

Opener

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Saint Teresa of Avila

- ❖ 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, Teresa 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).

**“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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Silent Prayer



**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.**

St. Teresa of Avila (V 8, 5)

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)

A Great Treasure is Gained



This Divine journey
is the
Royal Road to Heaven
....a great **treasure**
is gained by
travelling this road

Mystical Life

- ❖ **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.

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).

REMINDERS

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).

“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).