




# CONTEMPLATION

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# Living Water

- Carmelite prayer is the ideal path to **sanctification** because on this path we receive **Living Water** or the **grace** of contemplation.
  - We are all called to receive this grace of contemplation or sanctification.
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# Overview

- ▶ **Definition** of Contemplation;
  - ▶ Different **Degrees** of Contemplation;
  - ▶ **Problems** with Contemplation.
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# Definition of Contemplation

- ▶ **Dictionary:** the act of absorbing oneself in the observance of something or someone;
  - ▶ **St. Teresa of Avila:** contemplation and the absorption are brought about by **God**.
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# Same Objective

## *Christ in His Humanity*

- ▶ In Meditation & Contemplation Christ is **looked at** by **faith** with the **intellect** & **loved** by the **will**;
  - ▶ Meditation & Contemplation have the **same objective: Christ in His humanity but...**
  - ▶ In Contemplation, we receive **special help** from the **Holy Spirit** to **look at Christ** by **faith**.
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# The Captain's Boat

## *Two Chests*

- ▶ I meet a boat's **Captain (Holy Spirit)** on the dock. He invites me to come **aboard (soul)** or to enter **contemplation**;
- ▶ In my heart there are **two chests**. From one the Holy Spirit gives me oars(**will**) & a compass (**intellect**). I am in-charge. I set out on my **journey to Christ**;
- ▶ I row and row. After 2 days, I have gone a mile. I'm exhausted!
- ▶ Touched by my **effort, the Holy Spirit** offers to take over; most say 'Yes', some however do insist on doing it alone;
- ▶ He puts the oars (**will**) & compass (**intellect**) in the first chest & takes out **sails** from the second. He's at the helm...It takes **time**...but we do **arrive**.




# Holy Spirit Takes Over *Criteria*

- ▶ In **Meditation** we seek Christ with our **natural** forces;
  - ▶ In **Contemplation**, the **Holy Spirit takes over**, leading us to **union** with Christ;
  - ▶ You **know** if you have received the **gift** of contemplation;
  - ▶ The **criteria** used to determine the grace of contemplation: the prayer was **easy**; a profound **peace**; the **time** passed quickly; the prayer can't be **reproduced**.
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# Degrees of Contemplation


- ▶ There are different **degrees** of contemplation;
  - ▶ There are different **intensities** in the 'over-taking' of the **soul** by the Holy Spirit.
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# Prayer of Quiet

## *Deep Peace*

- The Holy Spirit takes over the power of the **will**;
  - The soul experiences a **supernatural draw** to its center where God lives;
  - It is a **divine action** of the Holy Spirit;
  - You are there in a **deep peace**. You don't want to move; you have found a peace that the world will never give you;
  - The Holy Spirit has penetrated the soul with **His love** through the faculty of the will.
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# Prayer of Quiet

## *Intellect is Free*

- ▶ **Description** of the Prayer of Quiet by St. Teresa of Avila:

'God and the soul are so close to one another that they can understand one another by signs. The soul finds itself in the inside the palace very close to the King. The soul understands that He is beginning to give it His kingdom. It feels like it is out of this world. Nothing bothers it. The interior joy and peace make it feel inebriated and absorbed. It can't imagine needing anything else and with your whole heart you say with St. Peter: 'Let's put up 3 tents here!' —

- ▶ **Remember** in the prayer of quiet, God only has a hold of the **will**. The **intellect** is **free**... It wanders & functions normally. It focuses on things that are not at all related to God.



# Prayer of Quiet

## *Pray & Be Present*

- ▶ St. Teresa wondered how you can be at peace at your center while **thinking** of a million things;
- ▶ We are **not** a **monolithic block**; the faculties are distinct; the **will** is one thing, the **intellect** another;
- ▶ Once we have chosen to **pray & be present** for God, **we win!** Even if we continue to experience **distractions**, if we continually return to God each time we realize that our minds have wandered, **we win!** Even if we had **twenty-five** minutes of distractions & **five** minutes of peace, **we win!**



# St. Teresa's 3 Tips

- ▶ Don't try & bring the **intellect** into God's presence; if I do I take back control. When God sees I prefer the '**oars**' to the '**sails**', He lets me take charge. I lose the 'sails' & return to meditation.
- ▶ When you receive the grace of quiet, avoid the **hussle-bussle** of the world that day. Seek the '**desert**'; bask in the **gift** of God.
- ▶ **Stay humble & small**. This is the most **important** piece of advice, it seems determinant in God giving the gift of quiet. When you receive it, thank God & wonder why you received it; admit to God that you don't deserve it but accept it because he gave it to you, an **unworthy servant**. With such an attitude of humility, He will continue to give it to you.



# Prayer of Union

## *2<sup>nd</sup> Degree of Prayer*

- ▶ The soul's take-over by the Holy Spirit is **complete**;
- ▶ The Holy Spirit has turned-off the **intellect**; there are no more **distractions**;
- ▶ No **awareness** of self... like someone who fainted;
- ▶ You are **lost** in God.

# Prayer of Union

## 'Ave'

- ▶ St. Teresa says that God **suspends** the **intellect**...this is the **grace** of the prayer of union;
- ▶ It's a **rare gift**;
- ▶ Teresa says it lasts the **length** of an '**Ave**';
- ▶ It is called union because God **unites** the faculties of **love & intellect**; they are in His hand.



# Prayer of Union

## *Sixth Mansions*


- ▶ There are other **degrees** of **union**, other experiences that are superior;
- ▶ They are all laid out in the 6<sup>th</sup> Mansion in the **Interior Castle**;
- ▶ **Examples:** wound of love(quiet);  
interior words;  
vision in images, intellectual visions;  
transverberation or martyr of love,  
ecstasies (disconnect of the body & soul).





## 2 Types of Contemplative Prayer


### *Positive vs. Negative*

- ▶ When contemplative **grace** is granted, our soul is taken-over by the **Holy Spirit**;
  - ▶ It is **supernatural**;
  - ▶ God is in **control** of the faculties of **love & knowledge**;
  - ▶ This 'take-over' of our faculties can be experienced in **2 different ways**:  
**Positively** or **Negatively**.
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# Positively *Fruitful*

- ▶ The Holy Spirit, through contemplative grace, suspends my faculty of **knowledge** ... He grants ecstasies, intellectual visions, visions in images, internal wounds of love, transverberation;
  - ▶ We are talking about **fruitful** contemplation; It's the '**juice**' that brings about the '**joyful**' experience of God;
  - ▶ In contemplation, God is in **control**; He put the 'oars' & 'compass' away; He takes out the '**sails**.'
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# Negatively *Dryness*

- ▶ We aren't allowed to know what God is doing in the faculties of **love & knowledge**; We can't use them;
  - ▶ It is **difficult** & painful;
  - ▶ We can't meditate anymore;
  - ▶ This is a **passive action** of the Holy Spirit, a **neutralization** of my faculties;
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# Negatively *Dryness*

- ▶ We can't appreciate the **positive work** the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives;
  - ▶ We feel **lost & abandoned**, unable to use our powers to draw closer to God;
  - ▶ We are having a contemplative experience...**contemplative dryness** ... this is talked about by St. John of the Cross.
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## Which Form of Contemplation is preferable?

### *Fruitful or Dry?*

- ▶ What is important is contemplative grace, **not** the form;
- ▶ What matters is that the **Holy Spirit** is **in-charge** & that He **acts** in us;
- ▶ The Holy Spirit gives this **grace to all** usually after 'rowing' for 6 months ('rowing' in meditation & in dry contemplation);
- ▶ The **spiritual director** helps discern if we are in **contemplative grace** or **lukewarm spiritually**;
- ▶ The **Key** is what the grace produces....The **product** is a new way of **loving & knowing**; Charity takes on a new heroic dimension in us. We love without limits, like the Saints.

## Which Form of Contemplation is Preferable?


### *More about the Product*

- ▶ We achieve a new way of **knowing** in faith & hope; **see** the world through the **eyes of Jesus**; **perceive** the mysteries of faith with more clarity; we fully **believe** in the Church;
- ▶ We understand the **behavior change** comes from **Christ's presence** in the **Eucharist**. The mystery of the holiness of the Church comes from Christ's presence amongst sinners.
- ▶ We understand with **unshakeable faith** that God will never **abandon** us.
- ▶ Another **criterion** of discernment that we are under the Holy Spirit's **influence** is that we give **advice** to our brothers and sisters, but it is the Holy Spirit speaking through us.



## Which Form of Contemplation is Preferable?

# *All Called to Contemplative Life*


- ▶ We are **all called** to contemplative life by the Holy Spirit;
  - ▶ We are **all called** to union of love with God, to spiritual marriage & to holiness;
  - ▶ We are **not** all called to the **same type** of prayer;
  - ▶ Some may be called to **fruitful prayer** & others to **dry contemplation**.
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# Conclusion

## *Question*

Why does God want  
a **certain type** of contemplation  
**for one**  
& **another type** for someone else?





# Why does God give Fruitful Contemplation?


*St. Teresa gives us 4 reasons*

- ▶ **To Draw the Soul to Christ:** to 'capture' it; make it want to become friends with Christ; avoid sin and convert;
- ▶ **To Show His Mercy:** the soul is overwhelmed by this grace; true contemplative grace humiliates the soul who knows it doesn't deserve this grace;
- ▶ **To strengthen the soul for a Mission in the Church:** this mission will be difficult; God sends his 'soldiers' into battle after getting them '**inebriated**' on grace; to overcome fear;
- ▶ **Visualize the action of the Holy Spirit in the Soul:** it is a faith booster for others; it strengthens and edifies the Church.





## Why does God give Dry Contemplation?

- ▶ We are **gourmands**: we become 'obese' on God's grace; He wants moderation; He wants us to come to Him for Him & not His gifts;
  - ▶ The Lord wants us to **earn** fruitful grace. In dryness credibility can be tested. It is harder to go to Calvary than to Cana. Jesus can count His friends on two hands. Only His friends stick with it when it gets tough;
  - ▶ God wants us to grow in **humility**.
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## Conclusion

# *Ask & Accept*

- **Ask** for the grace of Contemplation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, holiness & to know & love God as He loves Himself in the mystery of the Trinity;
  - **Accept** with **Abandon** whatever form of contemplation God gives you!
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