

## Chapter 7

2 We need to understand that all those who are troubled with melancholy, are not all equally troublesome; for when it appears in a person with a mild and humble disposition, although they may be troubled within themselves, they do no injury to others, especially if they possess a good intelligence. And there are greater or lesser degrees of this humor. I certainly believe the devil uses it, in some persons, as a means of winning them over; and if they do not proceed with great care, he will succeed. This humor can subject the reason which then becomes darkened. With the reason darkened, what won't our passions do? Where there is no reason, madness results. But in those we are speaking of madness doesn't result which would be much less harmful. To consider someone a rational person and treat them as such when they aren't is a terrible burden. Those who are really affected with this disposition are to be pitied since they do no harm: and if there is any way to bring them under control, it is to put fear into them.

3 With regard to those in whom this harmful affliction has only begun (for though it is not so deeply rooted, it comes from the same root and stock), if other means have failed, the same remedy must be used, and the prioress should make use of the " penances " of the Order, and endeavor so to bring them into submission and make them understand they are not in any way to have their own will. For if they think that their behavior will get them what they want (which the devil excites in them to drive them to perdition), they'll be lost; and one such person is enough to disturb a whole monastery. For as the poor individual has no strength to defend herself from the temptations of the devil, it is the responsibility of the prioress to proceed with the greatest care in governing her, not only in her exterior, but also her interior. For since the reason is darkened in such persons, it needs to be clear in the prioress so that the devil doesn't begin to bring that soul under his control too. This humor only comes at certain times to darken the reason. The person is not at fault, the same is true for the insane, whatever extravagances they may commit. But those who are not insane, and though their reason may be weak, have some fault. So, it is dangerous if when they are not well they take liberties which is a terrible trick of the devil. It is best they not do so; otherwise, they will not be masters of themselves when they are well. If we consider the matter well, their principal object (of the melancholic person) is to do their own will, to say what comes into their head, to notice the faults of others so as to conceal their own, and to indulge themselves in what gives them pleasure. In a word, they can't tolerate being resisted because their passions have gone unmortified, and each passion seeks to have its own way; what would happen if no one resisted them?

4 I say again, as I have seen and have had to manage many persons afflicted with this evil, that there is no other remedy but to make them submit by every possible means. If words are not sufficient, let punishments be used; and if slight punishments be not sufficient, let greater be employed: if keeping them a month in prison be of no avail, let them be kept for four months, for we cannot do their souls a greater service. For as I have said, and I repeat it again since it is of great importance that we understand it, though they may not be able to help themselves, yet, as their madness is not a confirmed disorder which frees them of any fault (though it is so sometimes, but not always), that must be done which I have already mentioned; for if not, the soul remains in much danger. But sometimes the reason is so overpowered, that they will be forced to do or to say what they did or said when they had no control. It is a great mercy of God to those who are afflicted to submit to a superior to guide them through this danger; because herein lies all their good. And for the love of God, if any one read these words, let her consider that it is perhaps a matter of her own salvation.

5 I know people who are very near entirely losing their minds. But they are so humble, and are so fearful of offending God, that although they may be dissolving into tears within themselves, they only do what they are told to do. They suffer their illness as other do their illness. This is a greater martyrdom that will gain them a greater glory. They will have their purgatory in this life rather than in the next. But I say it again, that those who will not submit willingly should be forced to do so by the superior; and let them not deceive themselves by a foolish pity, disturbing all with their confusion.

### **Questions:**

What does St. Teresa mean when she talks about 'melancholy'? Does this exist today?

Teresa's methods are severe and could be considered shocking. What does she base her method on? Why do you think her methods shock us today?

How and why does life in community or in society help a person overcome problems of 'melancholy'?