

The Fifth Dwelling Places

Chapter 2 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Continues on the same topic. Explains the prayer of union through an exquisite comparison. Tells about the effects it leaves in the soul. The chapter is very important.

It will seem to you that everything has already been said about what there is to see in this dwelling place. Yet a lot is missing ... there are **various degrees of intensity**. With regard to the **nature of union**, I don't believe I'd know how to say more. But when souls ... **prepare themselves**, there are many things to say about the Lord's work in them. I shall speak of ... the **state** the soul is left in. To explain things better, I want to use a helpful **comparison**; it is good for allowing us to see how, though we can do nothing in this work done by the Lord, we can do much by **disposing ourselves** so that His Majesty may grant us this favor.

2. You must have already heard about His marvels manifested in the way **silk** originates ... The **silkworm** come from seeds about the size of little grains of pepper ... When the warm weather comes and the leaves begin to appear on the mulberry tree, the seeds start to live, for they are dead until then. The worms nourish themselves on mulberry leaves until, having grown to full size, they settle on some twigs. There with their little mouths they ... **spin the silk** and make very **thick cocoons** in which they enclose themselves. The silkworm, which is fat and ugly, then dies, and a little white butterfly... comes forth from the cocoon ... And the poor little worm loses its life in the challenge ... Consider the wonders and wisdom of our God ...

3. ... This silkworm starts to live when by the **heat of the Holy Spirit**. It begins to benefit through the **general help** given us all by God and through the **remedies** left by Him to His Church, by going to confession,

reading good books, and hearing sermons ... It then begins to live and to sustain itself by these things, and by good meditations, until grown.

4. Once grown ... it begins to **spin the silk** and **build the house** where it will **die**. This **house is Christ**. Somewhere I have read that our life is hidden in Christ ... or that our life is Christ ...

5. Well, daughters, see what we can do through the help of God: His Majesty Himself, as He does in this prayer of union, **becomes the dwelling place we build for ourselves** ... To the little we do, which is nothing, God will unite Himself, with His greatness, and give it such a high value that the Lord Himself will become the reward of this work. Since He paid the **highest price**, He wants to **join our little labors with** the greater **ones He suffered** that **all the work may become one**.

6. Courage, my daughters! Let's be quick to do this work and **weave this little cocoon** by **getting rid** of our **self-love** and **self-will**, our attachment to any earthly thing, and by **performing deeds** of penance, prayer, mortification, obedience, and of all the other things you know ... Let this **silkworm die** ... and you will see how we "see God" in the sense ... of what is **felt** in this kind of **union**.

7. ... In this prayer the soul is truly dead to the world and a **little white butterfly** comes forth ... How **transformed** the soul is when it comes out of this prayer after having been **placed within** the greatness of God and so **closely joined** with Him for a little while... the union never lasts much more than a half hour. The soul doesn't recognize itself. Look at the **difference between an ugly worm and a little white butterfly**; that's the difference there is here.

The soul knows that it doesn't merit this **blessing**. It sees within itself a desire to **praise God**; it would want to die a thousand deaths for Him. It soon begins to experience a desire to **suffer great trials**. The strongest **desire**, however is for **penance**, for

solitude, and that **all may know God**; and **great pain** comes to it when it sees He is **offended** ... If after God brings a soul here it makes the effort to advance, it will see **great things**.

8. ... Now to see the **restlessness** of this butterfly, though never has it been so **quiet** and **calm** in its life ... All it sees on **earth displeases** it, especially if God gives it this **wine** often ... It now has **wings**. How can it be happy **walking** step by step when it can **fly**? ... Everything it can do for God seems little in its own eyes ... It now understands through experience how the Lord **helps** and **transforms** a soul.

The **weakness** it once seemed to have with regard to doing **penance** is now its **strength**. Its **attachment** to family and friends or wealth now **grieves** it when obliged to do what is necessary to avoid offending God. Everything **wearies** it, as it has learned through experience that **creatures cannot give it true rest**.

9. ... This little **butterfly seeks rest** since it feels **estranged** from **earthly things**. Well, where will the poor little thing go? It can't return to where it came from ... We are **powerless** to bring about this **favor** until God is again pleased to grant it.

Lord, what new **trials** begin for this soul! Who would say such a thing after so sublime a favor? Well, there **must be a cross** while we live ... Anyone who says that after he arrived here he always enjoyed rest and delight, I would say he perhaps never arrived but simply experienced some spiritual delight ...

10. I don't mean to say that souls who arrive here don't have **peace**, they do, and it is very **deep**. For the **trials** are so **valuable** ... and although **very severe**, they give rise to **peace** and **happiness**. The **unhappiness** caused by **worldly things** brings about a **desire to leave this world**. Any **relief** the soul has comes from the thought that God wants it to be **living in this exile** ... yet in spite of all these **benefits** it is **not entirely surrendered to God's will** ... though it

conforms itself to it. It conforms with a feeling that it can do no more, as no more has been given it, and with many tears.

When in prayer, this **regret** is its **pain**.

Maybe the **sorrow** comes from the **deep pain** it feels seeing **God offended** and **little esteemed in this world** and that many souls are **lost** ...

11. A few years ago – maybe days ago—this soul wasn't **mindful** of anything but **itself**.

Who has placed it in the midst of such painful concerns? ... I strove to think about the tremendous evil of an offence against God and that those souls who are condemned are his His children... but the **grief** that is felt here after the soul has experienced the prayer of union is not like the grief of this world. This grief reaches the **intimate depth of our being** as does the **pain** suffered in this state. It seems the pain **breaks** and **grinds** the soul into pieces without the soul striving for or even wanting it. Well, what is this **pain**? Where does it come from? Well, I shall tell you.

12. Haven't you heard it said of the **bride** ... that God brought her into the **inner wine cellar** and **put charity in order** within her? This explains the soul's suffering. The soul is now completely **surrendered** into His hands. Its **great love** makes it so surrendered ... that it only wants what He wants ...

He desires that ... it go forth from this **union** impressed with His **seal** ... The soul does no more in this union than the wax when another impresses a seal upon it.

The soul is only **disposed**; in other words, it is **soft**. And even to be **disposed**, it doesn't soften itself but only remains **still** and gives its **consent** ... All God wants is our **will** and that there be **no impediment** in the **wax**.

13. ... You see here, Sisters, what our God does in this union for the soul to **recognize itself as His own**. He gives from what He has, which is what His Son had in this life (a desire to love and save souls) He cannot grant us a higher favor ...

How is it Lord that you weren't thinking of the laborious death you were about to suffer ...?

You answer: "No, my **great love** and **desire** that **souls be saved** are incomparably **more important** than these **sufferings**; ...

14. It is true, it is a **torment** to see our Lord offended. The **pain** is so **unbearable** that to die would be better than to suffer this. If a soul with so little **charity** compared to Christ's ... felt this suffering to be unbearable, what must have been the feeling of our Lord?

And what kind of life must He have suffered since all things were **present** to Him and He was always witnessing the **serious offenses** committed against His Father? These **sufferings** were surely much greater than were those of His most sacred Passion.

At the time of His Passion, He already saw an **end** to these trials. With this awareness, the happiness of seeing a **remedy** for us in His death and of showing us the **love** He had for His Father in suffering so much for Him, His sorrows were **tempered**.

These sorrows are also tempered here below by those ... who perform great **penances**. They almost don't feel them. They would want to do more and more. All seems too little to them.

What must it have been for His Majesty to find Himself with so **excellent an occasion** to **show His Father** how completely **obedient** He was to Him, and with **love for His neighbor**. What great delight to suffer in doing the will of God!

It is so difficult to see the many offenses committed so continually against His Majesty and the many souls going to hell. One day of that pain would be sufficient to end many lives; how much more one life, if He had been no more than man. Amen