

Seventh Mansions

Selected Reading for Reflection

6 (...) This is the end and aim of prayer, my daughters; this is the reason for spiritual marriage whose fruit is always good works.

7 Works are the unmistakable sign which show these favors come from God, as I told you. It will do me little good to be deeply recollected when alone, making acts of virtue, planning and promising to do wonders in God's service, if afterwards, when occasion offers, I do just the opposite. I did wrong in saying, 'It will do me little good,' for all the time we spend with God does us great good. Though afterwards we may weakly fail to perform our good intentions, yet some time or other His Majesty will find a way for us to practice them although perhaps much in spite of ourselves. Thus, when He sees a very cowardly soul, He often sends it some great affliction, much against its will, and brings it through this trial with profit to itself, When the soul has learned this, it is less afraid to offer itself to Him. I ought to have said, 'will do us little good' in comparison with the far greater good we can gain when our works are in line with our actions and our words. She cannot do all this at once but only little by little, gradually dominating her will, if she wishes to gain fruit from prayer. Even in this little place where she lives she will find many opportunities to practice.

8-Remember, this is of far more importance than I know how to express. Fix your eyes on the Crucified One, and all will seem easy. If His Majesty proved His love for us by such stupendous labors and sufferings, how can you seek to please Him by words alone? Do you know what it is to be truly spiritual? It is for men to make themselves *slaves* of God—branded with His mark, which is the cross. Since they have given Him their freedom, He can sell them as slaves to the whole world, as He was, which would be doing them no wrong but the greatest favor. Unless you make up your minds to this, never expect to make much progress, for as I said humility is the foundation of the whole building and unless you are truly humble, our Lord, for your own sake, will never permit you to raise it very high lest it should fall to the ground. Therefore, sisters, take care to lay a firm foundation by seeking to be the least of all and the slave of others, watching how you can please and help them, for it will benefit you more than them. Built on such strong rocks, your castle can never go to ruin.

10- Perhaps you think I am speaking of beginners and that one may rest later on, but, as I told you, the rest such souls feel is within them: they have less outwardly nor do they wish for it. Why, do you think, the soul sends from its center these inspirations, or rather aspirations, (the messages of which I spoke), to the dwellers in the precincts of the castle and to the surrounding

mansions? To send them to sleep? No, no, no! The soul wages a fiercer war to keep the powers, senses and the whole body from being idle, than ever it did when it suffered in their company. Formerly it did not understand the immense benefit its afflictions brought, though indeed they may have been the means God used to advance it to this state. Besides, the company it enjoys gives it far greater strength than ever before. If, as David says: ‘With the holy thou shalt be holy,’ doubtless by its becoming one with the Almighty, by this sovereign union of spirit with spirit, the soul must gather strength, as we know the saints did, to suffer and to die.

11-Beyond doubt, with the force thus gained, the soul helps all within the castle and even the very body itself, which often seems to have no feeling left in it. The vigor the soul derives from ‘the wine’ drunk in the ‘cellar’ (into which the Bridegroom brought her and would not let her go) overflows into the feeble body, just as the food we eat nourishes both the head and the whole frame. Indeed the body suffers much while alive, for whatever work it does, the soul has energy for far greater tasks and goads it on to more, for all it can perform appears as nothing. This must be the reason of the severe penances performed by many of the saints, especially the glorious Magdalen, who had always spent her life in luxury. This caused the zeal felt by our Father Elias for the honor of God, and the desires of St. Dominic, and St. Francis to draw souls to praise the Almighty. I assure you that, forgetful of themselves, they must have passed through no small trials.

12-This, my sisters, is what I would have us strive for—to offer our petitions and to practice prayer, not for our own enjoyment but to gain strength to serve God. Let us seek no fresh path; we should lose ourselves in ways of ease. It would be a strange thing to fancy we should gain these graces by any other road than that by which Jesus and all His saints have gone before. Let us not dream of such a thing: believe me, both Martha and Mary must entertain our Lord and keep Him as their Guest, nor must they be so inhospitable as to offer Him no food. How can Mary do this while she sits at His feet, if her sister does not help her? His food is that in every possible way we should draw souls to Him so that they may be saved and may praise Him forever.

Interior Castle, VII Mansions 4

Reflection Questions:

1- Silent Prayer and an openness to the spiritual needs and other needs of my brothers and sisters?

2- Silent Prayer as a path: it is about not getting comfortable; it is about always moving and seeking.

