

## The Way of Perfection

### Part 4: Prayer in General

Chapter 26 Method for Recollecting One's Mind (summary)  
Saint Teresa of Avila

**Chapter 26** Explains a method for recollecting one's mind. Sets down some ways of doing this. The chapter is very useful for beginners in prayer.

Let's return to **vocal prayer** that it may be recited in a way that God grant everything together ...

-We begin with an **examination of conscience**, an **act of contrition**. The **sign of the cross** must come first.

-Since you are alone, strive to **find a companion**. What better companion than the Master Himself who taught you this prayer? --

-**Represent the Lord** Himself as close to you and behold how lovingly and humbly He is teaching you.

-Believe me you should **remain** with so good a friend as long as you can.

-If you grow **accustomed** to having Him present at your side, and He sees that you do so with love and that you go about striving to please Him, you will not be able --as they say-- to get away from Him;

-He will never fail you;

-He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere.

-Do you think it's some small matter to have a friend like this at your side?

**2.** O Sisters, those of you who cannot engage in much **discursive reflection** with the **intellect** or keep you **mind** from **distraction**, get used to this practice!

I suffered many years from the trial ... of not being able to quiet the mind in anything. But I know that the Lord does not leave us abandoned in anything. If **we humbly** ask Him for this **friendship**, He will not deny it to us.

And if we cannot succeed in one year, we will succeed later. Let's **not regret** the time that is so **well spent**. Who's making us hurry? I am speaking of **acquiring this habit** and of striving to **walk alongside** this true **Master**.

**3.** I am not asking you to **think** about Him or that you **draw out** a lot of concepts or **make** long and subtle reflections with your **intellect**. **I am not asking you to do anything more than look at Him.**

For who can keep you from turning the **eyes of your soul** toward this Lord, even if you do so just for a moment if you can't do more? ... Well now, daughters, **your Spouse never takes His eyes off of you** ... Is it too much to ask you to turn your eyes from these exterior things to look at Him sometimes? ... In the measure that you desire Him, you will find Him. He so esteems our turning to look at Him ...

**4.** They say that for a woman to be a **good wife** toward her husband she must be **sad** when he is sad, and joyful when he is **joyful** even though she may **not** be so.

(See what subjection you have been freed from, Sisters!)

The Lord though acts in such a way with us. He is the One who **submits**. He wants you to be the lady with the authority to rule.

**He submits** to your will. If you are **joyful**, look at Him as **risen** ... Is it then such a big thing that from time to time you turn your eyes to look upon one who gives you so much?

**5.** If you are experiencing **trials** or are **sad**, **behold** Him on the way to the **garden**; or **behold** Him bound to the **column**, filled with pain ... abandoned by His friends ... or **behold** Him burdened with the **cross** ... He will look at you with those eyes so beautiful and compassionate, filled with tears; He will forget His sorrows so as to console you in yours ... and you turn your head to look at Him.

**6.** O Lord of the world, my true Spouse! (... Not only ... will You desire to look at Him but you will also delight in **speaking with Him**; not with **ready-made prayers** but with those that come from the sorrow of your own heart ... )

If it is true, Lord, that you want to endure everything for me, what is this that I suffer for You? Of what am I complaining? I desire to suffer all the trials that come to me. I see them as a great good enabling me to imitate You in something.

Let us walk together, Lord, Wherever You go, I will go; whatever You suffer, I will suffer.

**7.** Take up that cross, daughters. Don't mind at all if the Jews trample upon you, if His trials can thereby be lessened ... In stumbling, in falling with your Spouse, do not withdraw from the cross or abandon it ...

... You will come out consoled because you will see that your trials are to be laughed at when compared to those suffered by the Lord.

**8.** You will .... say that if you had seen His Majesty with your bodily eyes at the time He walked the earth you would have looked at Him willingly ... Don't believe it.

Whoever doesn't want to use a **little effort** now to **recollect** at least the **sense of sight** and **look at this Lord within herself** ... would have been much less able to stay at the **foot of the cross** with the Magdalene who saw His death with her own eyes ...

The people around the Blessed Virgin and this blessed saint ... were people from hell, ministers of the devil. Indeed, what these two suffered must have been terrible; but in the presence of another greater affliction they didn't feel their own.

So, Sisters, don't think you are **capable of** such **great trials** if you are not **capable of** such **little ones**. **Exercising yourselves** in these **little trials**, you will come to be **able to suffer greater ones** ...

**9.** What you can do to help in this matter is to carry about an **image** or a **painting** of this Lord that is to your liking, not to carry it about on your heart and never look at it but so as to **speak often with Him**; He will inspire you with what to say... Don't believe words will fail you if you **acquire the habit**.

**Failure to communicate** with a person causes both **estrangement** and a failure to **know how to speak** with him. It seems that we don't know him, even though he may be a relative; **family ties** and **friendship** are **lost** through a **lack of communication**.

**10.** It is also a great help to take a **good book** written in the vernacular in order to **recollect one's thoughts** and **pray well vocally**.

Little by little accustom the **soul** with **coaxing** and **skill** not to grow **discouraged**.

Many years have passed since the **soul left** the **house of its Spouse**. Until it returns to this

house, there is a great need that it know how to deal with Him ...

Our soul and our thoughts are so **accustomed to wandering about at their own pleasure** – or grief, ... that the **poor soul** does not understand itself.

In order that the soul love remaining at home once again, a great deal of **skill** is necessary...

... If with care you **grow accustomed** to remaining at home, your **gain** will be great.

Draw near, then, to this good Master with **strong determination** to learn what He teaches you, and His Majesty will so provide that you will turn out to be good disciples.

He will not abandon you if you do not abandon Him.

Consider the words that the Lord's divine mouth speaks. In the first word you will understand the **love He has for you**; it is no small blessing and gift for the disciple to see that his **Master loves him**. Amen