

# Prayer of Recollection

Saint Teresa of Avila  
ICS Publications

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# *Prayer of Recollection*

*(Interior, Silent, Mental or Oraison)*



*Interior Prayer is, in my opinion,  
simply an intimate exchange of friendship  
where we speak often, one on one,  
with the One who we know loves us.*

*St. Theresa of Avila (V 8, 5)*

# Saint Teresa of Avila

- ❖ St. Teresa of Jesus was **born** in Avila, Spain, in 1515.
- ❖ At the age of 20 she entered the Carmelite **convent** of the Incarnation in her native Avila.
- ❖ After 26 years in the Incarnation, she was inspired by God to **found** the convent of St. Joseph in Avila that would be **devoted** to a **life of contemplative prayer**.
- ❖ Before her death in 1582 she founded **17 convents** which formed the beginnings of the Order of Discalced Carmelites.

# Saint Teresa of Avila

- ❖ Today Discalced Carmelites number about **12,000** cloistered women in 98 countries, nearly **4,000** mendicant friars in 82 countries and some **40,000** lay Carmelites throughout the world.
- ❖ Teresa believed the **purpose** of her new order was to pray for the **needs of the church**.
- ❖ During the course of her life she **wrote** several books and left other writings that **teach** the **way of contemplative prayer** for those who follow in her footsteps.
- ❖ In 1970, Pope Paul VI declared St. Teresa the first woman **doctor** of the church, primarily for her teaching on prayer.

# Saint Teresa of Avila

- ❖ Teresa however, did not always find prayer easy.
- ❖ In the earlier years of her religious life, she was not able to follow the **traditional** methods of **discursive meditation**, or prayerfully calling to mind & reflecting on specific religious thoughts and images.
- ❖ Finally she discovered '**the prayer of recollection**,' which she said the **Lord** himself **taught** her. '**I confess that I never knew what it was to prayer with satisfaction until the Lord taught me this method**' (W, 29,7).
- ❖ It involved simply **meeting Jesus Christ**, true God and true man, in the deepest **center** of her being. She wrote: '**I tried as hard as I could to keep Jesus Christ, our God and our Lord, present within me, and that was my way of prayer**' (Life, 4,7).

# Saint Teresa of Avila

Enthusiastically, she taught this way of prayer to others, assuring them that this method “is not something **supernatural**, but is something we can desire and achieve ourselves with the **help** of **God**” (Way, 29,4).  
It is a method she found “**beneficial**”  
in all stages of the **Spiritual journey** (Life, 12.3).

“This prayer is called ‘**recollection**’  
because the soul collects  
its faculties together  
and enters within itself  
to be with its God. (W 28, 4)

*Saint Teresa of Avila*

# Prayer of Recollection

**Preparation**

**Meeting the Lord**

**Intimate Sharing**

**Conclusion**



# Preparation



- ❖ Choose a **quiet place** where you are not likely to be interrupted;
- ❖ **Sit comfortably** in a **chair** with your feet placed separately on the floor in front of you, your hands joined on your lap or place separately on your thighs. if you are accustomed to praying in **another position**, for example on a **prayer bench**, assume this position;
- ❖ **Close your eyes**. Take a **deep breath**, and slowly exhale. Repeat this deep breathing several time. Gradually **relax** your whole body;
- ❖ **Quiet your mind**. Acknowledge any thoughts, or preoccupation, or worries, or anxieties. Whatever concerns you may have for your family, or your work, or your daily activities, simply **surrender** them to God.

# Meeting the Lord



- ❖ **Recall** that you are in **God's presence**; recall too that Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, true God & true man, is **present within you**. Sit quietly with Jesus, aware of his presence within you;
- ❖ To **remain attentive** to Jesus' presence, recall a passage from the Gospel, like Jesus with the woman at the well. **Recall** that Jesus Christ, is **present within you** just as he was present before the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well;

# Meeting the Lord



- ❖ When you notice your **mind wandering**, gently bring your **attention back** to the Lord present within you;
- ❖ Simply look at him with **eyes of faith**. And in faith be aware that he is looking at you;
- ❖ Looking at a **picture** or **icon** of Jesus or repeating his **name** or a **phrase** like “my Lord and my God,” or “Come, Lord Jesus,” may help you look in faith at Jesus within you.

# Intimate Sharing



As you **look at Jesus in faith** you may feel *moved to **speak*** to Him. *You may want to.....*

- ❖ **ask** Him for the 'living water' He promised to the Samaritan woman;
- ❖ **tell** him that you love Him;
- ❖ **thank** Him for His many gifts to you;
- ❖ **ask** a favor of Him or for strength in a trial that you are going through;

Just speak to Him however your **heart** moves you to speak.

# Intimate Sharing



- ❖ If you do not feel moved to speak just **remain quietly** with Jesus, looking at Him with **eyes of faith** and **love**;
- ❖ Come to Him as you are: If you are **joyful**, look at Him as **risen**; If you are in **pain**, look at Him in His **suffering**. (w  
26 4-5)
- ❖ No matter what you are feeling, you will find the Lord looking at you with **understanding** and **love**.

# Intimate Sharing



- ❖ You may experience a **deep peace**, or recollection, or communion with Jesus;
- ❖ **Rest** in this peace as long as it lasts;
- ❖ When it **passes**, let it go;
- ❖ Do not **cling** to it;
- ❖ With eyes of faith and love bring your **attention** back to the **Lord** present within you.

# Intimate Sharing



- ❖ If your **mind wanders** again, say to yourself nonjudgmentally, “Oh, my mind is wandering again,”
- ❖ Gently bring your **attention back** to Jesus within you.
- ❖ With eyes of faith and love look at him who is looking at you and allow your **heart to express** whatever your love desires to say to the Lord.

# Conclusion



- ❖ Remain in this prayer for at least **30 minutes**;
- ❖ As your time of prayer draws to a close, **open your eyes**;
- ❖ Continue to sit comfortably for a few more minutes, **gradually** becoming aware of your surroundings;
- ❖ Conclude your time of prayer by saying slowly and reflectively the **Our Father**, the **Hail Mary**, or some **other** prayer (W, 25.3).



# REMINDERS

## Make Time for Regular Periods of Mental Prayer

“Mental prayer... means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us”. (L8,5)  
Teresa speaks of ‘the hour I had determined to spend in prayer’  
(L8,7).

‘I should consider the time of prayer as not belonging to me and think that He can ask it of me in justice when I do not want to give it wholly to Him’ (W 23,2).

## Distractions are Normal

Distractions are ‘unavoidable ... and should not be a disturbance or affliction for you ... Pay no attention to these thoughts ... and let’s not blame the soul for what a weak imagination, human nature, and the devil cause’  
(IC 4,1).

I consider distractions an incurable disease” (L, 10/9/81).

# REMINDERS

## Be Prepared for Dryness

“As for... dryness, it seems to me that the Lord is now treating you as one who is strong. He wants to try you in order to know the love you have for Him, whether it is present in dryness as well as in spiritual delights. Take it as a very great favor from God. Don't let it cause you any grief, for perfection does not consist in delight but in the virtues. When you least expect, devotion will return. (L 8/7/1580)

## Pray Always

“The true lover loves everywhere and is always thinking of the Beloved! It would be a thing hard to bear if we were able to pray only when off in some corner” (F5,16).

“If you grow accustomed to having Him present at your side, and He sees that you do so with love and that you go about striving to please Him, you will not be able -as they say- to get away from Him; He will never fail you; He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere” (W 26,1).

# A Great *Treasure* is Gained



This Divine journey  
is the  
Royal Road to Heaven  
....a great treasure  
is gained by  
travelling this road