life. All of this means that when we receive our Lord himself as a sacrament, he is busy all the time he is present, feeding us with new life and giving us the strength to do what was not possible before. Christ is present not just to comfort, console and heal but to strengthen us so that we can do his Father's will as he did, to make a new beginning and set out with firm resolve to do something good and beautiful, to bring joy to our Father in heaven.

When we receive Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the full payment for all sin, there is no limit to the changes that can take place between us and our Father. We know that life-long habits will not break easily, that old ways do not change and that miracles are not to be multiplied. It is true that longstanding habits can reduce the scope of our freedom; but where there is no freedom, there is no fault and God alone knows us as we are. He can leave us our weaknesses and busy himself with our inner-selves: our deeper lives where we are still free and fully capable of doing good and avoiding evil, and can win that inner country for his Father. The world of the sacraments is a whole new world, linked with ours and yet above it. Nowhere do we receive its impact more fully than in the Eucharist.

At Communion time, we are really back to the fountain of life. The answer to all our needs is here. So we call out to God for help and we spell out our needs. But we must bear in mind that he knows a whole lot more about our needs than we do. So there is a lot of wisdom here in just giving our attention to him and let our wonder and love grow

“He can leave us our weaknesses and busy Himself with our inner-selves... and can win that inner country for His Father”

in strength of his presence -- in the light of his love for us. It is such a still time full of the dawn. "Remember that this is a very profitable hour for the soul; if you spend it in the company of the good Jesus, you are doing him a great service" (WP, 34). Here is the perfect situation for him to teach you some of the inner meaning of the Our Father. But for that, he needs our attention and not as a matter of habit. We must 'stay with him', be with him, recall him, come back to him until he is in reality the center of our living being, the home in which we are fed and loved, from which we go out and to which we return.

Forgive Trespasses

St Teresa proceeds to another petition by showing the logic of her reasoning up to now. The big thing for us to accomplish is to do God's will. We cannot do this with our own resources alone. So God gives us strength for the task, our daily bread. Now we can come before God ready to do his will. But being in his presence makes us again aware of who we are and what our record is and our condition. So we promptly ask to be forgiven our sins. The way in which our Saviour tells us to do this is by teaching us to say "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". St Teresa is fully aware of the deliberate linking of our forgiveness with the other, of God forgiving our sins and of us forgiving all who offend us. She points out that the petition indicates an existing practice and not just a good resolution. We who crave for forgiveness are forgiving in our own lives. It is God's will that we forgive each other, so that this practice is actually one of the things we are praying for when we say, 'Thy will be done'. So when we forgive, we do his will. St Teresa says, "the saints rejoiced in insults and persecutions: it was because these gave them something to present to the Lord when they prayed to him" (WL, 36). From this idea, she draws some hard conclusions: she herself has nothing to forgive, that instead of being blamed unfairly, she is not blamed enough because people do not realize how sinful she is. So she says her forgiving is not worth anything and most certainly cannot pay for the forgiveness she is asking of God. By implication, the same goes for you and me.

All this brings her back to the old question of our honor, of standing on our dignity, of nursing a grudge instead of being humble and forgiving in face of our own need for understanding and mercy. If we are to come close to God, then we have to begin to be like him and the place to begin is here: to forgive so that we may be forgiven. We are not losing our reputation - our true honor is to be found in God's salvation of us, not in a passing reputation. St Teresa says it clearly: "Let my interests be looked after by others - I will forget about myself altogether" (WP, 36). All of this is clearing the ground for a fuller love of each other. If we join our will with God's will, then we want what he wants, not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. We want goodness and joy and peace and unity. God wants us to be like that. He does not want us to be in opposite camps, fighting over rights or possessions. "How important it is for us to love one another and to be at peace" (WP, 36).

This may seem rather idealistic. But St Teresa is speaking from the experience of union with God, a form of prayer in which the will is united to God's will without reserve and in the light of this experience she is able to speak with real authority. In fact, she stresses frequently the fact that trials and crosses are good for us at this stage and being slighted by others helps us to grow in this union with God. It brings a great sense of eternal values so that all passing things are noticed less and less. Instead of looking for praise, such people are anxious to be seen for what they are, another example of what the merciful Lord is doing for a sinner.

Here is a quotation to remember: "The determination to suffer wrongs, even though such suffering brings distress, is very quickly seen in anyone to whom the Lord has granted this grace of prayer as far as the stage of union" (WP, 36). If this kind of forti-



tude does not begin to show itself, then any special states of prayer are suspect. So fortitude is a sure sign of the work of the Holy Spirit. He can manifest himself in many ways but if he is making us holy, like to Christ, letting Christ live in us, then a courageous love of the cross will appear. And this is surely a good principle to apply in proper measure at any stage of prayer. The Our Father has its own special insights for people very close to God but it is also the special prayer of all of us. In it each of us can express our individual needs and say what we want to say. We do not have to rise above ourselves to pray, but simply see ourselves as we are, and speak honestly and truthfully to God. When we say the Our Father in this way, we see in the words the meaning that matches our lives and the words we use begin to affect the way we live and this is real prayer. "If our actions and words are one, the Lord will unfailingly fulfill our petitions. The two things - surrendering our will to God and forgiving others - apply to all. True, some practice them more and some less. . . we will do what we can and the Lord will accept it all" (WP, 37).

Lead Us Not Into Temptation

We pray to God, our Father, to lead us not into temptation but to deliver us from evil. Each of us can list some of the temptations and evils we want God to keep away from us: be they persons, places or things, and it is good at times to repeat this petition quietly and to mention each of the things we have in mind. This helps to bring our prayer and our day-to-day circumstances together and it makes prayer more real and life more prayerful to do this. From her experience, St Teresa tells us how to apply this petition to our life of prayer. She repeats the very important fact that prayer and the cross work closely together so that it is far more important and infinitely wiser to face up to trials and go that way than to be looking for consolations. When our prayer is fervent it is very important to be humble about it and remind ourselves we are not worthy of this. A great sense of God's generosity and our own unworthiness is what we need when our devotion is strong.

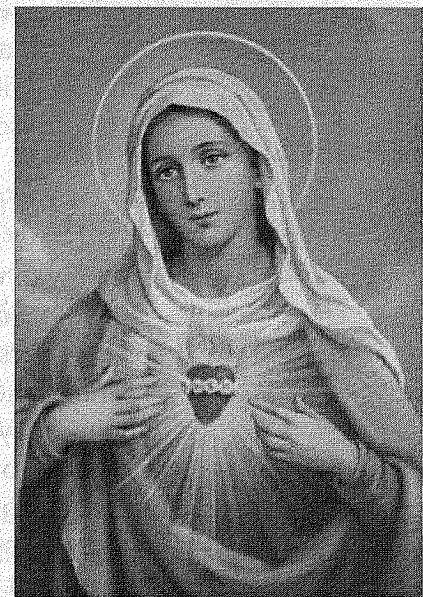


A bigger danger is in thinking we have certain virtues when we don't. This leads to pride and pride goes before a fall. This piece of advice should not be looked upon as a handy rule-of-thumb. The fact is that it is one application of an overall attitude that is absolutely necessary in spiritual matters. We like to grade our progress, to see how we are doing, and we do this in order to encourage ourselves. In this frame of mind, we tend to look for signs of progress and to invent or exaggerate them. This is a wrong approach with a very dangerous result. The result is that we put ourselves in an unreal situation, a role for which we are not prepared and we go from one error to another. It is like a person who is not physically fit getting into games. He can very easily sprain an ankle. When we're dealing with spiritual matters, the mistakes of judgment are not all that obvious. This is an icy surface and we have to be alert to keep our balance. The basic mistake here is in comparing ourselves with others or with our own performance at a previous time. This kind of comparison is good if it makes us humble. But once it begins to give us satisfaction, then we must go back to the really valuable comparison by which we come face to face with Christ. We begin to pray by placing ourselves before God. In every way we can, we should return to this most important basic position.

When the Bible talks of walking before God, aware he is looking at us, it is putting us on the right path. When we turn from God, we are in danger of putting on appearances, acting a role, wearing a mask. Before God we know we have nothing that we have not received and from that beginning we can grow up as people of God. If we watch our day-to-day behavior, we learn that we are actually very changeable people. The strength we experience on a certain day may be gone the next day; and the assurance which carries us through a whole decade may desert us and leave us without the courage to tackle any situation. St Teresa said this happened to her so regularly that she came to see that whatever virtue she had was just on loan. She is particularly anxious that we take heed of this lesson. God has to keep us humble because of what we really are. If we hold on to this truth, God can give us the virtue we need when we need it. If we make the mistake of thinking the courage or detachment God has given us is something we have acquired and now own, he must leave us without this ability so that we come back to the truth about ourselves. This is the sort of thing we may observe easily enough in another while we fail to see what is happening to ourselves. God gives us each new day and we must use it all in his service. The next day we ask again for everything we need to serve him and for that alone.

To stay before God and develop a deep permanent sense of how small we are is real wisdom. So we pray for God to keep us in this frame of mind and to save us from any temptation to change. St Teresa goes on to point out the difference between thinking we have some virtue and actually being tested in a concrete situation. This too may seem obvious but it can so easily escape the notice of the person to whom it is happening. It is very easy to think we are forgiving people, free from prejudice until we are put to the test. When God sends us trials, it is most important we notice the good they do us and thank him for that. Not so easy, but very Christ-like. At certain times in history one virtue or another comes into style and it is fashionable to be seen to practice this. In such an atmosphere, everyone talks a certain language in praise of work, peace, helping the aged or whatever is being promoted at the time. This is good in itself. But the individual may be just talking the language and avoid the concrete actions the real situations require. Real solid virtue looks for action not just words or feelings. There are many subtle mistakes whereby we can deceive ourselves and think we are serving God when we are just trying to please ourselves. We need God's guiding hand in this strange world of goal and motives. It is an area through which he must shepherd us, so we pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.' "The person who is truly humble is always doubtful about his own virtues; very often they seem more genuine and of greater worth when he sees them in his neighbours" (WP, 38).

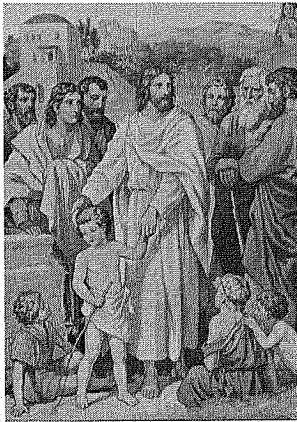
This living in humility, in honest truth before God, is a great healer of anxious hearts. It should bring us slowly but surely to realize in actual living that we are completely dependent upon God. We worry about possessions, about friends, about our health, and perhaps even more about our reputation. It is a very good thing to talk to God and tell him just what worries us and why. If we keep doing this, we are bound to begin to see that he controls all the things about which we worry. We are anxious because we are not in control. We must learn to be happy that he is in control. This is a hard lesson to learn



Do we strive to understand, like Mary did, how God sees us, instead of comparing ourselves to other people?

Do we strive to live as people made in the image and likeness of God?

and yet we cannot afford to live without this reality. It is a real sign of trust in God's love for us and a sure test of how deeply we believe in that love. "Stop worrying about yourself and leave God to provide for you, come what may" (WP, 38).



*"Blessed are the humble,
for they will inherit the
earth." (Matthew 5:5)*

St Teresa has a final word on humility and it is to warn us against a type that is not genuine. If people come to know the value of humility and try to deepen it in their lives by coming frequently face-to-face with God, there is something to be avoided in this valuable practice. It is the danger of dwelling on past sins and concluding we are not worthy to be close to God. This could drive people from prayer and even from the Sacraments. In less severe cases, it can undermine our confidence in God's love for us. There is something in us that keeps telling us God is not interested, is not close, does not care or that all the good things we hear about God's merciful understanding do not apply to us due to some known or hidden fault in us that makes us unworthy. We do not mercifully follow this complex to its logical conclusion where we say our sins are too great to be forgiven but we settle for a middle line which says that we are not good enough to be given any special call from God or to develop a deep friendship with him. Humility certainly makes us aware of our sins but this awareness does not disturb or distress us, rather "it is accompanied by peace, joy and tranquillity" (WL, 39).

Here St Teresa gives a very valuable piece of advice and all who feel they do not belong close to God should take it to heart and put it into practice regularly: "When you find yourselves in this state, cease thinking, so far as you can of your own wretchedness, and think of the mercy of God and of his love and his sufferings for us" (WP, 39). This is a very helpful rule for many people whose confidence in God is too weak to be worthy of God. It is a practice that will grow on us until we are lifted out of the mire of fear and we begin to love God.

"If we can in all honesty tell God that we are doing something to please him and do not believe it is against his will, then all is well."

When we come to this new experience, we should be glad of it and yet not develop another wrong self-image. The same persons who for years made the mistake of thinking they were somehow unclean and just not fit for God's love can now substitute a sense of sinlessness that is again far from the truth. This leads to minimizing real faults and lowering moral standards at least in some matters. This needs to be watched as it can lead to real sinning and can draw the unsuspecting into real sin. It is substituting a new sense of freedom for the reality of being face to face with God. If we can in all honesty tell God that we are doing something to please him and do not believe it is against his will, then all is well. If we have doubts we should consult a confessor or friend who we know will tell us the plain truth.

"However many consolations and pledges of love the Lord may give you, you must never be so sure of yourselves that you will cease to be afraid of falling back again, and you must keep yourselves from occasions of sin" (WP, 39). Our Saviour has taught us to pray to our Father in heaven asking him to steer us clear of temptation. In her reflections on that St Teresa gives us some of the mistakes people make when trying to practice prayer. In so doing, she becomes aware that such warnings could lead people to conclude that it might be safer not to do too much praying. So she hastens to correct such thinking. She says that people who say the Our Father sincerely will not go astray: "This road is a safe one and you will the more readily escape from temptation if you are near the Lord than if you are far away from him" (WP, 39). And that surely makes a whole lot of sense.

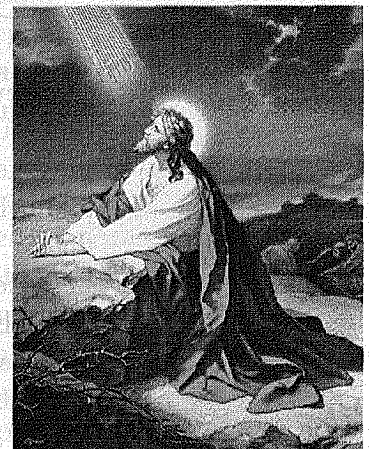
Deliver Us from Evil


The final chapter in *The Way of Perfection* is on the concluding words of the Our Father, 'Deliver us from evil. Amen.' St Teresa's reflection on this is very much that of a Saint. To her it was a prayer to be delivered from the misery of this life and brought immediately into the everlasting joys of heaven. She says Jesus prayed for this because his life was so full of suffering. She asks for it because she is only a sinner and getting worse instead of better. It is foolish to want to live on and on: "I shall find no redress in this life, so I ask the Lord to deliver me from all evil 'for ever'. What good thing shall we find in this life, in which we are deprived of our great Good and are absent from him? Deliver me, Lord, from this shadow of death, deliver me from all these trials, deliver me from all these pains; deliver me from all these changes, from all the formalities with which we are forced to comply for as long as we live, from all the many, many, many things which Weary and depress me" (WP, 42). This eloquent outburst may be beyond your own reactions but it is worth your while to reflect that you must pass on from here. No one has seen, heard or even imagined the good things waiting for you. This exercise of 'joyful hope' is a great way to become detached from all the things we cling to with a mere fingerhold.

Also, when we ask to be delivered from evil, we are not asking to be free of all pain and endure nothing in God's service. We ask to be free of offending God and then to serve him in a state of sacrifice and joy. But we are also asking that in the end heaven will be ours and we will be saved from all evil. It is this big request that we should make with confidence. We are talking to God who can give us anything and wants with all his heart to give us everything: "What does it cost me to ask it, since we ask it of One who is so powerful? It would be insulting a great emperor to ask for a farthing" (WP, 42).

Here this unique commentary on the Our Father stops. But she still has a few things to emphasize: "You see now, friends, what is meant by perfection in vocal prayer, in which we consider and know to whom the prayer is being made, who is making it and what is its object. When you are told it is not good for you to practice any but vocal prayer, do not be discouraged, but read this with great care and beg God to explain to you anything about prayer which you cannot understand. For no one can deprive you of vocal prayer or make you say the Pater Noster hurriedly, without understanding it. If anyone tries to do so, or advises you to give up your prayer, take no notice of him" (WP, 42). In that short passage we can hear a whole lot of echoes of things said before: the value of praying frequently in honest simplicity alone with God who loves us. She is amazed at all that is contained in the Our Father, so much that we do not really need any other method of praying and can even get on without any other instruction apart from what is to be got from this prayer: "Our books may be taken from us, but this is a book which no one can take away, and it comes from the lips of the Truth himself, who cannot err" (WP, 42).

And so we have come to see that prayer is not the achievement of the highly skilled nor of those trained in techniques. It is the gift of God given to anyone who believes in his love and speaks to him humbly, sincerely, frequently and with the faithful perseverance that love requires. It is possible for you and me. The question is not have I been called? But, am I resolved to answer the call? The answer comes today, not tomorrow. Today means yes, tomorrow means no. The



concluding words of *The Way of Perfection* remind us that it is a very good thing to praise God frequently. She says: "Blessed and praised be the Lord, from whom comes all the good that we speak and think and do. Amen" (WP, 42). 

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name.*

*Thy Kingdom come,
Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil. Amen*

