

Prayer of Recollection

Part 5 Methods to Recollect Yourself

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Teresian Prayer

(translated from French)

Teresa tells us that sometimes the **living contact** with Christ cannot be established or maintained during prayer perhaps because of **bad body position, dryness or distractions** (V 11 15).

To achieve or reestablish **contact**, Teresa suggests **diverse, little ploys or skills** (W 26 10) **which are only a means to reach the goal. Indeed, when the fire in the will ... is not enkindled and God's presence is not felt, it is necessary that we seek this presence** (IC 6 7 9).

She recommends **helping yourself with a good book ... in order to recollect one's thoughts and pray well vocally, and little by little accustom the soul with coaxing and skill not to grow discouraged** (W 26 10).

Teresa tells us that:

For eighteen years, after Communion, I never dared to begin prayer without a book for my soul was as fearful of being without it during prayer as it would have been should it have had to battle with a lot of people. With this recourse, which was like a partner or a shield by which to sustain the blows of my many thoughts, I went about consoled (V 4 9).

After that, Teresa would continue to use a book that she would keep beside her, and she would say that **as soon as I have a book, if I like it, I become recollected, and the reading transforms into interior prayer** (S).

She goes on to say:

Reading offers a center of interest, something for my thoughts to focus on; it represents an intermediate which enhances recollection and even for some replaces mental prayer that they cannot achieve (V 4 8).

In any case, for those who journey along this path, a book helps to promptly recollect oneself (V 9 5).

I have always been fond of the words of the Gospels and found more recollection in them than in very cleverly written books (W 21 3).

Another suggestion, Teresa recommends would be **to carry about an image or painting of the Lord that is to your liking, not so as to carry it about on your heart and never look at it but so as to speak often with Him** (W 26 9).

We have to return to this method when He Himself is absent, or when by means of a great dryness He wants to make us feel He is absent. It is then a wonderful comfort to see an image of One whom we have so much reason to love, (W 34 11), and to feel sorry for the heretics denied this consolation.

Now, then, let us speak again to those souls I mentioned that cannot recollect or tie their minds down in mental prayer or engage in reflection (W 24 1), Teresa suggests reciting a **vocal prayer** like the Our Father.

It is important to seek to understand **each word, ... The intellect is recollected much more quickly with this kind of prayer even though it may be vocal; it is prayer that brings with it many blessings** (W 28 4).

Teresa affirms that even by this path it is possible to achieve **perfect contemplation**.

I tell you that it is very possible that while you are reciting the Our Father or some other vocal prayer, the Lord may raise you to perfect contemplation (W 25 1) ...

There is a **last objection** that needs to be addressed. Teresa heard murmurings about the **reality** of her having had a **real conversation** with the Lord. The friendly **dialogue** that she proposes, doesn't it come down in fact to a **monologue** in which the soul does most of the talking without an answer?

Teresa recognized first of all **that the Lord comes very late and pays just as well, and all at once, what He was giving to others in the course of many years** (W 17 2). **Even though we do not hear Him, He speaks well to the**

heart when we beseech Him from the heart
(W 24 5).

Concerning beginners and all those who begin, yet they never reach the end [...]thinking they are **doing nothing**, she remarks that **it is then perhaps that their will is being strengthened and fortified, although they may not be aware of this** (V 11 15).

Teresa is certain that **the Lord does not stop acting in the soul who is looking for Him. Though He comes disguised, the disguise as I have said does not prevent Him from being recognized in many ways, in conformity with the desire we have to see Him. And you can desire to see Him so much that He will reveal Himself to you entirely** (W 34 12) **if we prepare ourselves to receive Him, He never fails to give in many ways which we do not understand** (W 35 1).

Another noteworthy remark ... **as soon as the Lord understands that the soul is totally His [...] He never ceases to commune with it in so many ways and manners, as One who is Wisdom itself** (M 5 5).

In summary, then the Lord's answer in the **heart to heart of interior prayer** happens, certainly **not** through **words**, but by His **action** in the most intimate part of the soul or by the feelings that He gives--delight to be there, to suffer for Him, to believe and hope in Him in spite of the contradiction of events. These are happy feelings about your misery, about knowing yourself loved and forgiven. Sometimes there is a silence full of love, of joy at His beauty, of His mercy, of His glory, of peace or of an interior light on Him. Sometimes there is a feeling that He is there, that He is listening. But more often, or usually, there is nothing other than a **reinforced** will to **serve Him** whatever the cost. Amen