

Prayer of Recollection

Introduction

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Teresian Prayer

(translated from French)

The path to union with God is attained through interior prayer. It is the characteristic way of prayer of Saint Teresa of Avila's reformed Carmel and is practiced two hours daily by all Discalced Carmelites.

Teresa of Avila developed a way of prayer (V Prologue; F 2 3) that she will offer in her writings as a **fundamental type of prayer** usable by either **beginners** or those more **advanced** in the way of perfection.

We know that interior prayer held the secret to the Holy Mother's success... It is thanks to prayer that Teresa met the Living God, achieved perfect union with Him, and drew the strength to successfully carry out her work as the Carmel reformer.

...But, it is hard to formulate a complete or precise idea of this prayer based on Teresa's descriptions alone. The difficulty, admittedly, is in part due to the subject itself; it is about a **complex, spiritual reality** situated between the natural and the supernatural; **between ordinary meditation and infused contemplation**.

Teresa realized this difficulty. It took her time to identify the original characteristics of her **manner of prayer** as compared to **discursive prayer or meditation** of which she will most often speak in a **negative manner**, dismissing it: *I am not asking you to reason, deliberate* etc., she often repeated.

Moreover, for quite some time, she wouldn't be able to explain to others what she was

living. She had to refer to pages in Bernardino de Laredo's book, **The Ascent of Mont Sion**, in order to explain to confessors the different **states of her soul**. Later on, she will consider it a **special grace** received from the Lord to have the capacity to describe her own interior movements.

To fully develop her method of prayer, Teresa would need a lot of time. It was only after many mistakes and uncertainties that she succeeded.

For many, **mystical life** is reduced to extraordinary phenomena which are accidental and unnecessary.... But, in reality this life is none other than the **fulfillment of Baptismal graces**. In other words, it is an increase in the **virtues of faith, hope and charity**, received at Baptism, in the heart of him who believes that the Kingdom of God is found within (see Luke 17: 20-21).

For Teresa of Jesus, **all who are baptized** are invited to **mystical life** for which interior prayer is the vital nourishment. She believes that her way of prayer is **not reserved for a few elite souls but is offered to all** who thirst to love and make loved the One who loved us all so much.

Amen