

Degrees of Infused (Mystical or Supernatural) Prayer

Seville, 1576

Saint Teresa of Avila

1. **Inner spiritual experiences** are **difficult** to speak about. If this writing was not done under **obedience**, it would be hard to succeed especially in matters so hard to explain ...

What I can **certify** is that I shall not mention what I have not ... experienced ...

2. It seems that it would please your Reverence if I started to deal with **supernatural experiences**, for there is already understanding of the devotion ... that we can ourselves, with the help of our Lord, procure here below.

Interior Recollection

3. The **first prayer** I experienced that was in my opinion supernatural (...what cannot be acquired by effort... although one can dispose oneself ...) is an **interior recollection** felt in the soul ... As the soul has **exterior senses** it also has **interior senses** which seem to want to withdraw within, away from outside noise.

Sometimes this recollection draws in the exterior senses. It gives the **soul** the desire to **close its eyes** and not **hear** or **see** or **understand** anything ... but **communion with God** in **solitude**.

In this state, none of the **senses** or **faculties** are lost. All are **intact** so that the soul can be occupied in God ...

Interior Quiet

4. A very pleasing **interior quiet** and peace sometimes flow from the **interior recollection**. It seems as if the soul is lacking in nothing. Even reciting vocal prayers or meditating tires it. All it wants is to **love** ... This quiet lasts a short while or a longer while.

Sleep of the Faculties

5. From this prayer there usually proceeds what is called a **sleep of the faculties**. The **faculties** are neither **absorbed** nor so **suspended** that the prayer can be called a **rapture**.

Although this prayer is **not** complete **union**, the soul understands that the **will** alone is united ... The **will** is completely occupied in God, and lacks power to be engaged in any other work.

The other **two faculties** (intellect, memory) are free for **business** and **works of service in God**. In sum, **Martha and Mary walk together**. Father Francis told me that the experience is a **frequent** one.

Union

6. When there is **union** of all the faculties, things are different because none of them is able to function. The **intellect** is in awe; the **will** loves more than it understands ... there is no **memory** nor **thought** at all...

During union, the senses are not awake, but as though **lost** so the soul can be more occupied in what it enjoys. This union **passes quickly**.

From the **humility** and other **virtues** left in the soul, one understands the **great good** that comes from union.

The experience of **union** cannot be described. The soul is given understanding of it ... but is unable to describe it.

If this is an authentic experience it is surely amongst the **greatest favors** our Lord grants along this **spiritual path**.

Rapture & Suspension

7. **Rapture** and **suspension** are both the same. I use the word suspension as the word rapture can frighten. Indeed, **union** can also be called **suspension**.

The **difference** between **rapture** and **union** is this: the **rapture** lasts longer and is felt more exteriorly, as the breathing diminishes and one is not able to open their eyes.

Although the diminishing of bodily powers occurs in **union**, it takes place in **rapture** with greater force as the body loses **heat**. When the **rapture** is intense ... the **hands** are frozen and sometimes stretched out like sticks. The **body** remains as it is, either standing or kneeling.

The **soul** is occupied in rejoicing in what the Lord represents to it that it seems to **forget to animate the body** and leaves the body **abandoned**. If the suspension lasts, the nerves are left aching.

8. It seem the Lord wants the soul to **understand** more of what it enjoys in the **union**. So some things about His Majesty are usually revealed to it in the **rapture**. The **effects** left in the soul are great. There is also a forgetfulness of self and the desire that so tremendous a Lord be known and praised.

If the **suspension** is from God, the soul is deeply aware of its inability to do anything there and of its great misery and ingratitude for not having served Him ...

The **feeling** and **sweetness** are so excessive. That if remembrance did not pass away all comparable satisfactions here on earth would be nauseating to the soul. As a result, it loses esteem for the things of the world.

Transport

9. The difference between **rapture** and **transport** is that in **rapture** the soul only **gradually** dies to exterior things, loses its senses and lives in God.

Transport, on the other hand, comes **swiftly** through **knowledge** the Lord gives in the intimate depths of the soul that results in the soul thinking that this **higher part** is being carried away (or leaves the body).

Courage is necessary initially for the soul to **surrender** itself into the arms of the Lord and go where He wants to bring it (to lofty things). There is certainly a need to be **determined to die** for Him ...

10. The **virtues** are left much **stronger** from this experience. The **soul desires** and

devotes itself more entirely to **understanding** that power of this great God, in order to **fear** and **love** Him.

Without our being able to **resist**, He carries the soul away. It is left with deep **repentance** for having **offended** Him ... and with an intense **longing** that no one offend such a great Majesty but that all praise Him.

It seems that the extraordinary **desires** for the **salvation of souls**, for **taking part** in this **work** and that God be **praised** as He deserves must come from this experience.

Flight of the Spirit

11. The **flight of the spirit** is something that rises up from the most **intimate part of the soul** ...

I think the **soul** and the **spirit** must be **one**, but like a fire that is great ... so the soul ... suddenly begins to blaze and shoot forth a flame reaching high in the air ...

So here in the soul it seems something is produced so suddenly and delicately that it rises up to the superior part and goes wherever the Lord wills.

This cannot be explained any further ... It seems to be a **flight** ... it is recognized very clearly and cannot be stopped.

12. It seems the **spirit** escapes from ... the **prison** of this body ... He gives it something **delicate** and **precious**, from what the soul understands, and there doesn't seem to be any **illusion** in it ... Afterward there were fears ... but in the interior of the soul remains a **certitude** and that enables one to live ...

Impulse

13. An **impulse** or **desire** sometimes comes upon the soul ... Suddenly it remembers its **separation** from God ... This remembrance ... has such force ... that in an instant the soul seems to be beside itself ... The mind's discursive power to console itself is taken away ... The **pain** serves a **purpose** the soul comes to know is worth dying for.

14. It seems that everything the soul understands adds to its **pain** and that the Lord doesn't want it to profit from anything else.

Nor does its **will** seem to be alive but in so great a **solitude** and so **forsaken** by all ... The **whole world** and its affairs give it pain, no created thing provides it company nor does it want any company but the Creator's, only possible if it dies ... So it dies with the longing to die that there is a true **danger of death**. It finds itself **hanging between heaven and earth ...**

From time to time God gives it **knowledge** of Himself ... so that it might see what it is missing. No knowledge on earth is equal to this divine knowledge.

In the half hour this prayer lasts, there is time to leave the body **disjoined** and the **arms straight** ... and the **pains** most **severe**.

15. Nothing of this is felt until that **impulse** passes. The soul is busy experiencing what is happening **interiorly**. It probably would not feel heavy bodily torments, yet it is in **possession** of its **senses**. It can **speak** and **see** but not **walk** because of the forceful **blow of love** that prostrates it.

But unless God gives this impulse nothing is gained... It leaves the **greatest effect** and **improvement** in the soul ... The soul understands that this impulse is a **great favor** of the Lord. Were it frequent, one's life would not last long.

16. In the ordinary **impulse** there comes an extremely **tender desire** to **serve God**, along with **tearful wishes** to **leave this exile**. But there is **freedom** in knowing it is the **Lord's will** that it go on living, it is consoled and **offers** Him its **life** for His **glory**. This thought allows the soul to continue on.

Wound of Love

17. Another **type of prayer** quite frequent is a kind of wound where it seems an **arrow** is **thrust** into the **heart** or the **soul** itself.

It causes a **severe pain** that causes the soul to **moan**; yet, the pain is so **delightful** the soul would never want it to go away.

This pain is not in the **senses** ... but in the **interior depths** of the soul without resemblance to bodily pain.

This experience can only be explained through **rough comparisons** ... it's impossible to understand them unless one has experienced it.

Spiritual sufferings are very **different** from physical ones. So surely then the **sufferings of souls in hell** and **purgatory** are greater than what can be understood of it from **bodily sufferings** here on earth.

18. Sometimes this **wound of love** rises from the **intimate depths** of the soul. Its **effects** are great. And unless the Lord provides a **remedy**, which the soul is unable to resist, there is none.

These **wounds** are like **alive** and **refined longings for God**. The soul sees itself confined in the body, preventing it from enjoying God as it would like.

As a result, a great abhorrence for the body comes over it. The body is like a **thick wall** impeding the enjoyment of what the soul knows it possesses within...

It also sees the **great evil** that came upon us through the **sin of Adam and Eve** when **freedom** was **lost**.

19. This prayer (**wound of love**) was experienced before the **raptures** and **great impulses** which are almost never taken away unless by a **rapture** and a great favor from the Lord where He **comforts** the souls and **encourages** it to live for Him.

20. ... Whether this **wound** is good or not the Lord knows. One cannot fail to recognize the **effects** and **improvement** it brings to the soul.

Persons of the Trinity

21. I see clearly that the **Persons of the Trinity** are **distinct** ... except I do not see or hear anything yet there is a strange

certitude although the **eyes of the soul** do not see. When the presence is gone, the soul is aware of its absence ...

This experienced I know is **not imagined** because, try as I may, I am unable to represent it again ...

Since so many years have gone by, one must have been able to see to speak with this **certitude** of these things.

22. ... I can easily affirm who I think is the **Person** who always **speaks**; of the other Persons, I would be unable to affirm that they speak. One of them I know clearly has never done so.

23. The **first Person**, I think spoke once ...but I would not dare affirm it ...

Although knowledge is given in a strange manner that these Persons are **distinct**; the soul understands there is **only one God**.

... It seems **our Lord** did not speak unless in His **humanity**.

Again I say that this work is not the work of the **imagination**.

24. What your Reverence says about water, I don't know; nor have I ever known where the **terrestrial paradise** is.

I am not able to avoid knowing what the Lord gives me knowledge of ... but I have never asked His Majesty to give me knowledge of anything....

And never, did I have a curious desire to know things, nor do I care to know anything more. This was quite a **trial** to me that without wanting to know, I understood...

Presence of God

25. Another prayer I recall, which comes before the first kind (**Interior Recollection**), is a **presence of God** that is not a vision. It seems that **when** and **each time** (at least when there is no dryness) a person wants to **pray to God**, though it may be vocal prayer, **he finds Him**.

May it please God to have mercy on me and that I not lose through my own fault so many favors. Amen