

PRAYER of RECOLLECTION

EMMANUEL RENAULT, O.C.D.
JEAN ABIVEN, O.C.D.

Prayer of Recollection



**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. (V 47)**

What is this Way of Prayer?

- ❖ **Inspired by Osuna**
- ❖ **Distinct from Discursive Meditation**

3 Essential Points & Tips

- ❖ **Recollect** oneself;
- ❖ **Become aware**, within oneself or near to oneself of the Living Presence of Jesus Christ;
- ❖ **Converse** in a heart to heart with Him;
- ❖ A few **Tips** to recollect oneself will be added.

1. Recollect Oneself

**...to come before God it is necessary to
recognize one's misery, unworthiness &
experience a real humility &
admiration before Our Lord...
however sublime the contemplation,
let your prayer always begin and
end with self-knowledge. (W 39 5)**

Preliminary Steps

❖ Examination of Conscience

❖ Act of Contrition

❖ Sign of the Cross (W 26 1)

Effort of Recollection

**...getting accustomed to caring nothing at
all about seeing or hearing. (V11 9)**

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

Movement of the Soul

**The Movement of the Soul to enter into itself
can be sought anytime and anywhere
since God is everywhere (W 28 2)**

**It helped me also to look at
fields, or water, or flowers (V 9 5)**

In the Beginning...

- ❖ **Habit of Silence** (W 4, 9): exterior solitude and withdrawal to enable interior silence and solitude.
- ❖ **Recollection** is an **Effort of Attention to God**: absorbs the soul's strength to the point of evacuating everything that isn't Him. Everyone can achieve this recollection with the ordinary help of **grace**.

Initial Devotion

...it is possible for us to acquire by our own means
[...] in obtaining this initial devotion
we can help ourselves in some way.

This recollection is **not** something **supernatural**,
it is something we can desire to achieve ourselves
with the help of God....(W 29 4)

2. Become Aware of the Presence of Christ

- ❖ To **Realize** that Our Lord is there is the most important step.
- ❖ To practice interior prayer it is not enough to ‘meditate on’ ---
intellect grows weary there must be a **Personal Relationship** with the Lord, a direct face to face contact.

Consideration & Personal Relationship

...grasping the quality of the Lord
compared to our situation as creature and sinner,
is essential for the soul.

...a person who is not aware
to whom he is speaking,
what he is asking,
who it is who is asking and of whom,
I don't call that prayer (C 17).

Living contact with Christ in His Humanity

- ❖ What sort of image does Teresa mean since she suggests this method to souls who, like herself, were incapable of using their imagination this way...
- ❖ Teresa could not achieve an **image** of Christ that was visual and continuous...like a painting or an image of Him
...I was unable to keep Him as **engraved in my soul** as I desired (F 5 2)

Faith that Perceives

The **representation** she proposed would not be an imaginative one but based on **faith**
... a **living faith perceived not seen**

...I was like one who is blind or in darkness;
...he knows with certainty that He is there;
such was the case with me
when I thought of our Lord (v 9 6).

Christ in His Humanity

Teresa, leaning on the certainty by faith
of the **living proximity** of Christ,
appreciated the truth of the Incarnation which brings
a **warmth, consistency and dynamism**
to the relationship of Our Lord with man
that the highest abstract elevations to the Divinity will never bring.
This is why she insists on the **physical reality** of the Presence...
however softly we speak, He is near enough to hear us (W 28 2).

Representation by Faith

Representation by faith

plays a major role in interior prayer...

Do you think it is of little importance to know what heaven is and where you must seek your most sacred Father?

Well, I tell you that for **wandering minds** it is very important not only to believe these truths but to strive to understand them by experience.

Doing this is one of the ways of greatly **slowing down the mind and recollecting the soul** (W 28 1).

Little Heaven of Our Souls

- ❖ The Representation of Christ...Teresa suggests that He be considered sometimes next to you (V 13 22), sometimes in front of you (V 12 2) and, sometimes within you (W 28 4)
- ❖ Yet, she insists that He is preferably **represented** in the most **intimate part** of the **soul** as such a thought is much more alluring and fruitful than thinking of Him as outside of oneself (V 40 6)...enter the paradise within itself to be with its God (W 29 4) or in the little heaven of our soul. (W 28 5)

Fundamental Principle of Teresian Spirituality

- ❖ Teresa's preference for the representation of Christ in the soul is **doctrinal**. (Jn 15:4 Remain in me).
- ❖ She is insisting on a truth which constitutes a **fundamental principle** of Teresian spirituality: Christ resides in the soul, in its center, as in a mansion.
- ❖ This idea, present throughout Teresian writings, is developed in the Interior Castle.

The Mutual Look: A Personal Relationship

- ❖ The Soul is recollected in the Presence of the Christ-Man.
Now What?

Represent the Lord Himself as close to you and behold how lovingly and humbly He is teaching you
[...] I'm not asking you now that you think about Him...
I'm not asking you to do anything more than **look** at Him (W 263).

- ❖ This mutual look...or loving attention, expresses a **personal living relationship** of reciprocal presence. It is about a simple activity.

3. Conversation with Christ

Two Variable Forms

- ❖ a heart to heart conversation
- ❖ a conversation with an evangelical theme

First Form: A Heart to Heart

For not only will you desire to look at Him
but you will also delight in speaking with Him,
not with ready-made prayers
but with those that come from the sorrow of your own heart, for
He esteems them highly (W 26 6)

Remain there in His presence with the intellect quiet.
And if a person is able he should **occupy** himself in
looking at Christ who is looking at Him,
and he should **speak** and petition, and humble himself,
and delight in the Lord's presence,
and remember that he is **unworthy** of being there. (V 13 22)

Truth, Liberty & Love

This **One on One** exchange is **characterized** by:

Truth- that it hide nothing, knowing it is loved by the Lord in spite of everything;

Liberty- It is about the simplicity of two friends;

Love- the **Heart of Teresian Prayer**

... it is important not to think much but to **love much** (IC 4 1 7).

... bodily strength is not necessary but only **love** and a **habit** (V 7 12)

... they are **servants of love** (V11 1)

...If all imaginations are not capable of meditation,
all souls are capable of loving (F 5 2)

To Love God Means.....

- ❖ To love God means to be willing to conform oneself to His will, whatever the cost... to please God in everything (IC 4 1 7).
- ❖ Teresa insisted that one proves the authenticity of one's love through actions...what is more acceptable and certain is what leaves the best effects...those confirmed by works ...that the intellect and memory be occupied in how best to please Him and show Him the love one has for Him
(Letter 136 pg. 368)
- ❖ During prayer, it is necessary to do everything to keep a lively contact with Christ and maintain the relationship of love active...and so do that which best stirs you to love (IC 4 1 7).

Second Form: a Conversation with an Evangelical Theme

- ❖ Teresa knew that the will often needs the help of the intellect so as to be enkindled; (IC 67, 7)
- ❖ We choose a Bible scene that we enter into ... interpreting the words of Christ as if spoken to us.
- ❖ St. Theresa's preference was the Passion... It is from here that has come and continues to come every good (V 13 13). (Theater)

Restrained Sense

- ❖ In this restrained sense, she invites us into meditation but be careful not to prolong this meditative conversation...one should not weary oneself (V 13 22)
- ❖ Once the soul is wakened to love (See V 22 14) come back to the free and spontaneous conversation or to the simple look.
- ❖ We alternate periods of silence with exchange.....He doesn't want us to be breaking our heads trying to speak a great deal to Him (W 29 6).

Summary

- ❖ St. Teresa's manner of prayer allows much liberty provided the soul is active or awakened to love.
- ❖ It is possible in one prayer session to go from the simple look to a heart to heart and inversely, using at will the type of prayer that allows us to stay vigilante and loving.
- ❖ To preserve this interior liberty necessary for love, St. Teresa said that...it is very helpful not to drag the soul along, as they say, but to lead it gently for the sake of its greater advantage (V 11 16).

4. Tips to Recollect Oneself

To establish or reestablish
contact with the Lord
St. Teresa suggests
little ploys, skill (W 26 10).

A Book

- ❖ 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 (W 26 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 (V 4 9).
- ❖ Reading offers a center of interest, something for my thoughts to focus on ...and even for some replaces mental prayer that they cannot achieve (V 4 8). In any case, for those who journey along this path, a book helps to promptly recollect oneself (V 9 5). I have always been fond of the words of the Gospels and found more recollection in them than in very cleverly written books (W 21 3).

An Image & Vocal Prayer

- ❖ **Image or Painting** of the Lord ...not so as to carry it about on your heart and never look at it but so as to speak often with Him (W 26 9).
- ❖ **Vocal Prayer** ...Now, then, let us speak again to those souls I mentioned that cannot recollect or tie their minds down in mental prayer or engage in reflection (W 24 1). The intellect is recollected much more quickly with this kind of prayer even though it may be vocal; it is prayer that brings with it many blessings (W 28 4). I tell you that it is very possible that while you are reciting the Our Father or some other vocal prayer, the Lord may raise you to perfect contemplation (W 25 1).

A Last Objection

- ❖ Teresa heard murmurings about the reality of her having a real conversation with the Lord....even though we do not hear Him, He speaks well to the heart when we beseech Him from the heart (W 24 5).
- ❖ Concerning beginners and all those who begin, yet they never reach the end...thinking they are doing nothing, she remarks that it is then perhaps that their will is being strengthened and fortified, although they may not be aware of this (V 11 15).

A Last Objection

- ❖ Though He comes disguised, the disguise ...does not prevent Him from being recognized in many ways, in conformity with the desire we have to see Him. And you can desire to see Him so much that He will reveal Himself to you entirely ^(W 34 12) if we prepare ourselves to receive Him, He never fails to give in many ways which we do not understand ^(W 35 1)
- ❖ The Lord's answer may perhaps not be through words, but by His action in the most intimate part of the soul. By the feelings that He gives...Sometimes a silence full of love...Sometimes a feeling that He is there, that He is listening. More often nothing other than a reinforced will to serve Him whatever the cost.