

Prayer of Quiet

Thy Kingdom come

...it would be appropriate, in writing of this petition of the Our Father, to say a little about the beginning of **pure contemplation**, which those who experience it call the *Prayer of Quiet*; ... I am discussing **vocal prayer** here, and anyone ignorant of the subject might think that the two had nothing to do with one another, though I know this is certainly not true. Forgive my wanting to speak of it, for I know there are many people who practice **vocal prayer** in the manner already described and are raised by God to the higher kind of **contemplation** without *having had any hand in this themselves or even knowing how it has happened. For this reason, daughters, I attach great importance to your saying your vocal prayers well.* (W 30, 7)

This is a **supernatural state**, and, however hard we try, we cannot reach it for ourselves; for it is a state in which the soul enters into **peace**, or rather in which the Lord gives it peace through His presence, as He did to that just man Simeon.¹ In this state all the **faculties** are **stilled**. The soul, in a way which has nothing to do with the outward senses, realizes that it is now very close to its God, and that, if it were but a little closer, it would become one with Him through **union**. (W 31, 2)

...we can no more control this prayer than we can make the day break, or stop night from falling; it is supernatural and something we cannot acquire. The most we can do to prolong this favor is to realize that we can neither diminish nor add to it, but, being most **unworthy** and undeserving of it, can only receive it with thanksgiving. And we can best give thanks, not with many words, but by lifting up our eyes, like the publican ... (W 31, 6)

The Prayer of Quiet and the Faculties of the Soul

The body experiences the greatest delight and the soul is conscious of a deep satisfaction. So glad is it merely to find itself near the **fountain** that, even before it has begun to drink, it has had its fill. There seems nothing left for it to desire. The **faculties** are **stilled** and have **no wish to move**, for any movement they may make appears to hinder the soul from loving God. They are **not completely lost**, however, since, **two of them being free**, they can realize in Whose Presence they are. 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**. The mind tries to occupy itself with only one thing, and the memory has no desire to busy itself with more: they both see that this is the one thing needful and that anything else will unsettle them. Persons in this state prefer the body to remain **motionless**, for otherwise their **peace** would be destroyed: for this reason they dare not stir. Speaking is a distress to them: they will spend a whole hour on a single repetition of the Paternoster. They are so **close to God** that they know they can make themselves understood by signs. They are in the palace, near to their King, and they see that He is already beginning to give them His Kingdom on earth. *Sometimes tears come to their eyes, but they weep very gently and quite without distress: their whole desire is the hallowing of this name.* They seem not to be in the world, and have no wish to see or hear anything but their God; nothing distresses them, nor does it seem that anything can possibly do so. In short, for as long as this state lasts, they are so overwhelmed and absorbed by the **joy and delight** which they experience that they can think of nothing else to wish for, and will gladly say with Saint Peter: "Lord, let us make here three mansions." (W 31, 3)

Pay great attention to the following comparison, which *the Lord suggested to me when I was in this state of prayer, and which* seems to me very appropriate. The soul is like an infant still at its mother's breast: such is the mother's care for it that she gives it its milk without its having to ask for it so much as by moving its lips. That is what happens here. **The will simply loves, and no effort needs to be made by the understanding, for it is the Lord's pleasure that, without exercising its thought, the soul should realize that it is in His company, and should merely drink the milk which His Majesty puts into its mouth and enjoy its**

sweetness. The Lord desires it to know that it is He Who is granting it that favor and that in its enjoyment of it He too rejoices. But it is not His will that the soul should try to understand how it is enjoying it, or what it is enjoying; it should lose all thought of itself, and He Who is at its side will not fail to see what is best for it. If it begins to strive with its mind so that the mind understand what is happening and then try to share in it, it will be quite unable to do so, and the soul will as a result lose the milk and lose the Divine food. (W 31,9)

This state of prayer is different from that in which the soul is wholly united with God, for in the latter state it does not even swallow its nourishment: the Lord places this within it, and it has no idea how. But in this state it even seems to be His will that the soul should work a little, though so quietly that it is hardly conscious of doing so. What **disturbs** it is the **understanding** and this is not the case when there is **union of all the three faculties**, since He Who created them suspends them: He keeps them occupied with the enjoyment that He has given them, without their knowing, or being able to understand, the reason... well, as I say, the soul is conscious of having reached this state of prayer, which is a **quiet, deep and peaceful happiness of the will**, without being able to decide precisely what it is, although it can clearly see how it differs from the happiness of the world. To have dominion over the whole world, with all its happiness, would not suffice to bring the soul such inward satisfaction as it enjoys now in the **depths of its will**. For other kinds of happiness in life, it seems to me, touch only the outward part of the will, which we might describe as its 'bark'. When one of you finds herself in this sublime state of prayer, which, as I have already said, is most markedly supernatural, and the understanding (or, to put it more clearly, the thought) wanders off after the most ridiculous things in the world, she should **laugh** at it and treat it as the silly thing it is, and **remain in her state of quiet**. For thoughts will come and go, but the **will is mistress and all-powerful**, and will recall them without your having to trouble about it. But if you try to drag the understanding back by force, you lose your power over it, which comes from your taking and receiving that Divine sustenance, and neither will nor understanding will gain,⁸ but **both will be losers**. There is a saying that, if we try very hard to grasp all, we lose all; and so I think it is here. Experience will show you the truth of this; and I shall not be surprised if those of you who have none think this very obscure and unnecessary. But, as I have said, if you have only a little experience of it you will understand it and be able to profit by it, and you will praise the Lord for being pleased to enable me to explain it. (W 31,10)

Recommendations

...But there are persons—and I have been one of them—to whom the Lord gives tenderness of devotion and holy inspirations and light on everything. He bestows this Kingdom on them and brings them to this **Prayer of Quiet**, and yet they deafen their ears to His voice. For they are so fond of talking and of repeating a large number of vocal prayers in a great hurry, as though they were anxious to finish their task of repeating them daily, that when the Lord, as I say, puts His Kingdom into their very hands, *by giving them this Prayer of Quiet and this inward peace*, they do not accept it, but think that they will do better to go on reciting their prayers, which only distract them from their purpose. (W 31, 12)

Do not be like that, sisters, but be watchful when the Lord grants you this favor. Think what a great treasure you may be losing and realize that you are doing much more by occasionally repeating a single petition of the Paternoster than by repeating the whole of it many times in a hurry *and not thinking what you are saying*. He to Whom you are praying is very near to you and will not fail to hear you; and you may be sure that you are truly praising Him and hallowing His name, since you are glorifying the Lord as a member of His household and praising Him with increasing affection and desire so that it seems you can never forsake His service. (W31, 13)

Let Your Will be done

So you see, daughters, **what God gave to His best Beloved**, and from that you can understand what His will is. These, then, are **His gifts in this world**. He gives them in proportion to the love which He bears us. He gives more to those whom He loves most, and less to those He loves least; and He gives in accordance with the courage which He sees that each of us

has and the love we bear to His Majesty. **When He sees a soul who loves Him greatly, He knows that soul can suffer much for Him**, whereas one who loves Him little will suffer little. For my own part, I believe that **love is the measure of our ability to bear crosses, whether great or small**. So if you have this love, sisters, try not to let the prayers you make to so great a Lord be words of mere politeness but brace yourselves to suffer what His Majesty desires. For if you give Him your will in any other way, you are just showing Him a jewel, making as if to give it to Him and begging Him to take it, and then, when He puts out His hand to do so, taking it back and holding on to it tightly. (W 32, 7)

The aim of all my advice to you in this book is that we should **surrender ourselves wholly to the Creator, place our will in His hands and detach ourselves from the creatures**. As you will already have understood how important this is, I will say no more about it, but I will tell you why our good Master puts these words here. He knows how much we shall gain by rendering this service to His Eternal Father. **We are preparing ourselves for the time, which will come very soon, when we shall find ourselves at the end of our journey and shall be drinking of living water from the fountain I have described**. Unless we make a total surrender of our will to the Lord, *and put ourselves in His hands* so that He may do in all things what is best for us in accordance with His will, He will never allow us to drink of it. This is the perfect contemplation of which you asked me to write to you. (W 32, 9)