

God Alone

Love for Love:
The Life and Works of St. Teresa of Avila

Part 3 (of 4)
Topic 9-13

By St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

9. God Alone

The soul that surrenders to the divine attraction by this way of praying ... receives some knowledge of heavenly glory... it loses pleasure in earthly things... Its clearly sees that it could not ... enjoy this supernatural joy on earth ... the only thing that can satisfy... it will say along with St. Peter, "Lord, let us make out home here."

(L, 15, 1)

- At 40 years old, God rewarded Teresa's perseverance, he drew her permanently to himself;
- Teresa was given the prayer of quiet, the will delivers itself to God like a prisoner;
- The Lord becomes the gardener; the soul is raised from quiet to union;
- ...this way of praying is a clear union of the entire soul with God...their only activity is to be occupied with him...(L,16, 2-3)

9. God Alone

By one visit...
the soul sees itself
transformed...

It recognizes it could not acquire
those virtues given by the Lord,
it feels a profound humility
beginning...

The Lord requires ...a simple
consent ... and a full surrender...

(L, 17, 1-3)

- At the beginning of her mystical life, the duration of the union was very short, hardly the time of a Hail Mary; the effect was astounding;
- Union frequently increases to rapture, the soul loses control of its body;
- During rapture it is almost always impossible to resist the supernatural power of attraction... if God wills something, all resistance to his omnipotence amounts to nothing;
- The effects are great...it teaches us ... we have a divine Master... detachment... leaves a great love in the soul.

9. God Alone

... One hour's ecstasy ...
is sufficient to make the
soul the mistress of itself
and of all things and
to give it a freedom
in which it no longer
recognizes even itself

- ...the soul sees beneath it the things of the world without in the least being governed by them!
- It is concerned for those who still live in darkness... it would like to break their chains and tear them from prison...;
- If it contemplates the endless holiness of its God, it is blinded by his light...;
- ... thousand times happy, the soul whom God raises to the knowledge of the truth; (L, 20, 21)
- Teresa would make any sacrifice for the glory of God; before she was permitted to be God's chosen instrument, she still had to taste bitter pain.

10. New Tests

A holy and learned man, Caspar Daza, interpreted her favors from the devil;

Fr. Juan de Pradanos reassured her about the origins of her mystical states and advised her to continue on the path adding mortifications and constraints in her manner of meditating, the latter quickly lifted.

- Teresa's first difficulty came from her ignorance of mystical theology;
- She couldn't imagine how an unworthy person like herself received such favors;
- She was plagued with fears that these mystical states were of the devil;
- Teresa stressed the importance of a spiritual director on the interior journey.

10. New Tests

St. Francis Borgia

visited the Jesuit college,
he told Teresa to offer no
more resistance

He advised to begin prayer by
meditating on a mystery of
the passion

He left Teresa completely
consoled (L, 24, 3)

- Soon everyone in town was talking about Teresa's favors;
- Fr. Baltasar Alvarez, imposed tests on her by denying her solitude and communion for twenty days;
- The Lord calmed her again and again; strengthened her to remain obedient no matter how hard it was;
- Her reward was increased favors, the presence of the Lord by her side, at first invisibly then in a visible form; (L, 29, 4)
- In the absence of Fr. Alvarez, another priest advised she send the evil spirit away and make a gesture of contempt.

10. New Tests

...The spirit of God only flows into things that are in agreement with the Holy Scriptures. If there had been the slightest deviation, I would have been convinced that these things came from the author of lies

(L, 25, 12-13)

- With each new favor Teresa grew in humility and love;
- During intense grace and trials, Teresa saw a visible image; I saw beside me... an angel...he had a long dart in his hands the end of which glowed like fire... he pierced my heart with it...I was entirely inflamed with love for God (L, 25, 12-13);
- The heart of the Saint is preserved in the monastery of Alba and remains intact bearing a long, deep wound.

11. Works for the Lord

One day she was transported into hell by a horrible vision.

“I immediately understood that God wanted to show me the place that the devil had reserved for me ...”

(L, 32, 1)

Brokenhearted, as though I could do something ... I embraced the feet of the Lord...and asked him to remedy such evil... (W, 1,2)

- One who loves feels compelled to do something for the beloved;
- She wanted to do as much as possible to make herself holy;
- She recognized what God’s mercy had preserved her from but countless others were still subject to dangers she had escaped;
- The thought occurred to her to free herself from the mitigated Rule of her monastery.

12. St. Joseph's of Avila the First Monastery of the Reform

“He assured me that he would be very well served in a monastery I might find, that this house would become a star shedding the brightest light...

What would the world be if there were no more monasteries?”

(L, 32,11)

- Maria de Ocampo suggested a monastery in which the life of the ancient hermits could be revived;
- Dona Guiomare, Teresa's trusted friend took up the idea;
- A little house was found for a monastery without income;
- Teresa was sent to Luisa de la Cerda in Toledo to console her after her husband's death; the duchess became a supporter of the reform;
- Her brother in law's illness allowed Teresa to move into the house, her future monastery, to care for him and oversee the renovations.

12. St. Joseph's of Avila
the First Monastery of the Reform

“My first daughters were four orphans without dowries but great servants of God... and would by their example be suitable building blocks of the spiritual edifice... and lead lives of contemplation and perfection” (see L, 36, 6)

- On August 24, the first four Carmelites arrived at the monastery; Caspar Daza celebrated the first Mass;
- Teresa clothed her daughters in the robe of the Discalced Carmelites;
- Rumor of the foundation without income spread, the opposition incited the population;
- The Prioress of the Incarnation ordered Teresa to return to the monastery, she did;
- Fr. Domingo Banez defended the foundation, the angry crowd dispersed, the monastery rescued.

12. St. Joseph's of Avila the First Monastery of the Reform

“God wanted ...to have a house where he could recreate, a dwelling for his consolation. He wanted a garden with flowers ...that unfold in heaven... a flower garden ... in whose midst he could take his repose, to whom he could disclose his secrets and open his heart.”
“Because our Lord has... so few friends ... they must be very good ones” (W, 1,2)

- On December 5, 1562, Teresa returned to St. Joseph's with four additional nuns from the Incarnation;
- They put on the habit, gave up their family names and chose a noble title from heaven;
- Teresa educated the nuns to be the Lord's good friends;
- The day was apportioned between work to contribute support, carried out in silence and solitude and prayer;
- Only during recreation, a required practice, did the sisters talk.

12. St. Joseph's of Avila the First Monastery of the Reform

“...they find their delight in solitude. All their happiness lies in thoughts of making progress in serving God. Their blessedness is to live alone with him. .. God rewards them with true joy for the false delights they have left for him. I cannot say how much comfort I feel living in the company of such innocents souls who have renounced everything,
(see L, 35, 12)

- Teresa desired to live this separation from the world with her family;
- She led them more deeply into prayer, the heroic exercise of virtues...humility, obedience, surrender of self, poverty, charity...;
- And to consecrate all to the glory of God and his church, for the salvation of souls and to support priests doing battle with the errors of the time.