

Teresa & Prayer
St. Teresa's School of Prayer

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Introduction

‘Mental prayer,
in my opinion,
is nothing else than
an intimate sharing between
friends; it means taking time
frequently to be alone
with him who we
know loves us” (L8,5)

- For St. Teresa prayer is an interpersonal & real relationship
- Who you are speaking to is all important.

Personal Encounter



- Christian prayer is a mystery;
- Each definition of prayer clarifies but an aspect of it;
- This article asks Teresa what she understands by 'prayer.'

The Word of God

Knowing that she was loved,
Teresa learned to love &
rest with him in **prayer**

We can read the following
in the **Gospel of John:**

God is Love (1 Jn 4,7);

God has first loved us (1 Jn4, 10);
your heavenly Father loves you (Jn16,
27).

- Teresa places prayer in the context of **friendship**;
- Faith in God & in the divine life we receive as a Gift of Baptism was something Teresa never doubted;
- Teresa was called by God to live the life of God she ignored for a time. But once she tasted the **living water**, she never hesitated again.

The Word of God

Teresa's experience of mental prayer is possible for all of us.

“If all are not capable of meditating or engaging in thoughtful reflection, at least we are

all capable of loving (W5,2)

- For Teresa, the emphasis is on the **Person** we encounter;
- Teresa's definition is about God and his creature who **seek** one another in **friendship & encounter** one another in **love**;

The Word of God

For St. Teresa
the method of prayer
is
Simple

Mental prayer means
being aware of
& knowing what we are saying
& to whom we are speaking;
who am I to speak with
so great a Lord...
that is to make **Meditation**

Rest in the Friendship of God

To pray is to
place oneself before God &
to rest in his good friendship.

One rests within oneself
where every personal contact
is realized,
in the presence of a friend.

We gaze on him
whose gaze is on us
in the center of the soul.

- For Teresa it is important to seek that encounter & that company;
- To seek is already to pray because God acknowledges & rewards the effort we make to come to him;
- It is at the moment of **meeting** that the person & God contemplate one another;
- To look or to **contemplate** expresses an encounter of friendship & love.

Rest in the Friendship of God

It is through **prayer**,
that Teresa compares
to a **door** or a **gate**,
that
God enters the soul

- Prayer is the **habitual seeking** of God within & thus to see & be seen;
- The **delight of God** is to live with his creature, to dwell in intimacy with him and to fill the person with himself which is '**infinite joy.**'

Rest in the Friendship of God

It is through the efforts
we make to seek
& be in the Lord's
company that God
strengthens us
& makes us more
& more capable of
resting in his presence

- It is not easy to arrive at this loving encounter—it requires **determination**—;
- But let us not tire in seeking the presence in us of the **Friend**;
- Teresa says that we should never cease entering within ourselves to seek the Lord;

Possible Dangers on the Journey

‘No sisters, the
Lord wants works,
He wishes, for example,
that if you see a sick person
to whom you can bring relief
you should be ready
to set aside
your devotion &
exercise compassion.’

Achieving a work of the Spirit is not possible
without **meeting the demon**

- **Narcissism** a common danger, Instead of talking with God we talk with ourselves;
- **Pride** another danger, we believe we are one of the ‘elect’ distinct from ordinary people;
- **‘Not walking in the truth’**; a tendency of people of prayer is that they must step aside from daily life.

Prayer Techniques

Teresa criticizes the belief that through techniques we can experience God. No human techniques can capture God. We experience God by **Grace**.

- Teresa preferred water given by Him to all we could draw from our own well; she was open to all that is good & 'everything helps.'
- There was a **yogic technique** used at that time to control the mind & slow the thinking. She turned from it;
- She disapproved of techniques of **emptying the mind**;
- In the Way of Perfection she suggests a discipline to focus the attention, relax & integrate the whole person.

Conclusion



- Teresa was a contemplative mystic;
- She overflowed with the mystery of God;
- Teresa was capable of the prayer of **deep recollection & silence.**