

2. Solitary Dialogue with God as the Prayer of the Church

excerpt from *The Prayer of the Church*

by Edith Stein

Carmel Clarion, Apr-June 2010

St Teresa of Avila's
Mandate

The Purpose
of the
Discalced Carmelite Order

St Teresa of Avila's mandate
to Pray for all Priests
... in the Way of Perfection
describes the purpose of
The Discalced Carmelite Order
and the Spiritual Imagery
of the houses of intense silent prayer
to confer protection upon the Church,
to build up of the Lord's Kingdom on earth
and for our Lord's Priests.

The Key

The Key
to understanding the
Prayer of the Church

The Key to understanding
the Prayer of the Church
is
the Prayer Life of Jesus

LITURGICAL PRAYER

The Prayer Life of Jesus

- Christ took part in public and prescribed worship services or 'liturgy';
- He brought the liturgy into the most intimate relationship with his sacrificial offering;
- So for the first time he gave it its full and true meaning - thankful homage of creation to its Creator;
- This is how he transformed the liturgy of the Old Covenant into the New.

SOLITARY PRAYER

SOLITARY PRAYER

preceded any

Action

taken by

Our Lord

- Before beginning his Public Ministry, Jesus went into the desert for 40 days/nights;
- Before choosing his 12 Apostles, Jesus withdrew into the solitude of the mountains;
- Before beginning his passion he spent an hour on the Mt. of Olives;

SOLITARY PRAYER

Father, if you are willing
take this cup away from me.

Nevertheless,
let your will be done,
not mine

Luke 22:42

- A few short words tell us what he implored of his Father during this most difficult hour of his life;
- These words are given to us as guiding stars for our own hours on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22: 42);
- These words illumine for us the innermost spiritual life of Jesus, surely this dialogue was life-long and uninterrupted;
- Christ prayed interiorly when alone but also among people.

SOLITARY PRAYER

At the end of the Last Supper,
the hour of the
birth of the Church,
Jesus prayed to the Father

High Priestly Prayer

John 17:1-26

- Talking alone with God had its antecedent in the Old Covenant;
- On the day of Atonement, antecedent to Good Friday, the high priest stepped into the Holy of Holies;
- The dialogue between the high priest and God took place in deep mystery;
- All who belong to Christ can hear how he speaks to the Father in the Holy of Holies of his heart and can do the same in theirs.

SOLITARY PRAYER

The decision for
Redemption
was considered in the
Eternal Silence
of the
Divine Life.

- The Savior's High priestly prayer unveils the mystery of the inner life: The Trinity dwells in the soul;
- In these mysterious depths the work of salvation was prepared in silence;
- It will continue until the union of all is accomplished at the end of time.

SOLITARY PRAYER

And so throughout history
in the Silent Dialogue
of Souls with their Lord
the Events of Church History
are prepared that
Renew the Face of the Earth

- Virgin Mary was praying alone in Nazareth and brought about the Incarnation of the Savior;
- St. Paul in blindness waited in Silent Prayer for the answer to his question: “What would you have me do?”
- St. Peter was prepared for his mission to the Gentiles in silent prayer.

Teresa of Avila & Silent Prayer

The Powerful Reformer
of her Order at a
time of widespread
falling away from the Faith

Her remedy to rescue
the Church was the
renewal of true interior life

...As though I could do something or were something, I cried to the Lord and begged him that I might remedy so much evil...
all my longing is since He has so many enemies and so few friends that these few friends be good ones. As a result I resolved to do the little that was in my power: that is, to follow the evangelical counsels as perfectly as I could and strive that these few persons who live here do the same...Since we would all be occupied in continual prayer for those who are the defenders of the Church...who protect her from attack, we could help as much as possible this Lord of mine...O my Sisters in Christ, help me beg these things of the Lord. This is why he has gathered you together here. This is your vocation.

Teresa's Strategy

In time of war

...the approach of a lord when in time of war his land is overrun with enemies and he finds himself restricted on all sides. He withdraws to a city that he has well fortified and from there sometimes strikes his foe. Those who are in the city, being chosen people, are such that they can do more by themselves than many cowardly soldiers can. And often victory is won in this way... we must ask God that in this little castle ... not one of us will go over to the enemy and that God will make the captains of this castle..., who are the preachers and theologians... advance very far in the perfection of religious life and their vocation... (W, 1)

Teresa's Strategy

In time of war

These persons must live among men, deal with men..., and even sometimes outwardly behave as such men do.

Do you think, my daughters, that little is required for them to deal with the world, live in the world, engage in its business..., while interiorly remaining its stranger...; in sum not being men but angels?

For if they do not live in this way, they do not deserve to be called captains; nor may the Lord allow them to leave their cells, for they will do more harm than good. This is no the time for seeing imperfections in those who must teach...

Teresa's Strategy

In time of war

Is it not the world they have to deal with?
Have no fear that the world will forgive
this deficiency; nor is there any imperfection
it fails to recognize.

It will overlook many good things and perhaps
not even consider them good;
but have no fear that it will overlook any evil
or imperfect things...do not think that little help
from God is necessary for this great battle these
preachers and theologians are fighting;
a very great deal is necessary...

Teresa's Strategy

In time of war

So, then, I beg you for the love of the Lord to ask His Majesty to hear us in this matter... it is for His glory and the good of the Church... And when your prayers, desires, disciplines, and fasts are not directed toward obtaining these things I mentioned, reflect on how you are not accomplishing or fulfilling the purpose or which the Lord brought you here together.

(W, 3)

Interior Castle

With zeal
be zealous for the Lord,
the God of Hosts

Elijah's words-Motto on the shield of the Order

- What gave Teresa the passionate desire to do something for the church and the keen eye for the needs and demands of her time?
- Well, Teresa lived in prayer and was drawn by the Lord into the depths of her ‘interior castle’;
- She reached that obscure room where he could say to her, “that now it was time that she consider as her own what belonged to him, and that he would take care of what was hers.”

Unconditional Surrender

Whoever surrenders
unconditionally
to the Lord will be
chosen by him
as an instrument
for building his kingdom.

- The Lord alone knows how much the prayer of St. Teresa and her daughters contributed to protect Spain (and Europe) from dissenting from the faith...;
- Official history is silent about these invisible and incalculable forces;
- They are recognized by the faithful and the judgment of the church after extensive investigations;
- And our time is more and more determined, when all else fails, to hope for the ultimate salvation from these hidden sources.