

Fifth Mansions

Selected Reading for Reflection

Chapter 1, 2

2- I said ‘some,’ but in reality there are very *few* who never enter this mansion: some more and some less, but most of them may be said at least to gain admittance into these rooms. I think that certain graces I am about to describe are bestowed on only a few of the nuns, but if the rest only arrive at the front door they receive a great gift from God, for ‘many are called, but few are chosen.’ All of us who wear the holy habit of the Carmelites are called to prayer and contemplation. This was the object of our Order we belong here. Our holy Fathers of Mount Carmel sought in perfect solitude and utter contempt of the world for this treasure, this precious pearl, of which we speak, and we are their descendants. How little do most of us care to prepare our souls, that our Lord may reveal this jewel to us! Outwardly we may appear to practice the important virtues, but we have far more to do than this before it is possible to attain contemplation, to gain which we should neglect no means, either small or great. Prepare yourselves, my sisters, and since some foretaste of heaven may be had here on earth, beg our Lord to give us grace not to miss it through our own fault. Ask Him to show us where to find it—ask Him to give us strength of soul to dig until we find this hidden treasure, which lies buried in our hearts, as I wish to show you if it please God to allow me to.

3-I said ‘strength of *soul*,’ that you might understand that strength of *body* is not indispensable when our Lord God chooses to withhold it. He makes it impossible for no one to gain these riches, but is content that each should do his best. Blessed be so just a God! But, daughters, if you would purchase this treasure of which we are speaking, God would have you keep back nothing from Him, little or great. He will have it all; in proportion to what you know you have given will your reward be great or small. There is no more certain sign whether or not we have reached the prayer of union. Do not imagine that this state of prayer is, like the one preceding it, a sort of drowsiness (I call it ‘drowsiness’ because the soul seems to slumber, being neither quite asleep nor wholly awake). In the prayer of union the soul is asleep, fast asleep, as regards the world and itself: in fact, during the short time this state lasts it is deprived of all feeling whatever, being unable to think on any subject, even if it wished. No effort is needed here to suspend the thoughts.

4- If the soul can love it knows not how, nor whom it loves, nor what it desires. In fact, it has died entirely to this world, to live more truly than ever in God. This is a delicious death, for the soul is deprived of the faculties it exercised while in the body: delicious because, (although not really the case), it seems to have left its mortal covering to abide more entirely in God. So completely does this take place, that I know not whether the body retains sufficient life to continue breathing; on consideration, I believe it does not; at any rate, if it still breathes, it does

so unconsciously. The mind entirely concentrates itself on trying to understand what is happening, which is beyond its power; it is so astounded that, if consciousness is not completely lost, at least no movement is possible: the person may be compared to one who falls into a dead faint with dismay. Oh, mighty secrets of God! Never should I weary of trying to explain them if I thought it possible to succeed! I would write a thousand foolish things that one might be to the point, if only it might make us praise God more.

Reflection Questions:

1- What do we give the Lord during our time of prayer?

2- How can we prepare ourselves for any action Our Lord might take?