

Difficulties in Prayer

An Overview: Spirituality St. John of the Cross

Fr. Moise, ocd

Broussey 2019

Blessed Adventure

To understand the
Difficulties in Prayer,
an overview
of the
**Soul's Spiritual
Journey**
in the
School of
St. John of the Cross
is important.

- **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.**

A Beginning & An Endpoint

Endpoint
is
Union of Soul
With
God

- 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 Nights

**Active
Purification
of both the
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

Purifying Action of God

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

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.

Go Deeper

**Dry Out
Our
Senses**

- 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.

A Just Relationship

Works of St. John

- 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.**