

## The Sixth Dwelling Places

### Chapter 6 (summary)

#### Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Tells about an effect of the prayer discussed in the previous chapter. How to understand whether this effect is true rather than deceptive. Discusses another favor the Lord grants so that the soul might be occupied in praising Him.

As a result of these wonderful favors the soul is left so full of longings to completely enjoy the One who grants them that it lives in a great though **delightful torment**. With the strongest **yearning to die**, and thus usually with **tears**, it begs God to take it from this exile... When it is alone it finds some relief, but soon this torment returns ... In sum, this little butterfly is unable to find a lasting place of rest ... In this dwelling place **raptures** are very common ... and they may take place in public. Hence, **persecutions** and **criticism** ...

2. ... The soul seems to feel very **secure** in its interior part, especially when alone with God, yet it goes about **distressed** fearing the devil may tempt it to offend God ... Little does it suffer over criticism ... It begs His Majesty to lead it by another path ... But since the soul has found the path to be very beneficial, it sees that such a path is leading it along the **way to heaven** ... Even if it wanted to, it could not really desire anything else but to **abandon itself** into God's hands ... **Obedying** and **not offending** our Lord, it thinks, is the complete **remedy** against deception ... It would not knowingly commit a venial sin ... but it is intensely afflicted upon seeing it cannot free itself from committing many venial sins.

3. God gives these souls a strong desire not to **displease** Him in anything and to avoid **imperfection**. For this reason the soul wants to flee people and has a great envy of those who have lived in deserts. Yet, it would want to enter into the midst of the world to

play a role in getting even **one soul** to praise God more. A woman in this stage of prayer is **distressed** ... envying those who have the freedom to spread the news abroad about who this great God of hosts is.

4. Oh, poor little butterfly bound with so many chains ... Ordain, my God, that it might somehow fulfill its desires for your honor and glory ... Helped by your strength, it can **suffer many trials**; it is determined to do so and desires to suffer them ... Let your grandeur appear in a creature so feminine and lowly ... so that the world ... may praise You ... She understands in all truth that she doesn't deserve to suffer for You even a tiny trial, much less die.

5. ... The **desires** are not passing but **remain** ... Why do I say they remain? Sometimes the soul feels ... that it is a **coward** ... and it doesn't think it has the **courage** to do anything ... The Lord leaves it to its **own human nature** for its own greater good. It can now see that if it was able to do something, the **power** was given by His Majesty. This **truth** is seen with a clarity that leaves the soul annihilated within itself and with a deeper knowledge of God's **mercy** and **grandeur** ...

6. ... About these great **desires** to see our Lord: they sometimes **afflict** so much that you ... must distract yourselves ... Since it seems these desires are **characteristic** of very **advanced persons** ... and we just might think we are advanced. It is always good to **walk with fear** ... A person who has no experience of the **authentic** and the **inauthentic** desires will think his desires are something great and will help them along as much as he can and will do **serious harm** to his health. For this **suffering is continual** ...

7. ... A **weak constitution** tends to cause these kinds of suffering ... A thousand times they will be led to think they weep for God ... The devil's aim here is that these persons become so **weak** they will afterward be **unable to pray** or keep their own **rule**.

8. It seems to me I can see you asking what you should do since I **mark danger**

**everywhere** ... but I do not speak without having seen these **false tears**; although not by me, for I am not at all tender. Rather I have a heart so hard that sometimes I am distressed; although when the **inner fire** is **intense**, the heart, no matter how hard, **distills** like an alembic. You will indeed know when this **fire** is the **source** of the **tears**, for they are then more **comforting** and bring **peace** not turbulence, and seldom cause harm ... In any case, it won't be wrong to be suspicious about tears.

9. Let's not think that everything is accomplished through weeping, but set our hands to the task of **hard work** and **virtue**. These are what we must pay attention to; let the **tears** come when God sends them ... These tears from God will **irrigate** this dry earth, and they are a great help in producing **fruit**. The less attention we pay to them the more there are, for they are the **water that falls from heaven** ... Place yourselves then, Sisters, in the presence of the Lord and look at His mercy and grandeur and at our own lowliness, and let Him give us what He wants, whether water or dryness. He knows best what is suitable for us. With such an attitude we shall go about refreshed ...

10. In the midst of these experiences that are both **painful** and **delightful** together, our Lord sometimes gives the soul feelings of **jubilation** and a **strange prayer** it doesn't understand ... in my opinion, it is a deep union of the faculties ... The **joy** is so **excessive** the soul ... wants to tell everyone about it so that they might help this soul praise our Lord ... It seems it has found itself and that, like the father of the prodigal son, it would want to prepare a festival and invite all because it sees itself in an undoubtedly safe place ... There is so much **interior joy** in the very intimate part of the soul and so much **peace**; and all the happiness stirs the soul to the praises of God.

11. To be silent and conceal this great impulse of happiness, when experiencing it, is no small pain ... I knew a saint named

Friar Peter of Alcantara ... who did this very thing, and those who at one time listened to him thought he was crazy. Oh, what blessed madness, Sisters! If only God would give it to us all! ... And, when the Lord gives you this favor and you tell others in this house about it, you will receive help rather than the criticism you would receive in the world ...

12. ... Happy are they whose good fortune it is to remain apart from the world ... In what better way can you, Sisters, when together, use your tongues than in the praise of God since we have so many reasons for praising Him?

13. May it please His Majesty to give us this prayer often since it is so safe and beneficial; to acquire it is impossible because it is something very supernatural. And it may last a whole day ...

The joy makes a person so forgetful of self ... that he can speak of nothing other than the praises of God which proceed from his joy ... What can give us greater happiness? And may all creatures help us forever and ever, amen, amen, amen!