

Spiritual Testimonies #1

Her Spiritual State & Manner of Prayer

Avila, 1560

Saint Teresa of Avila

1. My present **procedure in prayer** is as follows: I am seldom able while in prayer to use my intellect. My soul **immediately** begins to grow **recollected**. It remains in **quiet** or **rapture** and am unable to use my **senses**.

2. Often this recollection and elevation of spirit comes on me **suddenly**. I am **unable to resist** it. In a moment I receive the **effects** it carries in its wake.

This recollection occurs ... while I am dealing with other things and thinking that ... because of great dryness, intensified by bodily pains, I would not be able to practice prayer.

But while ... my soul is getting lost, I see what it **gains** ... in other words, blessings ... that I don't think I could have acquired myself in the course of a year.

3. Other times I receive a very **intense impulse** from God that I cannot resist. It seems my life is ending ... so I cry out and call to God ... It is such that the soul would never want to be relieved of it as long as it lives.

I have longings not to live this apparent life any more. I cannot find any **remedy** for these longings, since the cure for the desire to see God is **death**. I cannot take this cure. In addition, my soul feels that everyone has the greatest consolation and finds a cure for their trials except itself. This causes much affliction. If the Lord didn't provide a remedy by means of a **rapture** where all is made peaceful—the soul remains in **deep quiet** and **satisfaction**—beholding what it **desires** and **understanding** other things—it would be impossible to get free from that pain.

4. Sometimes **desires to serve God** come upon me with very strong **impulses**. There is **pain** in seeing of what little use I am. It seems then that no **trial** could be offered to

me that I would not undergo. This, too, occurs without reflection; in an instant, it changes me completely, and I do not know where I get so much strength ... God will give us so much good if we **dispose ourselves** of it.

These desires consume me... They are no good however in serving God ... I feel such pain in seeing I have no power to serve Him ... I end up with **delight** and **recollection** and **consolations** from God.

5. Other times, when these anxious longings to serve Him come upon me, I feel I want to do penance; but I am unable ... The penances amount to almost nothing on account of the weakness of my body ...

6. At times it gives me great pain to have to deal with others; ... as all my longing is to be alone ... solitude consoles me.

Conversation, especially with relatives, seems burdensome.

I feel among strangers, except ... when I speak about **prayer** and the **soul**. With these people, I feel happy and consoled ... yet at times, I just want to go where I can be **alone**...

7. At other times, it pains me to have to eat and sleep... but I do them to **serve God** ... It seems that **time is short** and that there is not enough for **prayer**, for I never tire of being alone.

I always want to have time to read... but in picking up a book I become **recollected** in my **contentment** and the time passes in **prayer**.

I have many **duties**, but they do not provide me the satisfaction reading does. So, I go about always wanting time. Aware that what I want is not granted, makes everything **insipid** to me.

8. All these **desires**, and those for **virtue** were given me by our Lord after He gave me the **prayer of quiet** with **raptures**. I was much improved. The **raptures** and **visions** leave me with benefits I will now describe.

If I have anything good it comes from these.

9. I have a very strong **determination** not to offend God; I would die a thousand deaths

rather than offend rather than offend Him knowingly... although in all these matters I **commit many faults and errors**.

I **obey** my confessor, although **imperfectly**...

I desire **poverty** although **imperfectly** ... I only want to have what is necessary. Still, I feel I am lacking in this virtue...

10. From almost all the visions I have experienced, I have received some benefit ...

11. When I see something beautiful like **water, fields, flowers, fragrances, music** and so on ... so great is the difference between them and what I am accustomed to seeing that all desire for such things is taken from me ... they make no impression on me and seem like dung.

12. If I speak or having dealings with secular people ... even about prayer ... such conversation is a severe hardship for me. Amusements that I used to like and things of the world, all annoy me; and I cannot look at them.

13. Desires for **loving, serving** and **seeing** God, that I have ... come with so excessive an **enkindling** and **fervor** that if God did not cure me by **rapture** which leaves my soul satisfied, I think my life would soon come to an end.

14. I greatly love those who are more **advanced** and who are **determined, detached** and **courageous**. It is with them that I would want to converse. They help me.

But, those who proceed with great **care** so that things can be done in **conformity** with **reason** oppress me and make me cry to God and to His saints.

I feel this because I think God helps those who set out to do much for Him and He never fails anyone who trusts in Him alone. I do not want to **worry** about what I eat or wear. I would want to abandon that to God ... It does not mean I do not try to procure them ... I do, but without worry.

He has given me this **freedom** ... I strive to forget myself as much as possible. Less than

a year has passed it seems since our Lord gave me this freedom.

15. ... There is no reason for me to experience **vainglory**. I can do nothing of myself; rather God gives me a feeling of my **miseries**. No matter what I do, I would never be able to see all the **truths** I come to know in a moment.

16. ... It seems to me that I am speaking of another person when I speak of these things. Once ashamed that my experiences be known, now I think I am no better from these favors but worse, since I profit so little from them... I beseech Him not to pay me in this life. I believe that because I am weak and wretched that the Lord led me by this path.

17. While in prayer ... I am unable to ask for **rest** ... as I see He did not live but with **trials**. Therefore, I beg Him to give them to me along with the grace to suffer them.

18. All that has to do with very **sublime perfection** seems impressed on me in prayer. I am amazed to see so many **truths** clearly; the things of the **world** appear to me to be **nonsense**.

Let me proceed carefully by reflecting on what I used to think of the things of the world; on what I was; and, what I used to feel...

19. If in some persons I see things that seem to be sins, I cannot conclude they have offended God. If I consider them—which happens rarely—I never reach that conclusion...

I never pause to consider anything evil; because later, when and if I recall it, I always see another **virtue** in that person.

Thus, these things never distress me ...

I grieve, but not a lot if I see someone turn from prayer. I strive not to think about it.

20. I also find improvement in regard to my **former vanities**. It is, however, not complete; for I am not always mortified by it.

21. This is **what** ordinarily **takes place in my soul**. I habitually strive to keep my mind on God; and when I am dealing with other

things ... I am made attentive by I don't know who...

22. It happens to me, though not often, that it seems that all the good things, fervor and visions have been taken away; and even from my memory ... Everything seems to have been a **dream** ...

My intellect disturbs me because I cannot think of God... It seems that I am full of faults ... and the courage I usually have dwindles ...and it occurs to me that I am **good for nothing**...

I should like to hide where no one would see me; not solitude for virtue's sake, but from a lack of courage. It seems too that I want to quarrel with anyone who contradicts me... I do not ask Him to remove this state, but if He wills that it might remain always. I ask only that He keep me in His hands so that I might not offend Him; I conform myself to Him with all my heart...

23. ... While in this **state**, with one word alone... or a little recollection ... or in approaching to receive Communion, my soul and body will become very **quiet**, and my **intellect** sound and clear, and I will feel all the usual fortitude and desires...

Sometimes I feel this by means of **raptures** lasting more than three hours ...

24. All these things mentioned make me believe these **favours** are from God. I know who I was and that I was walking on the **road of perdition**.

Through these experiences, my soul became amazed not knowing where these **virtues** came from. I saw they were **given** and **not gained** through toil. I understand ... that it has been a means by which God not only brought me to His **service** but **freed me** from hell...

25. When I meet someone who knows something about me, I want to explain my life to him that the Lord be praised ... I only want His glory

I don't do anything else but ask everyone for prayers—that He would either let me know if this is for His glory or lead me by another path. If they were not from Him, His

Majesty would not let these experiences continue.

26. These experiences and the teachings of many saints assure me that my experiences are from God... When they wanted to force me to believe the devil was the cause, I feared ... I was being deceived.

But at the first locution, or experience of recollection, or vision all was blotted out; I could only believe **God was the cause**.

27. Although I realize the devil sometimes meddles ...the effects he causes are different. Whoever has experience will not be deceived ...

28. I am ordinarily reprimanded for my faults ... and receive counsel that benefit me. My past sins are often brought to mind and cause me much grief.

29. ... In regard to the blessing I see in myself when I come out of prayer I have been brief. Afterwards I see my imperfections ... yet, the difference in my life is well-known and causes me to reflect on what I have said ... These are the perfect qualities the Lord has wrought in my who is so imperfect ...