

## Opening Remarks 2

Please Note that these opening remarks can be used to introduce any other presentation on this website.

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St. Teresa of Jesus was born in Avila, Spain, in 1515. At the age of 20, she entered the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation in her native Avila. After 26 years in the Incarnation, she was inspired by God to found the convent of St. Joseph in Avila that would be devoted to a **life of contemplative prayer**. Before her death in 1582 she **founded 17 convents** which formed the beginnings of the Order of Discalced Carmelites.

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Today Discalced Carmelites number about 12,000 cloistered women in 98 countries, nearly 4,000 mendicant friars in 82 countries and some 40,000 lay Carmelites throughout the world.

Teresa believe the purpose of her new order was to pray for the needs of the church.

During the course of her life she wrote several books and left other writings that teach the way of contemplative prayer for those who follow in her footsteps.

In 1970, Pope Paul VI declared St. Teresa the first woman **doctor of the church**, primarily for her teaching on prayer.

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Teresa however, did not always find prayer easy. In the earlier years of her religious life, she was not able to follow the traditional methods of discursive meditation, or prayerfully calling to mind & reflecting on specific religious thoughts and images. Finally, she discovered '**the prayer of recollection**' which she said the Lord himself taught her. 'I confess that I never knew what it was to prayer with satisfaction until the Lord taught me this method' (W, 29,7).

It involved simply meeting Jesus Christ, true God and true man, in the deepest center of her being. She wrote: 'I tried as hard as I could to keep Jesus

Christ, our God and our Lord, present within me, and that was my **way of prayer**' (L, 4,7).

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Enthusiastically, she taught this way of prayer to others, assuring them that this method "is not something supernatural, but is something we can desire and achieve ourselves with the help of God" (Way, 29,4). It is a method she found "beneficial" in all stages of the Spiritual journey (L,12.3).

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This prayer is called '**recollection**' because the soul collects its faculties together and enters within itself to be with its God. (W 28, 4)

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Interior Prayer is, in my opinion, simply an intimate exchange of **friendship** where we speak often, one on one, with the One who we know loves us. Teresa of Avila (V 8, 5)

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The whole aim of any person who is beginning prayer—and don't forget this because it's very important—should be that he work and prepare himself with determination and every possible effort to bring **his will into conformity with God's will**. Be certain that, as I shall say later, the **greatest perfection** attainable along the spiritual path lies in this conformity. It is the person who lives in more perfect conformity who will receive more from the Lord and be more advanced on this road. Don't think that in what concerns perfection there is some mystery or things unknown or still to be, for **in perfect conformity to God's will lies all our good**. (C, 2, 8)

### Slide 9

This Divine journey is the Royal Road to Heaven

.... a great **treasure** is gained by travelling this road

“If you grow accustomed to having Him present at your side, and He sees that you do so with love and that you go about striving to please Him, you will not be able -as they say- to get away from Him; He will never fail you; He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere” (W 26,1).

### Slide 10

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.

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#### Reminders:

-Make Time for Regular Periods of Mental Prayer  
“Mental prayer... means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us”. (L8,5) -  
-Teresa speaks of ‘the hour I had determined to spend in prayer’ (L8,7). ‘I should consider the time of prayer as not belonging to me and think that He can ask it of me in justice when I do not want to give it wholly to Him’ (W 23,2).

**Distractions** are Normal Distractions are **‘unavoidable** ... and should not be a disturbance or affliction for you ... Pay no attention to these thoughts ... and let’s not blame the soul for what a weak imagination, human nature, and the devil cause” (IC 4,1). I consider distractions an incurable disease” (L, 10/9/81).

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**-Be Prepared for Dryness:** “As for... dryness, it seems to me that the Lord is now treating you as one who is strong. He wants to try you in order to know the love you have for Him, whether it is present in dryness as well as in spiritual delights. Take it as a very great favor from God. Don’t let it cause you any grief, for perfection does not consist in delight but in the virtues. When you least expect, **devotion will return.** (L 8/7/1580)

**-Pray Always:** “The true lover loves everywhere and is always thinking of the Beloved! It would be a thing hard to bear if we were able to pray only when off in some corner” (F5,16).