

An Overview of The Way of Perfection

The Way of Perfection was written at the request of **Teresa's nuns** ... It was revised in 1569, and on the opening page Teresa wrote the following ... "**This book deals with the advice and counsel Teresa of Jesus gives to her religious Sisters and daughters.**" ...

It is a practical book of **advice** and **counsel** destined to **initiate** the Carmelite nun into a life of prayer. Throughout the work Teresa is a teacher, demonstrating how to lead a life of prayer, pointing to the pitfalls, and explaining the right from the wrong way of engaging in prayer.

Peace is necessary for a life of prayer so Teresa avoided placing burdens on her nuns. She focused on the **three practices** necessary to possess the peace the Lord recommends to **dispose** them to a **life of prayer: Love of Neighbor, Detachment & Humility**. These **three virtues** form a foundation for prayer, **free the spirit** and are at the same time the **effects of prayer**.

Teresa's **method or way of prayer** invites us to **be fully present to God** as He is fully present to us at all times ... We center our attention within, being fully present, looking at, gazing upon: these are the expressions that fit her way of prayer.

She states: "**I am not asking you now that you think about Him ... I am not asking you to do anything more than look at Him.**" (W 26 3)

The **Way of Perfection** can be divided as follows:

- I. Purpose of the Teresian Carmel (chs. 1-3)
2. Foundations of Prayer: love of neighbor (charity), detachment, and humility (chs. 4-15)
3. Diversity of Paths in contemplative communities (chs. 16-18)
4. Prayer in General (chs. 19-26)
5. Commentary on the Our Father (chs. 27-42)
 - a. Christ as Master and Guide in prayer (chs. 26-27)
 - b. Prayer of Recollection (chs. 28-29)
 - c. Prayer of Quiet (chs. 30-31)
 - d. Abandonment to the will of God (ch. 32)
 - e. the Eucharist (chs. 33-35)
 - f. Pardon of Offenses and Detachment from honor and esteem (chs. 36-37)
 - g. Deliverance from Deception and Illusions (chs. 38-41)
 - h. Desires for eternal Life (ch. 42)

Today two copies of The Way of Perfection have been conserved. The **first** is on display at the royal library of the **Escorial**; and the **second** is in Teresa's foundation of Carmelite nuns in Valladolid ... **Two copies** were made of the Valladolid copy ... and both were reviewed ... by Teresa herself. They are **conserved** today in the **monasteries** of the Carmelite nuns in **Salamanca** and **Madrid**.

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