

## **Teresian Prayer (Summary)**

Carmelite Nuns

Carmel Clarion, Jan-Mar 2011

### **Introduction**

We have only to look to Teresa to discover the **elements** that make a **Carmelite vocation** and **how to live it** in an adequate way. This applies too in the **area of prayer**, the **center** and **characteristic mark** of **Teresian life** and **charism** and, because of this, the **principle component** of **Carmel's place** in the **Church**.

St. Teresa's **person** and **message**, along with the Carmel itself, cannot be explained without speaking of **prayer**. The **study of Teresian prayer** gives us access to the whole of her **life** and **teaching** while allowing an **understanding** of the **Carmelite vocation**.

Today's person has the right to expect from us the **experience of prayer**. It is through Teresa that the **Carmel** has become known in the **Church** as a **praying community**.

All the **elements** that make a **qualified teacher of prayer** can be found in **Teresa**: vast **experience**; profound **understanding** of grace received from God; ability to **communicate** her experience. She writes:

**“For it is one grace to receive the Lord's favor; another, to understand which favor and grace it is; and one more, to know how to describe and explain it”** (L 17:5 ...)

These **three mystical graces** make Teresa a qualified **teacher of prayer**, while mapping out for us the subjects for studying Teresian prayer: **Experience, Doctrine and Pedagogy**.

### **Part 1. Teresa's Experience of Prayer**

To **understand Teresa's message**, knowledge of her **experience** is necessary. It is from her experience, where she saw the **essential elements** of **Christian life**, that she drew her knowledge...

... A schematic helps us grasp her word and message. **Three periods** are apparent in the **development** of St Teresa's prayer.

### **1-First Period:**

Easy and spontaneous prayer. Teresa took to prayer. (cf. LI)

### **2-Second Period:**

**Difficult** and **testing prayer** from an **adolescence crisis** triggered by her mother's death up to her **definitive conversion** in 1554. (L9)

The **difficulty** had a **two-fold source**:

- Teresa's inability for **discursive (or methodical) reflection** and **thoughts** that ran wild (L4 ...);
- Teresa's **resistance** to embracing the way of love, and the **contradictions** in her lifestyle.

### **3-Third Period:**

This period begins with Teresa's entry into **mystical life** in 1554, the year of her **definitive conversion**.

From now on, she will no longer fall back but only ascend. She avoids **occasions of sin** and spends more time in **prayer**. God lavishes His attention on her.

**“Now, then, when I began to avoid occasions and devote myself to prayer, the Lord ... started to grant me favors”** (L 23:2; ...)

A careful study of **mystical prayer** ... allows us to discover that ... it is a **communication of God**, a **personal communication** to the **human being**. The person “experiences” this communication each time to a **greater level inwardly**, until it becomes **personal communion**.

Mystical prayer for Teresa is about a **Person to person relationship**”, “**a friendly communication**”. God is more **active** in the prayer than the person. In friendship, friends take first place and all else becomes secondary. Amen

**To be continued...**

### **Part 2. Teresa's Method of Prayer**