

## *Prayer of Recollection*

### *Foundations of Prayer:*

**Love of Neighbor:** importance of friendship and its growth into perfect love, *compassion* is essential

**Detachment:** in observing the human condition Teresa was struck at how quickly things come to an end; the result of detachment is *inner freedom* from worry about bodily comfort, honor and wealth.

**Humility:** *Humility and detachment are so closely joined* that Teresa couldn't speak of one without the other; *humility implies detachment from oneself--from worry about esteem and honor*; by humility the soul draws love to itself; in humility one realizes that every good thing comes from God and could be taken away; humility does not disturb or disquiet, it comes with peace, delight, and calm; the pain of genuine humility expands the soul enabling it to serve God more.

-Teresa wanted the Lord's friends to be good ones, so she wanted her nuns to follow Christ's counsels as perfectly as possible; this implied careful observance of the Rule of Albert, the *essential element being prayer without ceasing*.  
-Peace was necessary for a life of prayer so Teresa avoided placing burdens on her nuns.  
-She focused on the *three practices necessary to possess inward and outward peace* thus disposing them to a *life of prayer: Love of Neighbor, Detachment and Humility*. These three virtues form a foundation for prayer and free the spirit but are also the effects of prayer.

### *Prayer in General:*

All those who do not falter on the way will drink this living water. May the Lord, because of who He is, give us the grace to seek this living water as it should be sought, for He promises it. (W 19 15)

Take my advice and do not stop on the road but, like the strong, fight even to death in the search, *for you are not here for any other reason than to fight*. You must always proceed with this *determination to die* rather than fail to reach the end of the journey. (W 20 2)

Do not be frightened, daughters, by the many things you need to consider in order to begin this divine journey which is *the royal road to heaven*. A great *treasure is gained by travelling this road*; no wonder we have to pay what seems to us a high price. The time will come when you will understand how trifling everything is next to so precious a reward. (W 21 1)

...How they are to begin is very important—in fact, all important. They must have a great and very resolute *determination* to persevere until reaching the end (...to drink from this water of life), come what may, happen what may, whatever work is involved, whatever criticism arises, whether they arrive or whether they die on the road, or even if they don't have courage for the trials that are met, or if the whole world collapses. (W 21 2)

Realize, Daughters that the nature of mental prayer isn't determined by whether or not the mouth is closed. If while speaking I thoroughly understand and know that I am speaking with God and I have greater awareness of this than I do of the words I'm saying, *mental and vocal prayer are joined*...(W 22 1)

There are many reasons why it is extremely important *to begin with great determination*: ...if we resolve to give something ...there is no reason for failing to give with complete determination...let us be wholly determined never to take it (time) back from Him...He adjusts Himself to our way of giving...He is not at all petty, but generous. Just the raising of our eyes in remembrance of Him will have its reward. (W 23 1-3)

The person who does so, (*begins with determination*), struggles more courageously. He knows that come what may he will not turn back...one who is in battle...wants to *fight like a desperado*...he is convinced that for him to conquer is to

live...if we don't let ourselves be conquered, ***we will obtain our goal*** ...Don't be afraid that the Lord will leave you to die if thirst, for He calls us to drink from this fount...it is a great thing to have experienced the ***friendship and favor*** He shows toward those who ***journey on this road*** and how ***He takes care of almost all the expenses***. (W 23 5)

You are right in saying that ***vocal prayer is now in fact mental prayer***...I don't know how vocal prayer can be separated from mental prayer if vocal prayer is to be recited well with an understanding to whom we are speaking...an obligation to pray with attention...the best remedy...***strive to center the mind upon the one to whom the words are addressed***... be patient and strive to make a habit... (W 24 6)

...it is very possible that while you are reciting the Our Father ... the Lord may ***raise you to perfect contemplation***...His Majesty shows that He listens... it is His grandeur that speaks to the soul, ***suspending one's intellect, binding one's imagination*** ...The soul understands ...this ***divine Master is teaching it by suspending its faculties***...the ***soul is being enkindled in love***...the ***will is enkindled*** without understanding how...this good cannot be merited or gained...it a gift from the Lord...What I have described is ***perfect contemplation***. (W 25 1-2)

...the ***difference that lies between perfect contemplation and mental prayer***.... (In ***mental prayer***) being aware and knowing that we are speaking, with whom we are speaking, and who we ourselves are who dare to speak ...with so great a Lord... (but) in ***contemplation***... we can do nothing; His Majesty is the one who does everything, for it is His work and above our nature. (W 25 3)

...***strive after what is contained in this present book*** and leave the rest to God; for it is ***He who must bestow supernatural prayer***, and He will grant it to you if you do not stop short on the road but try hard until you reach the end. (W 25 4)

***Method for Recollecting one's Mind***...The ***examination of conscience, the act of contrition, and the sign of the cross must come first***...since you are alone, ***strive to find a companion***. What better companion than the Master Himself who taught you this prayer? ***Represent the Lord Himself as close to you*** and behold how lovingly and humbly He is teaching you....remain with so good a friend as long as you can. If you grow accustomed to having Him present at your side, and He sees that you do so with love and that you go about striving to please Him, you will not be able –as they say- to get away from Him; He will never fail you; He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere. Do you think it's some small matter to have a friend like this at your side? (W 26 1)

Those of you who cannot engage in much discursive reflection with the intellect or keep you mind from distraction, ***get used to this practice!***...***I suffered many years from the trial ...of not being able to quiet the mind in anything***...the Lord does not leave us ....if we humbly ask Him for this friendship, He will not deny it to us. And if we cannot succeed in ***one year, we will succeed later***. Let's not regret the time that is so well spent. Who is making us hurry? I am speaking of ***acquiring this habit*** and of ***striving to walk alongside this true Master***. (W 26 2)

***I am not asking you now that you think about Him*** or that you draw out a lot of concepts or make long and subtle reflections with your intellect. ***I am not asking you to do anything more than look at Him***. For who can keep you from turning the eyes of your soul toward this Lord, even if you do so just for a moment if you can't do more? ...your Spouse never takes His eyes off of you. (W 26 3)

but you will also delight in speaking with Him, ***not with ready-made prayers*** but with those that come from the sorrow of your own heart...all the trials that come to me ...enable me to imitate You in something. Let us walk together, Lord, Wherever You go, I will go; whatever You suffer, I will suffer. (W 26 6)

Carry about an ***image or a painting of this Lord***...look at it ...***speak often with Him***...He will inspire you with what to say...***acquire the habit***. (W 26 9)

It is also a great help to take ***a good book written in the vernacular in order to recollect one's thoughts and pray well vocally***...***little by little accustom the soul with coaxing and skill not to grow discouraged*** ...many years have passed since the soul left the house of its Spouse...our soul and our thoughts are so ***accustomed to wandering about at their own***

*pleasure –grief- that the poor soul doesn't understand itself.* In order that it get to *love remaining at home once again*, a *great deal of skill is necessary.* (W 26 10)

*Draw near*, then, to this good Master with *strong determination to learn what He teaches you*, and His Majesty will so provide that you will *turn out to be good disciples. He will not abandon you if you do not abandon Him* ... (W 26 10)

If our Father had not so much majesty, it wouldn't surprise me if we refused to be known as His children... such an *attitude doesn't belong here*...the one from a noble lineage should ...speak least about her father. *All the Sisters must be equal* ... *you have a good Father, for He gives you the good Jesus. Let no one in this house speak of any other father but Him.* (W 27 5, 6)

### ***Who Art in Heaven: Prayer of Recollection***

... Do you think it's of little importance to know *what heaven is* and *where you must seek your most sacred Father?* ... for *wandering minds* it is very important ... to believe these truths ... to strive to understand them by experience. Doing this is one of the ways of greatly *slowing down the mind and recollecting the soul.* (W 28 1)

Do you think it matters little for *a soul with a wandering mind to understand this truth*...there is *no need to go to heaven* ... to *speak with one's Eternal Father or find delight in Him?* Nor is there any need to *shout*. ... *He is near enough to hear us* ... All one need do is *go into solitude and look at Him within oneself.... with great humility speak to Him as to a father.* Beseech Him as you would a father, tell Him about your trials, ask Him for a remedy ...realizing that you are not worthy to be His daughter. (W 28 2)

... *humility doesn't consist in refusing a favor the King offers you but in accepting it* and understanding how bountifully it comes to you and being delighted with it...I have the *Emperor of heaven and earth in my house* ...*speak with Him* as a with a father, or a brother, or a lord or as with a spouse; sometimes in one way, at other times in another; *He will teach you* what you must do in order to please Him. (W 28 3)

The *intellect is recollected much more quickly with this kind of prayer even though it may be vocal*; it is a *prayer that brings with it many blessings*. This prayer is called '*recollection*' because the *soul collects its faculties together and enters within itself to be with its God*. And the *divine Master comes more quickly to teach it and give it the prayer of quiet* than He would through any other method it might use. For centered there within itself, it can think about the Passion and represent the Son...and *not tire the intellect*... (W 28 4)

Those who can *enclose themselves within this little heaven of our soul*, where the *Maker of heaven and earth is present*...should believe they are following an *excellent path* and that they will *not fail to drink water from the fount*...*It is the path of heaven.* (W 28 5)

\*\*\**At the beginning since the recollection is not so deep*— for there are *greater and lesser degrees of recollection*— *the soul should get used to this recollection*...*If we make the effort, practice this recollection for some days, and get used to it, the gain will be clearly seen*; we will understand when beginning to pray that the *bees are approaching and entering the beehive to make honey*. And this *recollection will be effected without our effort*...the Lord has desired that ...the *faculties are drawn inward*...When *the soul does no more than give a sign that it wishes to be recollected*, the *senses obey it and become recollected*. Even though they go out again afterwards, their *having already surrendered* is a great thing; for *they go out as captives and subjects* and when the *will calls them back*...*they come more quickly*, , *until after many of these entries the Lord wills that they rest entirely in perfect contemplation.* (W 28 7)

Let's speak a little about *how we should get accustomed to a method* that's so good...let's imagine that *within us is an extremely rich palace, built entirely of gold and precious stones*...*you have a part to play in order for the palace to be so beautiful; for there is no edifice as beautiful as is a soul pure and full of virtues*...in this palace dwells this mighty *King* ...seated upon an extremely valuable *throne, which is your heart*. .. I consider it impossible for us to pay so much attention to worldly things if we take that care to remember we have a Guest such as this within us...(W 28 9)

*...I understood that I had a soul. But what this soul deserved and who dwelt within it I did not understand because I had covered my eyes with the vanities of the world.....if I had understood as I do now that in this little palace of my soul dwelt so great a King, I would not have left Him alone so often. I would have remained with Him ... striven... not to be so unclean. (W 28 11)*

So that the *soul won't be disturbed in the beginning by seeing that it is too small to have something so great within itself*, the Lord doesn't give it this knowledge until *He enlarges it little by little and it has the capacity to receive what He will place within it.....we should give ourselves to Him with complete determination...He doesn't give Himself completely until we give ourselves completely. (W 28 12)*

...Let us always *direct our thoughts to what is lasting...how quickly all things come to an end...Turn your eyes inward and look within yourself...you will find your Master...*the less you have of exterior consolation the more He will favor you. (W 29 1 2)

...the *solitude enjoyed between the soul and its Spouse when the soul desires to enter this paradise within itself to be with its God...*you must understand that this *recollection is not something supernatural*, but that it is *something we can desire and achieve ourselves with the help of God*—for without this help we can do nothing, not even have a good thought. *This recollection...is an enclosure of the faculties (body-5 senses; soul-will, intelligence and imagination) within the soul. (W 29 4)*

...I'm speaking only of *how vocal prayer should be recited...we should see and be present to the One with whom we speak...all the harm comes from not truly understanding that He is near, but in imagining Him as far away...to acquire the habit of easily recollecting our minds and understanding what we are saying and with whom we are speaking...the exterior senses must be recollected...be occupied...We have heaven within ourselves since the Lord of heaven is there. (W 29 5)*

With this method we shall *pray vocally with much calm, any difficulty will be removed...He is very fond of taking away our difficulty...*of His willingness to give to us, how eagerly He remains with us...*get used to praying the Our Father with this recollection*, you will see the benefit before long. This is a *manner of praying that the soul gets so quickly used to that it doesn't go astray, nor do the faculties become restless...*try this method...it may mean some *struggle...before the habit is acquired. (W 29 6)*

*...I never knew what it was to pray with satisfaction until the Lord taught me this method. ...so many benefits from this habit of recollection...you can, if you want, avoid ever withdrawing from such good company; ...if you can, practice this recollection often during the day; if not, do so a few times...Once this recollection is given by the Lord, you will not exchange it for any treasure. (W 29 7)*

...if you try, *within a year, or perhaps half a year you will acquire the habit*, see how little time it takes for a *gain* as great as is that of *laying a good foundation. (see W 29 8)*

## ***Interior Castle 4<sup>th</sup> Dwelling Place (prayer of recollection)***

**4 D 1** ...another kind of prayer that almost always begins before this one...It is a recollection that also seems to me to be *supernatural* (W 28 7) because it doesn't involve being in the dark or closing the eyes, not does it consist in any exterior thing...it seems that without any contrivance the edifice is being built, by means of this recollection, for the prayer (of quiet)...The senses and exterior things seem to be losing their hold because the souls is recovering what it had lost. (God)

**4 D 2** ...They say that the souls enters within itself and, at other times, that it rises above itself...Let us suppose that these *senses and faculties* (for I have already mentioned that these powers are the *people of the this castle*, which is the image I have taken for my explanation) have gone outside and have walked for days and years with strangers...enemies of the well-being of the castle...they've already begun to approach the castle even though they may not manage to remain inside because the *habit* of doing so is *difficult to acquire...*Once the King, who is in the center dwelling place of this castle,

sees their good will, He desires in His wonderful mercy to bring them back to Him. Like a good shepherd, with a *whistle so gentle*...recognize His voice...*they will return to their dwelling place*...this shepherd's whistle has such power that they abandon the exterior things...and *enter the castle*. (See W 26 10)

**4 D 3** ...*Don't think this recollection is acquired by the intellect striving* to think about God within itself, or by the *imagination* imagining Him within itself. Such efforts are good and an *excellent kind of meditation* because they are *founded on a truth*, which is that *God is within us*. But this *isn't the prayer of recollection because it is something each one can do*...with the help of God...But what I'm speaking of comes in a different way. Sometimes before one begins to think of God, these people are already inside the castle, I don't know in what way or how they heard their shepherd's whistle. It wasn't through the ears, because nothing is heard. But one noticeably senses a gentle drawing inward...it seems to me I have read where it was compared to a hedgehog curling up or a turtle...But these creatures draw inward whenever they want. *In the case of this recollection, it doesn't come when we want it but when God wants to grant us the favor.*

**4 D 4** May whoever experiences this within himself praise God greatly because it is indeed right to recognize the favor and give thanks, for doing so will dispose one for other greater favors...*this recollection is a preparation for being able to listen*... so that the soul instead of striving to engage in discourse strives to remain attentive and aware of what the Lord is working in it. If His Majesty has not begun to absorb us, I cannot understand how the mind can be stopped ... *love must be already awakened*.