

Please Note: This short presentation, Opening Remarks, can be used as an ‘**opener**’ for any other presentation planned. We are briefly introduced to St. Teresa of Avila, her life, her definition of prayer and her view of mystical life. The importance of determination to complete this divine journey and the necessity to learn to pray are also pointed out.

Opening Remarks

Mystical Life:

- Mystical life is the fulfillment of Baptismal grace and an increase of the virtues of faith, hope and charity in the heart of he who believes the Kingdom of God is found within.
- For Teresa all who are baptized are invited into mystical life, not just a few elite souls.
- Interior prayer is the path to union with God. This way of prayer is practiced two hours daily by all Discalced Carmelites.

Definition of Teresian Prayer:

Interior Prayer is, in my opinion, simply an intimate exchange of friendship where we speak often, one on one, with God who we know loves us. St. Theresa of Avila (Life 8, 5)

The Royal Road to Heaven:

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; no wonder we have to pay what seems to us a high price. The time will come when you will understand how **trifling everything is next to so precious a reward**...how you begin is very important—in fact, all important. You must have a great and very resolute **Determination to Persevere** until reaching the end, come what may... St. Teresa of Avila (W 21 10)

Determination:

Draw near, then, to this Good Master with **strong determination** to learn what He teaches you...He will not abandon you if you do not abandon Him. (W 26 10)

It is also a great help to take a good book ... to recollect one’s thoughts ... and little by little **accustom the soul** with coaxing & skill not to grow discouraged...Imagine that many years have passed since the soul left the house of its Spouse ...For so we sinners are: our soul and our thoughts are so accustomed to wandering about at their own pleasure...In order that it get to love remaining at home once again, a great deal of skill is necessary. If little by little this is not accomplished, we shall never do anything.

Progress:

If we make the effort, practice this recollection for some days...the **gain** will be clearly seen ... (W28 7) At the **beginning** since the recollection is not so deep—for there are **greater & lesser degrees of recollection**... Even though they **go out again** afterward, their having **already surrendered** is a great thing; for they go out as **captives and subjects** and do not cause the harm they did previously. And when the **will calls them back again**, they come more quickly, until after many of these entries the Lord wills that they rest entirely in **perfect contemplation**.

Important Dates in Saint Teresa’s Life:

1515 (March 28): The birth of Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada.	1572 (November 16): Teresa experiences the Grace of Spiritual Marriage.
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<p>1535 (November 2): Teresa enters the Incarnation Convent.</p> <p>1554 Teresa's Conversion (Saint Augustine, Christ's wounds)</p> <p>1562 (August 24): Foundation of Saint Joseph's Carmel. (December): Teresa begins The Way of Perfection.</p> <p>1568 (November 28): The foundation of first male Discalced Carmelite monastery with John of the Cross.</p>	<p>1582 (October 4/15): Teresa dies "Daughter of the Church" in Alba de Tormes.</p> <p>1614 (April 4): Teresa's Beatification by Paul V.</p> <p>1622 (March 12): Teresa's Canonization by Gregory XV.</p> <p>1970 (September 27): Teresa is named Doctor of the Church by Paul VI.</p>
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The Desert Fathers: *As a Christian Religious Community, the Carmel...*

- ❖ is only 800 years old, **born** in the 1200's on Mount Carmel by a spring known as the 'fountain of Elijah';
- ❖ The early Desert Carmelites, the Prophet Elijah being one of them, led **disciplined lives of unceasing prayer, reflection, fasting, silence, solitude, work**, taking the **Eucharist** together, having weekly **meetings** to correct & encourage one another;
- ❖ They **abstained** from meat, lived in poverty, all was owned in common;
- ❖ The leader was **elected** and lived at the entrance to the site;
- ❖ The **oratory** was situated in the midst of their cells; it formed the center of their lives.

The Rule of Albert:

- ❖ Albert Avogadro, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, elaborated the **Official Rule** of the Order between 1206 - 1214;
- ❖ The Rule was based on the **hermetical life** of the early desert hermits;
- ❖ The **Standard of Conduct** for the Carmel Order;
- ❖ St. Theresa of Avila began her **reform** in the 16th century, rejecting the **mitigated rule**;
- ❖ As other reformers before her, she used the original setting on **Mt. Carmel** as her **blueprint**.

Lord, teach us to pray:

More people than you would think would be capable of practicing interior prayer, but no one taught them. And, *without an interior life*, the baptized run out of breath, their actions become noisy gongs and even their religious practice, when it exists, dries up." John Paul II September 29, 1982

We need a Christianity that distinguishes itself above all in the art of prayer. {...} We also know that prayer must not be considered self-evident. It is necessary to **learn to pray** ... through prayer a dialogue develops with Christ which allows us to become his **intimate friends**: "Remain in me and I in you" (John 15:4). This **reciprocity** is the **essential element** of the soul in the Christian life ...

"Yes, our Christian communities must become authentic 'schools' of prayer, ... allowing history to be built according to God's design'. John Paul II Apostolic Letter 1/6/2001 Novo Millenio Ineunte