

Third Mansions

Ch. 1 3-6

Selected Reading for Reflection

3- Truly, my daughters, I feel such fear as I tell you this that I do not know not how I am writing this nor even how I go on living when I think about it as I very often do. Beg of His Majesty, my daughters, to remain within me, for otherwise, what security could I feel, after a life so badly spent as mine has been?

Do not be upset knowing this. I have often seen you troubled when I have spoken about it, for you wish that my past had been a very holy one, in which you are right—indeed, I wish the same myself. However, what can be done, now that I have wasted it entirely through my own fault? I have no right to complain that God withheld the aid I needed to fulfil your wishes. It is impossible for me to write this without tears and great shame, when I see that I am explaining these matters to those capable of teaching me. What a hard task obedience has laid upon me! God grant that, as I do it for Him, it may be of some service to you; therefore beg Him to pardon me for my miserable presumption. His Majesty knows that I have nothing to rely upon but His mercy; as I cannot cancel out the past, I have no other remedy but to flee to Him, and to confide in the merits of His Son and of His Virgin Mother, whose habit, unworthy as I am, I wear as you do also. Praise Him, then, my daughters, for making you truly daughters of our Lady, so that you need not blush for my wickedness as you have such a good Mother. Imitate her; think how great she must be and what a blessing it is for you to have her as patron, since my sins and evil character have brought no tarnish on the luster of our holy Order.

4- Still I must give you a warning: do not be too confident because you are nuns and the daughters of such a Mother. David was very holy, yet you know what Solomon became. Therefore, do not rely on your enclosure, on your penitential life, nor on your continual exercise of prayer and constant communion with God, nor trust in having left the world or in the idea that you hold its ways in disdain. All this is good, but it is not enough, as I have already said, to remove all fear; therefore remember this text and recall it often: 'Blessed is the man that fears the Lord.'

5- I do not remember what I was saying, and have digressed very much: for when I think of myself my mind cannot soar to higher things but is like a bird with broken wings; so I will let this subject go for now. To return to what I began to explain about the souls which have entered the third mansions. God has shown them no small favor, rather a very great one, in enabling them to overcome the first difficulties. Thanks to His mercy I believe there are many such people in the world: they are very desirous not to offend His Majesty even by venial sins, they love penance and spend hours in meditation, they employ their time well, exercise themselves in works of charity to their neighbors, are well-ordered in their conversation and dress, and those who own a household manage it well. This is certainly to be desired, and there appears no reason to

forbid their entrance into the last mansions; nor will our Lord deny them entrance if they want to enter, for this is the right attitude to receive all His favors.

6- O Jesus! can anyone say that he does not desire this great blessing, especially after he has passed through the chief difficulties? No, no one can! We all say we desire it, but there is need of more than that for the Lord to completely possess the soul. It is not enough to say so, any more than it was enough for the young man when our Lord told him what he must do if he desired to be perfect. Since I began to speak of these Mansions, he is constantly in my mind, for we are exactly like him; this very frequently produces the great dryness we feel in prayer, though sometimes it proceeds from other causes too. I am not speaking of certain internal sufferings, which bring intolerable pain to many devout souls through no fault of their own; from these trials, however, our Lord always delivers them with much benefit to them. People who suffer from melancholy and other infirmities are exceptions. Nevertheless, in these cases, as in all others, we must leave aside the judgments of God.

I maintain that these side-effects usually come from the first cause I mentioned; such souls know that nothing would cause them to commit a sin (many of them would not even commit a venial sin advertently), and that they employ their lives and wealth well. They cannot, therefore, patiently endure to be excluded from the presence of our King, Whose servants they consider themselves to be, as indeed they are. An earthly king may have many subjects yet all do not enter his court. Enter then, enter, my daughters, into your interior; pass beyond the thought of your own petty works, which are no more, nor even as much, as Christians are bound to perform: let it suffice that you are God's servants or you will have nothing left. Think of the saints, who have entered the Divine Presence, and you will see the difference between them and ourselves. Do not ask for what you do not deserve, nor should we ever think, however much we may have done for God, that we merit the reward of the saints, for we have offended Him. It should not enter your mind.

Reflection Questions:

1- How does silent prayer help us to find and rest in the presence of God?

2- Between our desire to make progress in silent prayer and the reality of our powerlessness, where do we find the courage to not quit despite it all?

3- What is the place of the Virgin Mary in our life of prayer? of the Saints?

