

What is Silent Prayer? Fr.Theodore, o.c.d. Lourdes18 *The First Steps....*

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like **treasure hidden in a field**, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of **fine pearls**,
46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Matt. 13:44-46

These Verses illustrate an important aspect of **Silent Prayer that we are going to discover together...**

The Plan:

- ❖ What is **Silent Prayer**?
- ❖ What is the **Goal of Silent Prayer**?
- ❖ How do you **Practice Silent Prayer**?

1/What is **Silent Prayer**? Silent prayer is talked about a lot in Carmel, it is an important part of the Charism, but what gives us the authority to talk about Silent Prayer? Why is the Carmel **referenced** when it comes to **Silent Prayer** more so than the other orders such as the Dominicans, Franciscans or Jesuits for example? Does the Carmel have something special bring to this discussion?

To **answer that question**, we will turn to the **Catechism** of the Catholic Church for the answer.

The Catechism is arranged in 4 principal parts or the 4 Pillars of Christianity: The Profession of Faith (the Apostle's Creed); The Celebration of the Christian Mystery (the Sacred Liturgy, the sacraments); Life in Christ (Ten Commandments, Beatitudes); Christian Prayer (Lord's Prayer)

-Life of Prayer

2697 Prayer ... ought to animate us at every moment. ... "We must remember God more often than we draw breath."

2698 The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer... the cycle of the liturgical year, its great feasts.

2699 .. Christian Tradition has retained **three major expressions** of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: **composure of heart**.

a/ Vocal Prayer:

2700 Through his Word, God speaks to man ... Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: "**Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls.**"²

2701 Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master's silent prayer, **Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father...**

2704 ... Even interior prayer, however, cannot neglect vocal prayer... we become aware of him "to whom we speak;"⁴ Thus vocal prayer becomes an initial form of contemplative prayer.

b/ Meditation:

2705 Meditation is above all a **quest**... The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by **books**, particularly the **Gospels, holy icons...**

2708 Meditation engages ... is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the **knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.**

c/ Contemplative Prayer (interior prayer-supernatural): We have the answer to our above question...

2709 What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa of Avila answers: "Contemplative prayer [*oracion mental*] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us." ...

Note: The Church and the Catechism recognize that St. Teresa & the Carmel is a school in its own right devoted to teaching the path of silent prayer

Let's Breakdown Teresa of Avila's Definition of Contemplative Prayer...

2/ What is the Goal of Silent Prayer?

-From the moment of Baptism the Holy Trinity resides in our soul; God wants to purify us, to sanctify us from the effects of sin in order to unite us with Him; United with Him, the presence of the Trinity radiates through your whole being

-The whole **aim** of any person who is **beginning prayer**—and don't forget this because it's very important—should be that he work and prepare himself with **determination** and every possible effort to bring **his will** into **conformity** with **God's will**. Be certain that, as I shall say later, the **greatest perfection attainable** along the spiritual path lies in this conformity. It is the person who lives in more perfect conformity who will receive more from the Lord and be more advanced on this road. Don't think that in what concerns perfection there is some mystery or things unknown or still to be, for in perfect conformity to God's will lies **all our good**. (C 2,8)

-The **goal** of Silent Prayer is **Union with God**, especially in the **will** because it is with my will that I make choices for my life; The more I am united to his will, the more I will accomplish his will, the happier I will be, the more I will bring the kingdom of God to earth allowing the life of God to radiate in the world; The **challenge** of Silent Prayer is to be ever more united to God, to Christ in his Pascal Mystery, in his Passion, in his Resurrection so that the life of God irrigates my whole life and radiates to those around me in my workplace and in my family.

3/ How to Practice Silent Prayer?

Determined Determination; Same time daily, this time belongs to God alone; Decide on a time, a place, a length of time, aids such as a book, picture, or vocal prayer; Spiritual Director, a school of prayer, an OCDS community.

Difficulties It is hard to develop a life of prayer, it's a struggle to develop this **habit**; **Spiritual Combat**

There is one who doesn't want us to experience union with God because we will bring others with us

Distractions; Dryness: Important to have a fixed length of time.

Conclusion:

Union with God-The daily practice of prayer allows me to become more and more united to him to include my whole being;

Relationships-A life of silent prayer is about a friendship with the Trinity or a specific member of the Trinity. Teresa had a friendship with the Christ in his humanity; My relationship with God in prayer allows me to understand the depth, vitality and beauty of human relationships with my spouse, friends; We take better care of our relationships, become more respectful of others, treating them with dignity and respect who like us are Temples of the Holy Spirit.

Interior Life-In a world influenced by the material, consumption, where everything is going so fast, living my life in God's presence as his child gives me liberty and allows me to maintain an appropriate distance from the world around me; I can be in the world but not of it; I can keep the world in perspective

*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... **Teresa of Avila**
(W 21,1)*

Remember? Let's Re-read Matthew The Treasure?

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