



# SILENT PRAYER: A Friendship

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# Definition

***Saint Teresa of Avila:***

"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." (L8,5)

# Saint Teresa of Avila

## 3 aspects of her definition:

-exchange of friendship,

-solitude,

-faith in God who loves us.

They are **interconnected** and  
can't be separated

# Saint Teresa of Lisieux

“For me, prayer is a surge of the heart;  
it is a simple look turned toward heaven,  
it is a cry of recognition and of love,  
embracing both trial and joy.”

“

# Saint Teresa of Lisieux

She was often in Christ's company. She said she couldn't go more than two minutes without thinking of him. This friendship continues today in heaven where she dialogues with the Spouse.

# Saint Teresa of Lisieux

Connection with the **3 theological virtues**  
received from God at Baptism:

## **Charity**


surge of the heart;

## **Hope**

a simple look turned toward heaven;

## **Faith**


a cry of recognition and of love, embracing  
both trial and joy.




-Silent prayer helps us to create this relationship with the Lord. It is an **interpersonal relationship** thanks to Baptism (we receive the theological virtues), a **gift** and a **friendship** with God. It is not about emptying out but about a meeting with the Lord within one's self.

-It isn't an intellectual exercise, but rather a gift from God that we can humbly ask for to enter into relationship with him. It is about **looking** at him in faith and allowing ourselves to be looked at by him.

-It's mainly **silence**- 'Silent Love' says St. John of the Cross. Our words are like twigs that keep the fire of love going rather than a discussion. Our words are there only to maintain a climate of relationship.

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- The **beginnings** are **difficult** as we are bombarded with a lot of sensory input (both visual and auditory), so it is hard to learn to allow the silence to enter deep within our being.
  - It is important to **be patient**, it's a process. There are 'rest stops' along the way, different levels that allow us to go deeper to develop this friendship.





-Listen to the Word. Let the Christ speak to your heart. Let him give you insights, hidden meanings, a deeper understanding.

-In summary: **silent prayer is a friendship and a gift.**

# Spiritual Fruits of Carmelite Prayer

It is hard to name them all but here are the basic ones.

- an increase in **spiritual maturity**; St. Teresa describes the levels of prayer that correspond to the soul's progress towards sainthood. There is a relationship between spiritual maturity and the degree of prayer.
- an internal **stripping away** that allows us to move ever closer to the **essential**.

# Spiritual Fruits of Carmelite Prayer

- we move from the **superficial** to the **infinite** frontiers of God's love and the love of others. (the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments)
- we are made to be **unique saints**. Normally this process towards sainthood happens with time. Sainthood is the experience of being loved by God and responding to his love. St. Paul however was given it all at once, a complete transformation, but usually it happens over time.

# Recollection

Those who can enclose themselves within this **little heaven of our soul**, where the Maker of heaven and earth is present...should believe they are following an **excellent path** and that they will **not fail to drink water from the fount...It is the path of heaven.** (W28 5)

...**I never knew what it was to pray with satisfaction until the Lord taught me this method.** ...so many *benefits from this habit of recollection*...you can if you want , avoid ever withdrawing from such good company; ...if you can, **practice this recollection often during the day; if not, do so a few times.**

...Once this **recollection is given by the Lord, you will not exchange it for any treasure.** (W29 7)

# Recollection

- The soul collects its powers and **encloses** itself with God in its soul. Recollection allows us to take care of our relationship with God.
- We screen out our surroundings and turn within to focus on the Lord, talk to him. The 3 powers of our soul turn within... the intellect, the memory and the will, the most spiritual part of the being.
- This prayer is **natural**. It is within our reach. It is not supernatural. Our **will** takes the lead, the initiative. In supernatural prayer it is God who leads.
- Close your eyes, focus your attention on our Lord. If you can do this you are well on your way.

# Recollection

Consider what St. Augustine says, he sought Him in many places but found Him ultimately within himself.

Do you think it matters little for a soul with a wandering mind to understand this truth and to see that there is no need to go to heaven in order to speak with one's Eternal Father or to find delight in Him?

Nor is there any need to shout. However softly we speak he is near enough to hear us. Neither is there any need for wings to go to find him. All one need do is go into solitude and look at him within one's self...

It is simple to enter into a relationship with our Lord; know too that he hears you.

# Silence

- Silence allows us to live out this friendship with Christ; it needs silence.
- St. John of the Cross: The Heavenly Father said one word; His Son. He said it eternally and in an eternal silence. It is in the silence of the soul that it is heard.
- Silence allows this intimate, **internal transformation**. God wants to transform us into Himself.
- Silence is a gift; it is complete availability to God.

# Silence

- The more we are attached to something, the more it will preoccupy us and prevent us from resting in this silence; so what will God do as we are very weak, if we happy to be with him - He will work in our soul.
- **Distractions** then aren't an obstacle to silence. They will always be there, a natural activity of the imagination especially at the end of the day, there will be more images coming to mind from the day. St. John of the Cross tells us that silence is a disposition of the heart.
- In spite of distractions, if you have the **desire to be with God**, it is the prayer. It is a desire to be with the Christ, to give yourself completely to Him that prepares the way internally.



# Silence

And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks *before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind.*

*And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.*<sup>12</sup>

And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire.

And after the fire the sound of **a low whisper.**

And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said,

“What are you doing here, Elijah?” Kings 19

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# Silence

**God's actions don't make noise.**

He works in the soul without us even being aware of it.

For example you might have a 'noisy prayer session', full of distractions, but that could have been the day when God worked the most in your soul but you didn't even notice this 'light breeze'.

# In Summary

- Silent prayer needs recollection and silence;
- We will be transformed, deified, by silent prayer;
- There is only one God by nature but in a way, God makes us equal to Him, He calls us to participate in His divinity; this happens through friendship.

# In Summary

- Friendships creates equality between two beings; or two equal beings can form a friendship;
- Silent Prayer allows God to transform us to be able to fully live out this friendship with Him.