

Second Mansions
Selected Reading for Reflection
Chapter 1

7- I have already said, yet it is of such importance, that I repeat it here: let no one think on starting a project of the reward to be reaped: this would be a very lowly way of commencing such a large and stately building. If built on sand it would soon fall down. Souls who act like this would continually suffer from discouragement and temptations, for in these mansions no manna rains; farther on, the soul is pleased with all that comes, because it desires nothing but what God wills.

What a farce it is! Here are we, with a thousand obstacles, drawbacks, and imperfections within ourselves, our virtues so newly born that they have scarcely the strength to act (and God grant that they exist at all!) yet we are not ashamed to expect sweetness in prayer and to complain of feeling dryness. Do not act like this, sisters; embrace the cross your Spouse bore on His shoulders; know that your motto should be: 'Most happy she who suffers most if it be for Christ! All else should be looked upon as secondary: if our Lord give it you, render Him grateful thanks.

8- You may imagine you would be determined in enduring external trials if God gave you interior consolations: His Majesty knows best what is good for us; it is not for us to advise Him how to treat us, for He has the right to tell us that we know not what we ask (Mat. 20:22). Anyone beginning to practice prayer (and do not forget it, it is very important) should be able to endure trials, and to resolve and strive to the utmost of her power to conform her own will to the will of God. Be certain that in this consists the greatest perfection to be attained in the spiritual life, as I will explain later. She who practices this most perfectly will receive from God the highest reward and is the farthest advanced on the right road. Do not imagine that we need a complicated formula or any other deep or mysterious thing to attain it our whole welfare consists in doing the will of God. If we start with the false principle of wishing God to follow our will and to lead us in the way we think best, upon what firm foundation can this spiritual foundation rest? Let us strive to do our best: beware of the poisonous reptiles—that is to say, the bad thoughts that are often permitted by God to assail and torment us so that we cannot repel them. Indeed, perchance we feel their sting! He allows this to teach us to be more on our guard in the future and to see whether we grieve much at having offending Him.

9- If you occasionally lapse into sin, do not lose heart and stop trying to advance, for God will draw good even out of our falls, like the merchant who sells medicine, who first drinks poison, and then takes the medicine to prove the power of his elixir. This combat would suffice to teach us to amend our habits if we realized our failings in no other way, and would show us the injury we receive from a life of dissipation. Can any evil be greater than that we find at home? What peace can we hope to find elsewhere, if we have none within us? What friends or kindred can be so close and intimate as the powers of our soul, which, whether we will or no, must ever bear us company? These seem to wage war on us as if they knew the harm our vices had wrought them. 'Peace, peace be unto you,' my sisters, as our Lord said, and many a time proclaimed to His Apostles. Believe me, if we neither possess nor strive to obtain this peace within, we shall never find it without. By the blood which our Lord shed for us, I implore those who have not yet begun

to enter within themselves, to stop this warfare: I beg those already started in the right path, not to let the combat turn them back from it. Let them reflect that a relapse is worse than a fall, and see what ruin it would bring. They should confide in God's mercy, trusting nothing in themselves; then they will see how His Majesty will lead them from one mansion to the next, and will set them in a place where these wild beasts can no more touch or annoy them, but will be entirely at their mercy and merely objects of ridicule. Then, even in this life, they will enjoy a far greater happiness than they could even imagine.

Reflections Questions:

-What is preventing you from always seeking God's will?

-A determination (whoever begins to practice prayer must be determined, bring oneself to conform...). What is a true determination for you?

-Do you know how to cry to the Lord that He quiet your heart when temptation and dryness overwhelm you? (Luke 19: 1-10: Zacheus: "Hurry and come down...today I will stay (remain) with you, today salvation has entered this house...)

Please Note: the numbered paragraphs differ according to the translation.