

## *Prayer of Recollection* (fr JE based on fr ML)

**Habit:** Recollecting oneself has to become a *Habit*. As we practice it, we develop the capacity to do so, the process becomes easier and easier; *Recollection* means to turn the senses and the faculties inward and then giving them something to do.... turn my attention (progressively) present to the *Presence within*. It is a mental operation.

**What does this mean?** There are 2 aspects of the process of Recollection, one is positive and the other can be seen as negative (*effort of the will*). The *two go together*, one can't exist without the other.

1/ **Positive** : Why are we practicing this prayer? What is the goal? We are turning our attention to someone who is present within our hearts. It is not at all an emptying out. We fix the eyes of our souls progressively on Him; we find company and we *keep Christ company*

**Passage:** *'Represent the Lord Himself as close to you... remain with so good a friend as long as you can. If you grow accustomed to having Him present at your side... you will not be able—as they say—to get away from Him...'* (W 26,1-3)

It seems easy at first glance but once we have tried to recollect ourselves we realize how much trouble we run into but we still need to *persevere*. We need to **seek to please Jesus by keeping Him company (recollection) if we do**, the rest of the effort will be easier.

**Passage:** *'I'm not asking you to do anything more than look at Him...turn the eyes of your soul toward this Lord...just for a moment if you can't do more?'* (W 26,1-3)

2/ **Negative:** There is an **effort** to be **fully** in His presence and not distracted by outside activities. To succeed in this prayer, we have to **withdraw** from outside distractions, this requires an **effort**. At the same time, we have to learn to be **attentive** to internal realities. It isn't easy, **you have to want it**. It is therefore important to put yourself in the right situation---**silence, no distractions, solitude**. This effort is an **ascetical (personal effort)** one...a **spiritual training ground**. As we practice going within and becoming attentive to our internal reality, this effort becomes easier and easier just like in sports. Jesus becomes a **good friend**. He shows up for us. As we practice we become more responsive to His grace. *We reap what we sow!*

**What presence are we talking about?** God is everywhere. He enters the human heart at Baptism. This presence represented in recollection is a **presence by faith**. I have to make **an act of faith**. I believe by **faith** but I don't *feel* anything with my bodily senses. By continually **making these acts of faith, my faith increases** and I realize I am **changing**...calmer, strength not my own. *'I believe please help my disbelief.'*

**Passage:** *'I was like one who is blind or in darkness; he speaks with a person and sees that that person is with him because he knows with certainty that he is there (I mean he understands and believes he is there but does not see him); such was the case with me when I thought of our Lord'* (V 9 6).

We don't **'feel'** a person in the room with our bodily senses but by **faith**. It's faith that allows me to believe someone is there. St. Teresa learned this way of prayer in a book (*The Third Spiritual Alphabet*).

**To succeed in interior prayer:** it is important to find a comfortable place that suits you, either in nature or in adoration; whatever or wherever that **promotes recollection**; develop the **Habit of Being in God's Presence** within; I have to allow God to **establish** the habit in me until it

becomes **natural** (not supernatural), in other words until I have overcome ...with God's help... all **objections** to the practice (attachments);

**Passage:** *Beginners... are those who draw water (grace) from the well...it's a lot of work...they tire themselves trying to recollect their senses ...and get accustomed to being distracted ...it requires much effort... and hours of practice ...thinking on their past life...considering the life of Christ...the intellect grows weary...these are the things we can do of ourselves...with God's help because without this help...we cannot even have a good thought (VII, 9)*

I make **acts of faith** repeatedly and in time things fall into place; we are so used to being **scattered** and living at the **surface** of myself, the Prayer of Recollection helps us to live at another level, a more interior level. St Teresa tells us that if we are diligent in a daily practice we will see **effects** within 2-3 months and **results** within a year maximum. Overtime we regain **mastery** of ourselves which gives us a new **liberty**. Once we have **tasted this recollection**, this **peace**, we come back to it, but it comes with a **cost**.

**Passage:** *...At the beginning since the recollection is not so deep— for there are greater and lesser degrees of 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... (W 28 7)*

**How to proceed practically speaking:** light a candle, icon, image book (a life preserver), a Bible verse to grasp hold of, focus our thoughts; **Once recollected, then what?...**Recollection of St. Peter--**sleep**, St. Teresa of the Little Flower's experience too; We **find** this presence gradually and we don't want this to be a '**must**' but something I look forward to so I have to allow myself to be formed to look forward to it; **God changes us**; He progressively tames us from our **scattered 'wild' selves**, living on the surface as we get used to God's presence in our souls...He is GOD; St. Teresa used a book after communion to recollect her thoughts, like a '**shield**'...she didn't use her prayer time as a reading session but as a help needed to focus her thoughts.

**Passage:** *...a good book written in the vernacular to recollect one's thoughts... little by little accustom the soul with coaxing and skill not to grow discouraged (W26 10). For eighteen years, after Communion, I never dared to begin prayer without a book. For my soul was as fearful of being without it during prayer as it would have been should I have had to do battle with a lot of people. With this recourse, which was like a partner or a shield by which to sustain the blows of my many thoughts, I went about consoled (V4 9).*

**-Dialogue** with our Lord has to be nourished. **Dialogue and silence** go together. We have to learn not only to talk but to listen as well. One of the first fruits of prayer is to learn to **listen-- to God**, to others and to Oneself, our real self—to my real need...I discover that I am lost and **need a Savior** (St.Teresa's 2nd conversion, 1554)—This is a joyous discovery that I don't have to do it alone...I can seek God's help. So one of the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits is **self-knowledge (I am a poor sinner in need of a Savior)**; the second listening to **others**; the third is listening to **God**. We become more interior less superficial.