

Introduction

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❖ Teresa of Avila developed a ‘**way**’ of prayer, usable by **beginners** or those **more advanced** in the **way of perfection**;

❖ She met the Living God through her practice of interior prayer & experienced **union with Him**;

❖ It took her time to **identify** the **original characteristics** of her **way** of prayer...;

❖ For a long time she wouldn’t be able to **explain** what she was living. She had to refer to Bernardino de Laredo’s book, *The Ascent of Mount Sion*.

Introduction

- ❖ Teresa's difficulty to explain herself clearly came from the **variability** of her spirit;
- ❖ She wasn't able to **discipline** herself to logically **develop an idea**, but did have the ability to return to her original idea;
- ❖ **Imprecise Vocabulary** was another difficulty. Having received no formal training;

Our Mission is
to seek to
discover the **truth**
Teresa was striving
to convey
as we follow the
steps of her journey.

Discursive Meditation

Discursive Meditation

- ❖ Teresa received **no special training** in prayer during her novitiate; no obligation to have a personal prayer time. Teresa **taught herself**.
- ❖ As a novice, she practiced meditation using **books**;
- ❖ She meditated on the **Passion** of Our Lord, on her **sins** & on the **briefness** of everything in this world.

- ❖ At her final vows, she still did **not** know how to proceed in prayer or how to be recollected. (V 4, 7)
- ❖ She said that she had read a lot of things and didn't understand anything of what I read. (V 12 6)
- ❖ Her writings indicate that **meditation** did **not** suit her.

Discursive Meditation

❖ For her **meditation** is an exercise of the intellect... *It is about thoughts to help the intellect...the whole business lies in thinking* (F 5 2)

❖ This exercise presupposes an **ordered intelligence** or a form of logical thinking requiring a visual imagination.

❖ Teresa felt that this mental gymnastic requires a lot of **work**; the intellect grows **weary**....

❖ Teresa could never get accustomed to this method.

❖ She had an intuitive and practical intelligence...There are some souls and minds so scattered that they are like wild horses no one can stop...(W 19 2)

❖ Her attempts at meditation were torture for her.

Discursive Meditation

There is nothing for me to say to anyone who can form the habit of following this **method of prayer**, or who has already formed it, for by means of so good a path the Lord will draw him to the haven of light. And through such a good beginning the end will be reached. All who are able to walk along this path will have rest & security for when the **intellect is bound** one proceeds peacefully (W 19,1).

Such measured praise betrays her **distaste** for this method of prayer...
The souls in the previous dwelling places...
do well because **nothing further** has been given them (IC 4 1, 6).

Discursive Meditation

She strongly recommended a **‘shortcut’**

(to contemplation taught her by the Lord)...

...one reaches contemplation more quickly (V 4 7).

In its progress it advances a great deal

because it advances in **love** (V 9 5);

and its divine Master comes more quickly to teach it

and give it the **prayer of quiet**

than He would through any other method it might use (W 28 4).

Osuna Method

Osuna Method

- ❖ **The Third Spiritual Alphabet** by Osuna suggested finding **union** with God in prayer through the path of **interior recollection**.
- ❖ He suggested becoming **silent within**, making oneself 'deaf, blind and dumb', - to think of nothing - **no pensar nada** - to be attentive to God in His **Divinity**.
- ❖ Osuna said it was important to make a big place in the '**heart**,' for **love**.
- ❖ This method agreed with Teresa's leaning towards **kindness & emotional activity** --- little towards reasoning;
- ❖ Teresa completely gave herself to this method; in **6 months** she experienced the **prayer of union**;
- ❖ This first experience of God will constitute the **foundation** of her future pursuits.

Osuna Method

- ❖ His book made her **very happy**; ...his quest for simplicity, truth, use of Scripture, love of nature, experience & action rather than theory;
- ❖ Teresa would **not lose esteem for him** but was **frustrated** by his 'preacher' style, confusing writing & imprecise vocabulary.

In short,
his **doctrine**
was **unreliable.**

Osuna Method

First Objection

- ❖ He encouraged ‘**absolute silence**’;
- ❖ He compared recollection to a ‘**hedgehog**’ ... (IC 4 3, 3);
- ❖ ‘**No Pensar Nada**’, Teresa realized that seeking God by emptying the senses & intellect caused the **soul** to be **idle**...The intellect ceases to work because God suspends it...trying to keep the soul’s faculties busy and thinking you can make them be quiet is foolish. (V 12 5)

**The hand of God should
not be forced.**

Since God gave us our faculties
that we might work with them
and in this work
they find their reward,
there is no reason to charm them;
we should let them perform
their task until God appoints
them to another greater one (C 4 3 6).

Osuna Method

Second Objection

- ❖ To reach contemplation, Osuna suggested **eliminating** thought of the **human nature of Christ** to concentrate on His **divinity**;
- ❖ This advice would **COST** Teresa dearly;
- ❖ Teresa insisted on attaching oneself to Christ's humanity that provides man a *friendship* (W 26 2), a **focal point** for the *faculties* (V 22 9)...

But mainly because

...if we are going to please Him and receive His great favors, we must do so through the most sacred **humanity of Christ** in whom He takes His delight (V 22 6).

Osuna Method

- ❖ Osuna's method did not allow Teresa to **blossom**;
- ❖ But he taught her the essential was not **discussion** but **love**;
- ❖ Unaware of the errors, she persisted almost 20 years wanting the *recollection* of *infused contemplation*;
- ❖ She experienced *dryness* making it hard for her to persevere in prayer;
- ❖ She deliberately committed *venial sins*;
- ❖ She *gave up interior prayer* for a year & a half, she considered to be her greatest temptation.

Osuna Method

❖ **After her conversion**, a Jesuit, taught her how to practice the **virtues**, to attach herself to the **Humanity of Christ** & to **meditate** according the Company's method (V 23 17);

❖ Father Balthasar **forbade** her to experience infused recollection;

It was only after
much **trial & error**
& a lot of **suffering**,
that she perfected
habit of recollection

(V 13 5; W 29 7)

taught her by the Lord,
Himself (W 29 7).