

The Spiritual Journey through the Mansions

The Apostolate and the Growth of Love

The Saint in the Whole of Christ

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I am a daughter of the Church, Chapter 1X

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C. The Apostolate and the Growth of Love

Apostolate and love dwell in perfect harmony only on the summit of the transforming union. As a child Saint Teresa goes away in the hope of seeing God. She finds Him fully only after discovering the Church and giving herself completely to the mission that is hers within it. And this mission she fulfills perfectly only when she has arrived at transforming union.

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The problem then must still be solved... how does one fulfill one's duty to the apostolate while developing a life of love?

Solutions to this problem are numerous...Teresa who built a cloister for herself and her daughters...gave on occasion in her writings advice for their external apostolate. These counsels follow the progress of the contemplative ascent. They are so exact at each stage... that by gathering them ...one could ...prepare an excellent treatise for the formation of apostles ...

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1-The Apostolate in the First Three Mansions

In the first three Mansions...characterized by the general help of God, God's action in the soul remains secondary, leaving the initiative to the soul in the direction of its spiritual life. We note that this reserve on God's part comes from...lack of charity in the soul.

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Charity is still weak; all its efforts at growth meet with numerous obstacles. Evil tendencies are not yet dominated...The soul is able to keep from sin and to derive grace in sacraments and prayer only thanks to a disciplined life, ensuring the mortification of its passions and its habitual union with God. This discipline takes effort and patience. And even ... in the third Mansions, where the soul has triumphed over enemies within and without, Saint Teresa thinks that its charity is still too feeble to be shared with others.

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In her opinion, during this period the soul's own spiritual life and its search for God must absorb all of its energies and be its single and constant preoccupation. She doesn't even want to speak of the apostolate, so convinced is she that it would be perilous for the soul and bear little fruit for the neighbor.

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Teresa is not talking about Christians in general but is addressing her daughters, contemplatives... the Christian has an apostolic duty to exercise in his family and social group. These duties are independent of the degree of charity...the apostolate supposes the exercise of charity toward the neighbor and so happily ensures the growth of charity.

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But can the apostle neglect Saint Teresa's remarks...that emphasize a spiritual state that is the same for the apostle and for the contemplative? In both the flesh is weak, the passions are not yet dominated; and supernatural charity, with its imperfect channels for acting, feels the pressure of external influences.

The priesthood...does not preserve one from the dangers of the world. Flesh and spirit confront each other in the apostle...

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At the beginning the apostle's charity is weak... the priesthood requires for its perfection identification with Christ, priest and victim...Charity flows from God. The apostle must go to the sources of this divine life, the sacraments...In enemy country, an army is on greater guard...vigilance and asceticism are necessary to keep watch over the senses...to prevent dissipation of the faculties. Without a rule, it is impossible for the apostle to bring his soul back to the living sources of grace and remain there...

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For three years, Jesus kept His chosen apostles near Him. They witnessed His movements and teachings, He often instructed them apart. He sent them on mission at times ... Before His Passion, He bestowed the priesthood on them and established them as His successors... but the apostles weakened when confronted with the Cross...

After His Resurrection, bringing them to the peace of pardon, He confirmed their mission ... and they then awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem...to be fully capable of fulfilling their mission.

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It was not until three years after his conversion, that Saint Paul was officially invested with his mission of preaching to the Gentiles...It is from solitude that have emerged the majority of great bishops...

Saint Teresa's thought on the apostolate and her directives are modeled, it seems, on the spiritual technique of Jesus for the formation of the apostles, and show precisely its practical application at each stage of the spiritual life...

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2-The Apostolate under the First Divine Raptures (4th Mansions)

In the fourth mansions, God intervenes directly in the spiritual life of the soul with special help...

Saint Teresa likes to emphasize how, in the prayer of quiet, characteristic of this period, the will alone is held captive by the inflowing of love ... experienced as a sweet savor...and giving riches and strength to the will that becomes its captive...

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Can the soul now distribute its riches? ... Is it fit for the apostolate? ... Well, the Spirit of God is there; His action often shines out clearly. And so the apostolate of the soul is fruitful...But let's hear the advice of Saint Teresa:

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There is one earnest warning which I must give those who find themselves in this state; namely that they exert the very greatest care to keep themselves from occasions of offending God. For as yet the soul is not even weaned but is like a child beginning to suck the breast. If it be taken from its mother, what can it be expected to do but die? That, I am very much afraid, will be the lot of anyone to whom God has granted this favor if he gives up prayer; unless he does so for some very exceptional reason. IV Mansions

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In the book of her Life, Teresa points out the snare the devil lays for these souls:

When a soul finds itself very near God ...it seems to have a clear vision of the reward and believes that it cannot now possibly leave something which even in this life is so sweet and delectable for anything as base and soiled as earthly pleasure. Because it has this confidence, the devil is able to deprive it of the misgivings which it ought to have about itself;

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... it runs into many dangers, and in its zeal begins to give away its fruit...thinking it has nothing to fear. This condition is not one of pride, for it clearly understands that of itself it can do nothing; it is the result of extreme confidence in God ... the soul does not realize that it is like a bird ... It is able to leave the nest ... but it is not ready to fly, for its virtues are not yet strong and it has no experience which will warn it of dangers, nor is it aware of the harm done by self-confidence.

Life XIX

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The warning is clear and justified ... a soul must still use prudence and reserve in sharing with others. God's interventions are only intermittent ...The soul is not yet strong enough to resist the occasions of sin. It exhausts itself by giving away its treasures...riches it still needs... as the source that renews them is not on-going...

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How much more useful are these grave warnings for the apostle as the dangers they faced are constant...and to give what he has of the spiritual is for him a duty. How shall he regulate the gift? ...How to refuse the solicitations of those he has the duty to sustain ...Through Saint Teresa, He will insistently repeat:

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They are not yet weaned and for some time yet need to be fed with the milk of which I first spoke. Let them remain near those Divine breasts; and, when they have sufficient strength, the Lord will take care to lead them on farther. If they advanced now, they would not do others as much good as they think but would only harm themselves. Life XIII

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To give without measure would be to spend oneself before the time, to sin by presumption, and perhaps deprive oneself of the grace and strength to mount higher. It would be to cut the wheat in the blade and thus lose the harvest for having failed to wait for the ripening.

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3-The Apostolate when the Soul has come to Union of the Will (5th Mansions)

**Does the union of the will realized in the fifth Mansions ensure the perfect maturation necessary for gathering all the fruits?
At least it gives promise that the time is near.**

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God's hold on the soul through the union of the will is habitual ... the fruit of this divine contact causes an abundant inflowing of love deep within which leaves the will in God's hands. The will alone is made captive; but the will commands the whole soul. The other two faculties, the memory and the intellect, are not yet purified and docile. Saint Teresa points out:

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I believe it is God's will that so great a favor not be given in vain, and that if the soul ...does not profit by it others will. For, as the soul possesses these desires and virtues, it will always profit other souls so long as it leads a good life, and from its own heat new heat will be transmitted to them. Even after losing this, it may still desire others to profit, and take pleasure in describing the favors given by God to those who love and serve Him. V Mansions.

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Teresa says of herself:

I knew a person (herself) to whom this happened, and who ... was glad that others should profit by the favors God had shown her; she would describe the way of prayer to those who did not understand it, and she brought them very, very great profit. V Mansions

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And further:

But how many are called by the Lord to apostleship, as Judas was, and enjoy communion with Him, or are called to be made kings, as Saul was, and afterwards, through their own fault, are lost! V Mansions

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...For Saint Teresa then, union of the will is a hold, an anointing, a seal that marks a soul for a mission... There appears also the painful preoccupation that distresses the Saint, the faithlessness that still is possible, ending in an irremediable fall...

Captivation by God is a grace by divine choice, dedicating the soul to great things...stirring up the devil's jealous hatred...Saint Teresa writes:

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As I have often noted, if he wins a single soul in this way he will win a whole multitude... If we consider what a large number of people god can draw to Himself through the agency of a single soul... V Mansions

And so the devil is going to let loose a hard combat against this soul...How?

Saint Teresa considers this difficult problem, important enough to delay over.

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God's domination of the soul in the union of the will is only the beginning of the great things that will come to pass. The newness of the experience, the rarity of domination extending to all faculties, and the darkness in which the union takes place make the soul restless... and leaves the impression of detachment from everything rather than a positive experience of union. Teresa writes:

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Despite all I have said, this Mansion seems to me a little obscure. V Mansions

...The devil takes advantage of the darkness to lay his hidden snares. Teresa warns:

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...The devil takes advantage of the darkness to lay his hidden snares. Teresa warns:

The devil comes...and under the color of doing good, sets about undermining it in trivial ways, and involving it in practices which... Are not wrong; little by little he darkens its understanding, weakens its will, and causes self-love to increase, until ... he begins to withdraw it from the love of God and to persuade it to indulge its own wishes. V
Mansions

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Prudence is necessary. The contemplative soul or the apostle...cannot sleep in false security. It must be watchful to not lose all as did Saul and Judas. Saint Teresa's admonitions become stronger. The stake is of first importance; these are the last battles in which the soul risks losing all.

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So, Christian souls, whom the Lord has brought to this point on your journey, I beseech you, for His sake, not to be negligent, but to withdraw from occasions of sin---for even in this state the soul is not strong enough to be able to run into them safely, as it is after the betrothal has been made--- that is to say, in the next Mansion. V Mansions

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4-The Perfect Apostolate of the Sixth and the Seventh Mansions

...For Saint Teresa there is no door separating the sixth and the seventh Mansions. It is only about love attaining the perfection that makes it completely transforming in the seventh Mansions and gives union stability. Yet even in the spiritual betrothal of the sixth Mansions, God dwells in habitual union deep in the soul.

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And so, although the manifestations and effects of love are of a higher quality in spiritual marriage, they are not different between the sixth and seventh Mansions. The perfection of contemplation and of the apostolate are realized although in different degrees. So we are justified in putting these two Mansions together, to consider the characteristic traits of the perfect apostolate at the summits of spiritual life.

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a-The Perfect Apostolate is the Fruit of Perfect Love

Love in these lofty regions, because it is perfect, is transforming and unifying. The soul has become the living branch of the vine... This union produces a certain equality between God and the soul, but by an assimilation of the soul by God, the drop of water has been cast into the ocean, and it remains distinct.... The soul has become God by participation.

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... God's hold on the soul, brought about through love, shows forth in what the person does. Saint John of the Cross writes:

All that it does is of God, and its operations are Divine...Ascent

God's captivation of the whole soul finds the soul perfectly docile. The transforming union brings to pass at the same time loving rapture and loving submission.

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Saint Teresa insists on submission as one of the characteristics of the perfection attained on the summits. She writes:

The highest perfection consists not in interior favors or in great raptures or in visions ... but in the bringing of our wills so closely into conformity with the will of God that, as soon as we realize He wills anything, we desire it ourselves with all our might, and take the bitter with the sweet, knowing that to be His Majesty's will. Foundations

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This disposition is not simply submission to God's will; it is the soul's placing itself entirely ... at the disposal of God's good pleasure. Saint Teresa writes:

Do you know when people really become spiritual? It is when they become slaves of God and are branded with His sign, which is the sign of the Cross, in token that they have given Him their freedom. Then He can sell them as slaves to the whole world, as He Himself was sold. VII Mansions

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... The Holy Spirit's hold on the soul and the soul's surrender create a working as one for the realization of the great design that is the Church...

By His perfect laying hold of the soul in transforming union, the Holy Spirit associates it with His fecundity and that of the Virgin Mary. In union with these divine agents, souls who abandon themselves to divine love build up the Church.

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Saint Teresa very well grasped this finality of perfect union which frees the soul from self and subjects it to the designs of God.

Oh, my sisters, how little one should think about resting, and how little one should care about honors, and how far one ought to be from wishing to be esteemed in the very least if the Lord makes His special abode in the soul. For if the soul is much with Him, as it is right it should be, it will very seldom think of itself;

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...its whole thought will be concentrated upon finding ways to please Him and upon showing Him how it loves Him. This, my daughters, is the aim of prayer: this is the purpose of the Spiritual Marriage, of which are born good works and good works alone.

VII Mansion

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By ...the charity He pours out, the Holy Spirit has identified the soul with Christ Jesus. It must follow the way traced out by Jesus who moved through the mystery of Redemption toward the realization of the mystery of the Church. These three mysteries—Incarnation, Redemption, the Church—are bound one to the other...This truth appears clearly to Teresa:

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It will be a good thing, sisters, if I tell you why it is that the Lord grants so many favors in this world. Although you will have learned this from the effects they produce, if you have observed them, I will speak about it further here, so that none of you shall think that He does it simply to give these souls pleasure. That would be to make a great error.

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For His Majesty can do nothing greater for us than grant us a life which is an imitation of that lived by His Beloved Son. I feel certain, therefore, that these favors are given us to strengthen our weakness, as I have sometimes said here, so that we may be able to imitate Him in His great sufferings. VII Mansions

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The activity of the soul ...under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, builder of the Church, constitutes the apostolate at the summits of the spiritual life, the fruit of transforming union. Perfect love is its activating element...

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b-This Perfect Apostolate is exercised in Special Missions in the Church

... The perfection of love in each saint causes it to shine ... in identification with Christ ...

Saint Teresa recalls the dazzling vision of Saint Paul on the Damascus road. The vision that throws him to the ground, converts him, and reveals to him his mission, is, the Saint assures us, a grace of the sixth Mansions. She refers to it as an exception to the general rule:

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... the case of anyone to whom Our Lord addresses a special call, as when He at once raised Saint Paul to the summit of contemplation and appeared to him and spoke to him in such a way as to raise him immediately to great heights. Conceptions of the Love of God.

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This vision, in the judgement of Saint Teresa, is an exceptional favor. In an instant, Paul receives the degree of charity that places him at once in the lofty regions of the spiritual life. From then on he is ...elevated by grace to the height of his mission. Ordinarily God does not proceed this way:

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He gives these sublime consolations, and grants these great favors, to persons who have labored greatly in His service and desired His love and tried to love so that all their actions may be pleasing to His Majesty. Such souls have fatigued themselves by long years of meditation and by long seeking of their Spouse.
Conceptions of the Love of God

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...It is in the sixth mansions that Saint Teresa discovers her mission as foundress. The raptures of her spiritual betrothal, strengthen her to give up all for God. The transverberation, that makes her a spiritual mother, also takes place in this period....

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The missions conferred in the sixth Mansions spring from sanctifying grace given at Baptism.... The soul sees...its place in the divine plan and the cooperation the Holy Spirit expects of it.

However, the soul's mission does not date from that time. It may have been made known to the soul before...but it is in the sixth Mansions that the soul receives the grace necessary to fulfill it perfectly; and finds in this grace the light that confirms the mission and makes it explicit.

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...So, the mission and powers are given in advance; the fullness of grace to exercise it perfectly is received only on the summits of the spiritual life...

... Saint Teresa, after founding her first convent of the Reform, discovers the Church; she extends her Reform to meet the measure of her mission and the needs of the Church.

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...Such ...precisions of one's mission issue from the interior impacts of grace and from events that bring it into sharper focus, confirming one's intuitions concerning it.

... Certitude of its mission, certitude of the love that is invading it, go together ...

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Saint Teresa finds in the intellectual vision of the Holy Trinity the same security and help. She writes:

While the soul is enjoying the delight which has been described, it seems to be wholly engulfed and protected by a shadow, and, as it were, a cloud of the Godhead, whence come to it certain influences and a dew so delectable as to free it immediately, and with good reason, from the weariness caused it by the things of the world. Conceptions of the love of God ...

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c. In this Apostolate Action and Contemplation are United

... The docile soul lets itself be led by the Holy Spirit; and if it had to make known its desires, this would be, says Saint Teresa, to undertake works and undergo trials for the reign of God:

To a soul that is surrounded by crosses—that is, by trials and persecutions—it is a great help not to be habitually enjoying the delight of contemplation...

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... I particularly notice in certain persons (there are not many of them, on account of our sins) that the farther they advance in this prayer and the more favors they receive from Our Lord, the more attentive they are to the needs of their neighbors especially to those of the soul; as I said at the beginning, they would give their lives again and again to save one person from mortal sin. Conceptions of the Love of God

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Moreover, on these summits, Martha and Mary resemble each other and unite to fulfill the same office. “Believe me,” writes Saint Teresa,

Martha and Mary must work together when they offer the Lord lodging, and must have Him ever with them, and they must not entertain Him badly and give Him nothing to eat... His food consists in our bringing Him souls, in every possible way, so that they may be saved and may praise Him forever.

VII Mansions

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Action and contemplation are united and merged. In order to remain with God, the soul must obey the impulse of the Holy Spirit... It is never more active nor more powerful than when God keeps it in solitude and contemplation; it is never more united to God nor more contemplative than when engaged in works to do God's will, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Teresa writes:

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It is here, my daughters, that love is to be found--- not hidden away in corners, but in the midst of occasions of sin; and believe me, although we may more often fail and commit small lapses, our gain will be incomparably the greater. Remember I am assuming all the time that we are acting in this way out of obedience or charity: if one of these motives is not involved, I do not hesitate to say that solitude is best ... it would be a bad business if we could practice prayer only by getting alone in corners. Foundations

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Teresa has some fears that these statements seem contrary to what she had said on the necessity of recollection and solitude for contemplatives, and scandalize certain souls:

Who will ever instill this truth into people to whom our Lord is only beginning to grant favors? Perhaps they think that these other make little progress in their lives and that the important thing is that they should stay in their own little corner and enjoy themselves. I think it is by the Lord's providence that such people do not realize how high these other souls have risen: ...

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... for, if they did, the fervor which beginners always have would make them want to go rushing after them, and that would not be good for them, for they are not yet weaned and for some time yet need to be fed with the milk of which I first spoke of. Let them remain near those Divine breasts; and, when they have sufficient strength, the Lord will take care to lead them on farther. If they advanced now, they would not do others as much good as they think but would only harm themselves. Conceptions of the Love of God

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...Each stage has its grace and its demands. In transforming union, love has acquired a freedom by which it must profit, if it would obey the impulses of the Spirit of Love ...its pleasures on the summits are God's good pleasure; nothing could any longer harm it, for it has conquered all.

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d. Fruitful Apostolate and Delicate collaboration

... Thanks to the docility of the soul, the Holy Spirit can lead it as He wills and where He wills. Whether it prays or works, the soul does what it does under the light and impulse of the Spirit. Its acts become divine...the captivation by God has for its purpose to use the soul to realize the great work of the Church.

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God's hold on the soul through transforming union, and the Spirit's special captivation for the realization of a special mission, create in this transformed soul, now an apostle, a plentitude of God that appears in its movements and words, and shows itself in their effects...

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The saints are actually possessed by God... “By their fruit you will know them.” Matt 7:16

This is the sign He gives to recognize his authentic ambassadors... “I have chosen you and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” John 15:16

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This fruit that remains, the great works, the institutions, the strong organizations holy in every epoch, defy centuries. This fruit is the Church itself, which the Holy Spirit is constantly building up with the activity of the Saints...to affirm His power and bring to fulfillment His eternal plan...

... The apostle is the friend of the Master... The soul is entirely docile in the hands of God, and God Himself yields to the good pleasure of the soul. Saint Teresa writes:

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**He begins to make such a friend of the soul that not only does He restore its will to it but He gives it His own also. For, now that He is making a friend of it, He is glad to allow it to rule with Him, as we say...
Way of Perfection xxxiii**

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And so the Spirit of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve us, after conquering His apostles by love, gladly disappears behind their personality and their action...

The apostles'... senses have been purified, his intelligence is refined, his will is strengthened, a whole human balance is established... Fishermen of Galilee become apostles who go up and down the world and transform the Roman Empire... In each epoch the Holy Spirit makes giants of the saints on whom He lays hold. We have only to look to see them: Saint Benedict, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Dominic, Saint Teresa of Avila, and so many others...

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The Holy Spirit appears in this world under a thousand human faces that reflect the power and grace of His hidden presence. The Spirit never repeats Himself in the exterior forms He chooses. Is this not the reason why Saint John of the Cross asks us never to take a saint for our model? This would be to expose oneself to failure...

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The delicate charms of this loving collaboration of God and the soul ... the love that unites them ... all the splendors of lowliness and of power are... a reflection ... of the work the Holy Spirit is building... This is the masterpiece of ... the whole Christ in whom God has oriented all things. For the beauty of the Church of God, Jesus gave His blood...

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The saint ...has entered by transforming union into the whole Christ...and continues Christ's priestly prayer for union...and under love's captivation, works to consummate in unity all those whom God has 'predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son.'" Rom. 8:29

Like Christ Jesus, the saint will enjoy the whole flowering of his grace and will be perfectly glorified only when Christ will have reached his stature of the perfect Man. In the whole Christ, which is the Church, the saint finds his end, his perfection and his glory.

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While awaiting the day when Jesus will appear on the clouds in all His splendor, the saint is formed here below in that light of dawn which reveals to him his place in the Church and gives him assurance of his triumph.

Saint Teresa repeated on her death bed in the overflowing joy of ecstasy: “I am a daughter of the Church”

AMEN