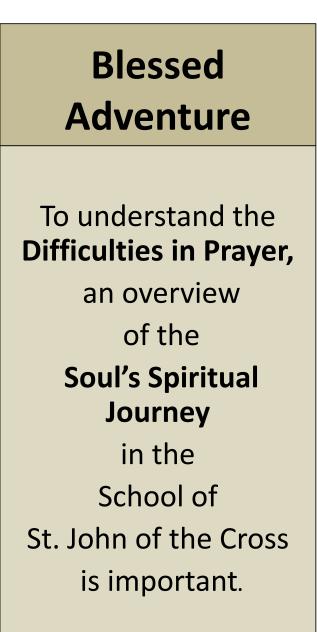
# **Difficulties in Prayer**

#### An Overview: Spirituality St. John of the Cross

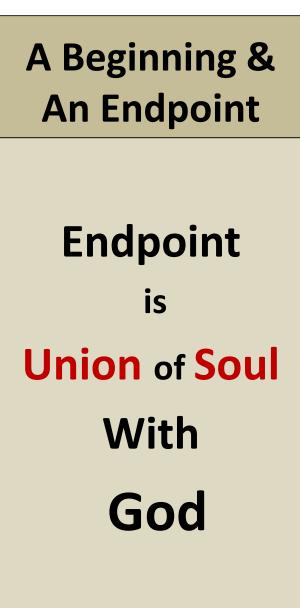
**Fr. Moise, ocd** Broussey 2019



 Quest of the soul for union with God;

• Context of the **big picture**;

 A sound foundation is needed to grasp the dynamic at the root of the difficulties.



- The spiritual journey doesn't occur as successive steps but as guideposts that are connected to the difficulties;
- If we don't understand the big picture we will study the difficulties but won't know when to expect them;
- We are made to be loved by God. It is the endpoint that St. John of the Cross lays out for us.

#### Guide to Union with God

#### **Spiritual Father**

### Teacher

## **Spiritual Guide**

- John of the Cross doesn't talk about doctrine;
- He points out the traps and the difficulties and what to do about them;
- If you have understood this you won't have any trouble reading his works;
- He wants to guide us to union with God.

# Active Purification of both the

**Active Nights** 

Senses &Spirit. The **Beginning** is the **World** of **Passions & Appearances;** 

- Senses are in charge and control the intellect which rebels against God;
- The soul is as if blinded and no longer reflects the image of God;
- Then we had a **conversion** that turned us towards God.

# Active Night of the Senses

# Make Room for God

- Gradually worldly occupations leave us indifferent;
- When invited we go out of courtesy.
   We force ourselves to leave these things behind for God;
- We notice we have an interest in the Word of God. Our will is turning towards God. Our memory is striving to reflect the image of God;
- There is active work taking place at the level of the senses and the spirit.

Passive Nights	<ul> <li>Our work is not enough to make us over in God's image. God needs to help us;</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>God does the work in our place. It's God's transformative action or the passive night of the senses and of the spirit;</li> </ul>
Purifying Action	<ul> <li>God purifies our senses by communicating with us through our spirit;</li> </ul>
of God	<ul> <li>Before when we prayed we would get good feelings. Suddenly it ended, we feel nothing;</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>We think God has left us. He seems absent. Work is however being done at a spiritual level.</li> </ul>

#### **Raise Us Up**

### Our Senses

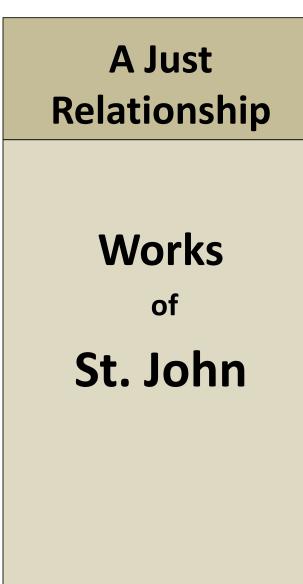
are put at

# 'Half-Mast'

- He initially filled us with sensory
   graces that led to conversion;
- God wants to wants to raise us up to the spiritual level.
- This is very challenging for us; we are lost;
- Initially we notice the distractions, it will be difficult for us to become recollected.



- We have extracted our senses from the world to progress on the spiritual path;
- Our Lord wants us to go deeper so he puts our senses at 'half-mast'. He wants to 'dry them out';
- The spiritual life is not a linear progression. There are guideposts but not levels;
- If we allow ourselves to be transformed in this passive night, total union will happen for us.



- The Ascent of Mount Carmel describes the first effort of the soul to leave the world behind;
- The now-liberated soul throws itself into the conquest of its Beloved;
- This new freedom allows the soul to interact with creatures in a just relationship; a means to unite us to God;
- The entire creation is seen in God. This is described in the Spiritual Canticle.

#### The Living Flame

Soul is adjusted to God

- The soul's now spiritual, unified, simplified and aware of its internal world;
- Communion, has taken place with God; the soul desires to see the veil torn;
- We are fully united with God, but this union isn't yet the vision;

# Challenges Beginning, An End,

A Path.

- Keep in mind the beginning & the end to understand the path's challenges;
- No creature can reach the end by its own efforts; it needs God through the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity;
- The path of seeking God through a dark night of faith ends in a divine meeting;
- We let go of all to seek God.

#### Move Away with Affection

# Leave Behind all things Created

- This detachment is important to avoid all that isn't God;
- We deprive ourselves to make room for God;
- This path leads to a process of transformation, of becoming divine, of being made spiritual;
- The human spirit becomes flexible and pure, completely moved by the Holy Spirit. This is the contemplative life.

Contemplation

Having the Flexibility & Purity necessary to be completely moved by the Holy Spirit It's our **Baptismal vocation**. It's not for the elite. It's for all Christians;

- Stop thinking that silent prayer isn't for you!
- We are made for union with God and to live out this filial adoption;
- A life of prayer is a Baptismal grace. When Jesus came out of the water he was praying. God confirmed his filial relationship with him.

# Goal

When I don't know the **Goal of my Life**, it's hard to live life

- It is important to see the **big picture** of the spiritual path;
- We focus on aspects & end up lost;
- Dryness & distractions are part of the path;
- The goal of the spiritual life is union with God.