

# UNION*GPS*

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# Seeking God

- ▶ Whether we are aware of it or not, we are all seeking God;
- ▶ He makes his home in our hearts at Baptism;
- ▶ Most look for him outside of ourselves in the world but don't find him there;
- ▶ Teresa of Avila has mapped out the '**GPS**' to the soul's union with God within.



# Ice Breaker

- ▶ Who are you?
- ▶ Who is Teresa of Avila?
- ▶ Who am I?





# The Fall of Man

<sup>22</sup> And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

<sup>23</sup> So the **LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden** to work the ground from which he had been taken.

<sup>24</sup> After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3: 22-24



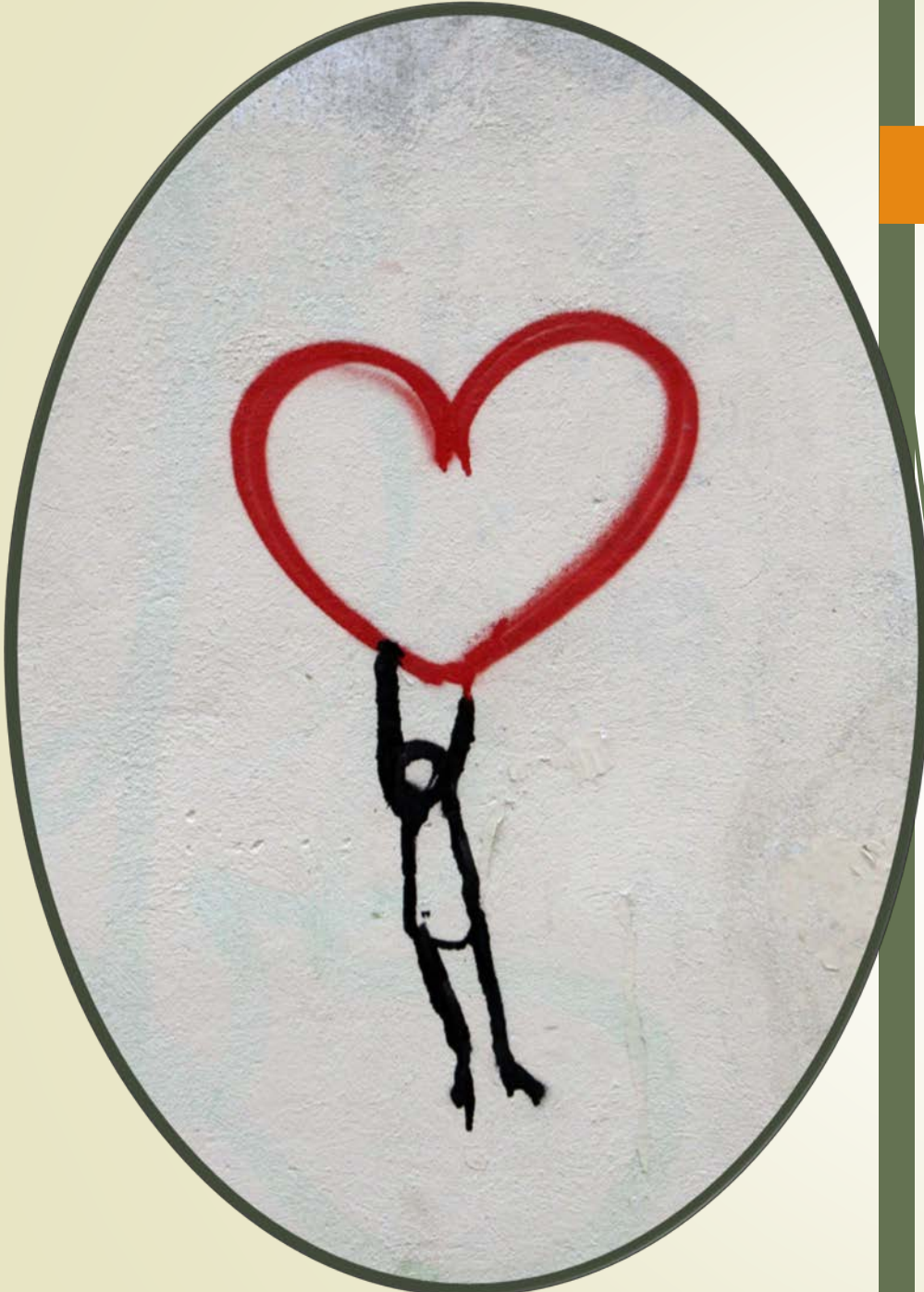
## But the Good News is God's Law is written on Man's Heart

14 For when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature observe the prescriptions of the law, they are a law for the selves even though they do not have the law.

15 They show that **the demands of the law are written in their hearts**, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even defend them

16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge people's hidden works through Christ Jesus. Romans 2: 14-16





## The Heart of Man is Restless

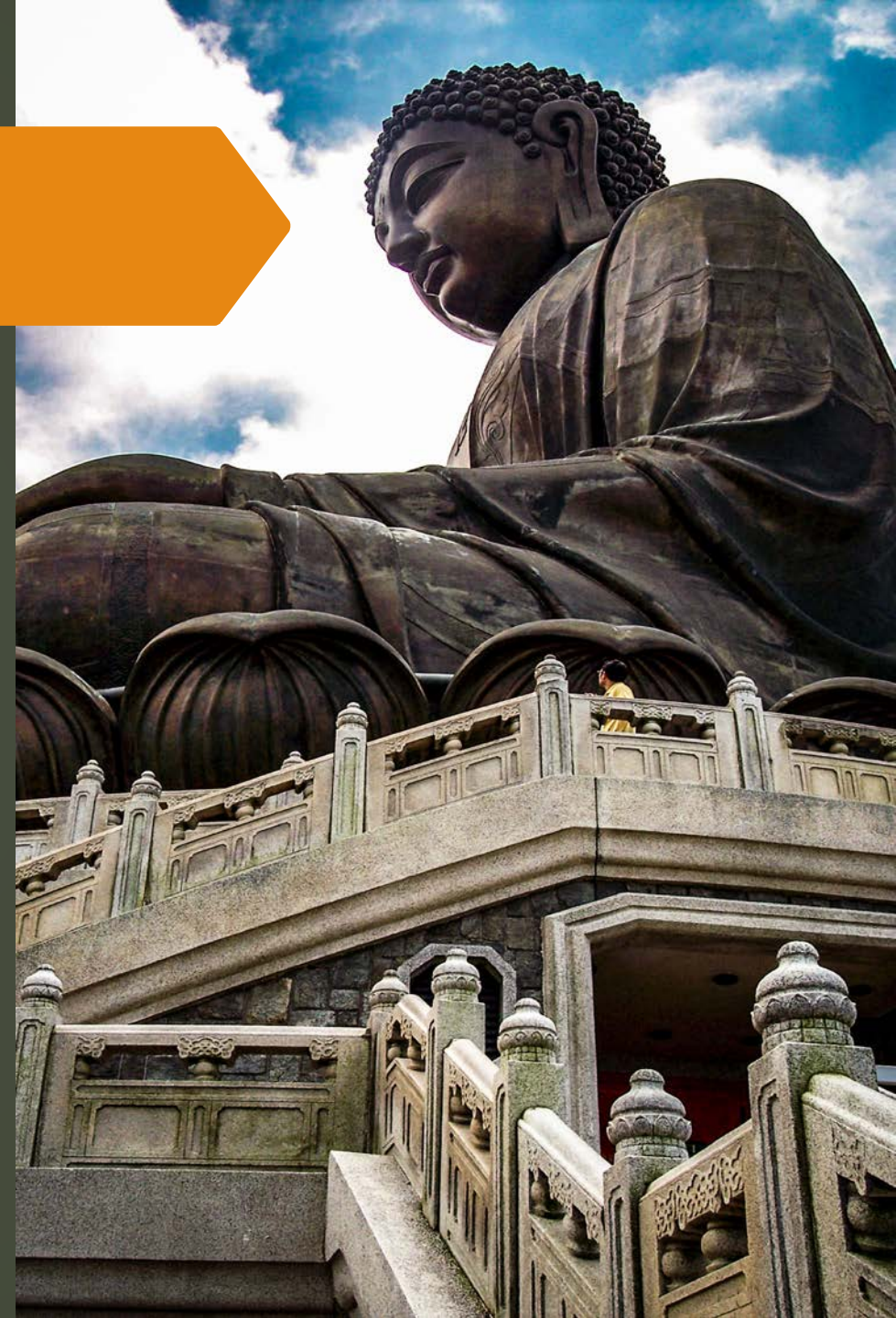
“You have made us  
for yourself, O Lord,  
and our heart is restless  
until it rests in you.”

Saint Augustine  
Confessions



## Turning to Eastern Thought for Answers

- ▶ Seeking to quiet the restless heart westerners often turn to Eastern thought;
- ▶ They are unaware that the Catholic Church offers the path to union with God.





## The Path To Union with God

- ▶ The Carmel offers a Way of prayer practiced two hours daily by the friars-nuns; it is a direct Path to the heart;
- ▶ Carmel is defined by the belief that God lives in the heart and we can reach Him there through faith, hope and charity;
- ▶ A relationship results satisfying a person's thirst to be loved by God; we offer God our availability;
- ▶ It is a leap into the invisible.



# Four Ways to Water the Garden

*Teresa's first attempt to describe the life of her soul*

## 1. Drawing Water from a Well



## 2. Water Wheel & Aqueducts



# Four Ways to Water the Garden

## 3. River or Stream



## 4. Rain





# Prayer is the Door to enter the Castle of the Soul

- ▶ Fifteen years later, in 1577, Teresa wrote her masterpiece, the Interior Castle;
- ▶ She described the journey of the soul through seven mansions or stages of purification;
- ▶ Its final destination is spiritual marriage, transformational union, the summit of the spiritual life.





## Teresa's Definition of Prayer

For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing but an intimate conversation between friends; it means conversing frequently and alone with him who we know loves us...(v, 8, 5)





How is  
Friendship  
possible between  
the Creator &  
the Created?



# Baptism & the Theological Virtues

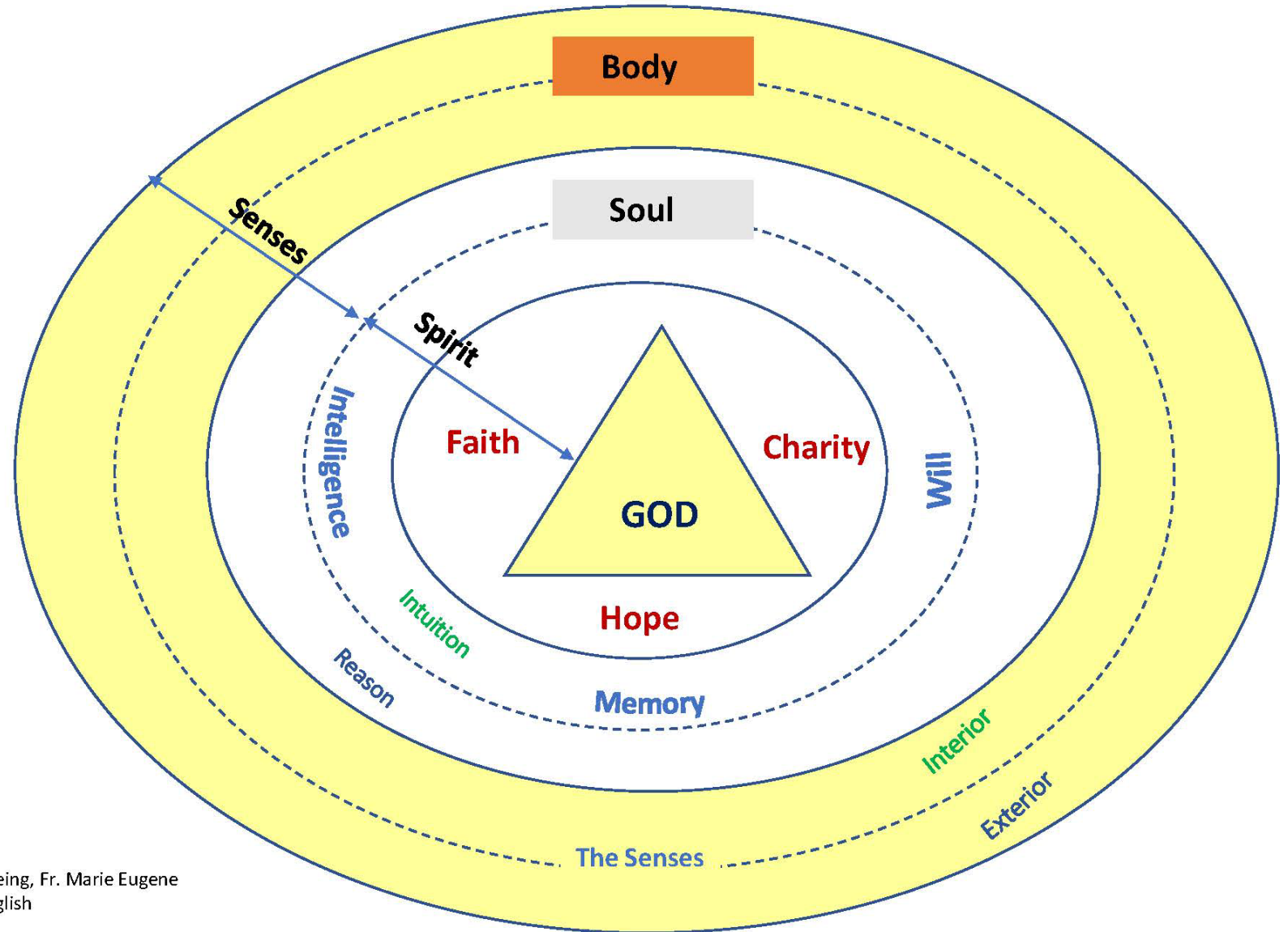
- ▶ Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God.
- ▶ The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace: enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues... the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.





# Nature of Man

## Body & Soul



Human Being, Fr. Marie Eugene  
trans. to English



## The Soul & the Theological Virtues

- ▶ The Theological Virtues of **faith, hope & charity** are grafted into the Soul at Baptism and allow us to enter into contact with God;
- ▶ They are **supernatural & infinite virtues** that are directly infused into our soul. This differentiates them from other virtues. The theological virtues are actually **God**, himself who **gives himself to us**.
- ▶ These virtues render the **soul's faculties divine**, and by proxy, man himself shares this divine life. In a certain way we are **made equals to God** by **participation**, not by **nature** though, there is only one God.





## The Soul & the Theological Virtues

- ▶ The Book of Genesis tells us that we were created in God's image and likeness;
- ▶ St. John tells us that God is love. The essence of love is to share itself;
- ▶ God desired that man have his best; What is his best? Himself;
- ▶ So, he transforms us into his image.

# The Goal of the Spiritual Journey

I have been crucified with Christ  
and I no longer live,  
but Christ lives in me.

The life I now live in the body,  
I live by faith in the Son of God,  
who loved me and  
gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20





## Basics of the Spiritual Journey towards Union with God

- ▶ Prayer is the highest achievement of which the human spirit is capable;
- ▶ Prayer is a Jacob's ladder on which the human spirit ascends to God & God's grace descends to people;
- ▶ Teresa presented the mystical life of grace in all its stages with incomparable clarity;



## Basics of the Spiritual Journey towards Union with God



- ▶ **Vocal** prayer is the lowest stage; The words are spoken as the soul raises itself to God;
- ▶ **Meditative** prayer is one stage higher; the Spirit moves without being bound to words; when practiced faithfully, it can gradually remake the whole person;
- ▶ The **lower stages** of prayer are accessible to every believer by **human effort** and **God's grace**.



## Basics of the Spiritual Journey towards Union with God



- ▶ We are now **standing at the border** of the mystical life of grace that cannot be entered by human effort;
- ▶ St. Teresa calls the next stage the **prayer of quiet** or simplicity;
- ▶ The soul can no longer reflect intellectually or make decisions;
- ▶ It is engaged by God's presence and rests in him; his presence gives the soul a happiness beyond any earthly happiness.

## Basics of the Spiritual Journey towards Union with God

- ▶ At this stage of mystical favor many events occur that are recognized as extraordinary: **Ecstasies & Visions**;
- ▶ **Union** with the Lord surpasses the soul's happiness in the presence of God; it usually lasts but a short time;
- ▶ The **senses** lose their effectiveness; in some cases the body becomes **rigid** like a corpse;
- ▶ The **soul** however lives an **intensified life** as if it were outside the body.





## Basics of the Spiritual Journey towards Union with God



- ▶ These Revelations are **not** a sign of holiness; they usually **only** appear during a certain phase and vanish again;
- ▶ Sometimes Our Lord, the Mother of God, an angel or a saint **appears**; or its intellect is enlightened and gains **insights** into hidden truths;
- ▶ Private revelations usually teach souls about their own condition or that of others; or of confiding God's intentions to them, and of forming them for a **specific task** for which God has selected them.

## Basics of the Spiritual Journey towards Union with God

- ▶ God expects them to be **at his service**; he takes them into safekeeping, and is always ready to grant their requests;
- ▶ These souls have been **prepared & tested** by repeated transitory union with him, by extraordinary illuminations, & through suffering & trials;
- ▶ The Lord wishes to bind them to himself. He enters into a covenant with them called '**spiritual betrothal**;"





## Basics of the Spiritual Journey towards Union with God



- ▶ Teresa calls the highest state of blessedness "**spiritual marriage**;"
- ▶ Events have now stopped;
- ▶ The soul is constantly united with the Lord; she enjoyed his presence even in the midst of external activities without being hindered;
- ▶ Teresa went through all these **stages**, it took years before she could account for them herself & give others advice.

## Basics of the Spiritual Journey towards Union with God

- ▶ The **effect** of her prayer life was an ever-increasing love of God & souls;
- ▶ Her **supernatural power to love** gave her an almost irresistible force.







## The 7 Mansions of Teresa's Interior Castle

- Silent prayer is the door into the castle of the soul;
- Mansions 1, 2, 3 represent man's effort to reach God;

Mansions 4, 5, 6, 7 represent the action of God in the soul.



# Mystical Life: Who's it for?

- ▶ For many, mystical life is reduced to unnecessary extraordinary phenomena;
- ▶ In reality, it is the fulfillment of Baptismal graces, an increase in the virtues of faith, hope and charity in the heart of the one believing the Kingdom of God is within;
- ▶ For Teresa, **all the baptized** are invited to a mystical life for which interior prayer is the vital nourishment; this life is not reserved for a few elite souls.







## Carmelite Coat of Arms

The banner surrounding the seal carries the Order's motto; Taken from the mouth of the prophet Elijah it cries out with his prophetic spirit and absolute dedication to the one, true, God;

"Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum"

"With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts."

- 1 Kings 19:10