

The Way of Perfection

Part 5: Our Father

Who art in Heaven: Prayer of Recollection

Chapter 28 (summary)

Saint Teresa of Avila

Chapter 28 Explains the nature of the prayer of recollection and sets down some ways of getting accustomed to this form of prayer.

Consider what your Master says: **Who art in heaven**. Do you think it is of little importance to know **what** heaven is and **where** to seek your Father?

For **wandering minds** it is very important not only to **believe** these truths but to **strive** to understand them by experience. Doing this is one of the ways of greatly **slowing down the mind** and **recollecting the soul**.

2. You already know that God is **everywhere** ... and wherever God is, there is heaven ... Consider what **St. Augustine** says, that he sought Him in many places but ultimately found Him **within** himself.

Do you think it matters little for a soul with a **wandering mind** to understand this **truth** and see that there is no need to go to **heaven** in order to **speak** with one's Eternal Father or **find delight** in Him? Nor is there any need to **shout**. However softly we **speak**, He is **near** enough to hear us. ... All one need do is go into **solitude** and **look at Him within oneself**, and not turn away from so good a **Guest**. With great **humility** speak to Him as to a father. Beseech Him as you would a father, tell him about your trials, ask Him for a remedy against them, realizing that you are not worthy to be His daughter.

3. Humility doesn't consist in **refusing** a favor the King offers but in **accepting** it ... and being delighted with it ...

I have the Emperor of heaven and earth in my house ... and out of "**humility**" I do not want to take what He gives me but leave Him alone. Or, while He is begging me to ask Him for something, I do not do so ... I even let Him go. He sees that I never finish trying to make up my mind.

Have nothing to do with this **kind of humility** but **speak with Him as with a father, or a**

brother or a lord, or as with a spouse;

sometimes in one way, sometimes another.

He will teach you what you must do to please Him ... He is your Spouse, He will treat you accordingly. It is well worthwhile for you to have understood this **truth: the Lord is within us, it is there we must be with Him.**

4. The **intellect** is **recollected** much more quickly with this kind of prayer ... it is a prayer that brings with it many **blessings**. This prayer is called "**recollection**," because the soul collects its **faculties** together and enters within itself to be with its God.

Its divine Master comes more quickly to **teach** it and give it the **prayer of quiet** than He would through any other method ...

Centered there within itself, it can **think about** the Passion, **represent** the Son, offer Him to the Father and **not tire the intellect** by going to look for Him on Mount Calvary or in the garden or at the pillar.

5. Those who can **enclose themselves within this little heaven of our soul**, where the **Maker** of heaven and earth is **present**, and grow accustomed to refusing the distraction of the exterior senses, should **believe** they are **following an excellent path**. They will not fail to **drink water** from the **fount**. They will **journey far** in a **short time**.

Their situation is like a person who travels by ship; with a little wind, he reaches the end of his journey in a few days. Those who go by land, however, take longer.

It's the **path of heaven**. I say "of heaven," because they are there in the **palace** of the King; they are **not on earth** and are more secure ...

6. Those who know how to **recollect** themselves are already **out to sea**. They are maybe not completely away from land, but they **strive** to get **free** from land by **recollecting their senses within**.

If the **recollection** is **true**, it is felt clearly, because it produces an **effect** in the soul ...

It is like one who enters a **fortified castle** to be **safe** from **enemies**. There is a withdrawing of the senses ... the eyes close ... so that the **sight** might be more **awake** to things of the **soul**.

Anyone who walks this path keeps his **eyes closed when he prays** ... to not look at **things**

on earth. This **striving** comes at the beginning, later there is no need to strive ...

7. ... There are **greater** and **lesser degrees** of **recollection** ... and if we make the effort, **practice** this recollection for some days, and get used to it, the **gain** will be clearly seen. We will understand when beginning to pray that the **bees** are **approaching** and **entering** the **beehive** to make honey.

This **recollection** will happen **without** our **effort** ... The **faculties** are **drawn inward** ... When the **soul** does no more than give a **sign** that it wishes to be **recollected**, the **senses** obey it and become **recollected**.

Though they go back out again ... they go out as **captives** ... When the **will** calls them back, they come more quickly, until after many entries, the Lord wills they **rest** entirely in **perfect contemplation**.

8. Those who know how to **recollect themselves** are like those who **travel by sea**. Since it is important **not** to proceed slowly, let us speak about how to **get accustomed** to such a **good method**.

The **fire of divine love** is more quickly **enkindled** when they **blow a little** with their **intellects**. Since they are close to the **fire**, a little **spark** will **ignite** and **set all ablaze** ... The soul is **alone** with its God and **well-prepared** for this **enkindling**.

I would like you to clearly understand this **manner of prayer** which is called **recollection**

9. Let us **imagine** that within us is an extremely rich **palace** built entirely of **gold** and **precious stones** ...

Imagine too that you have a part to play for this palace to be so beautiful. There is no **edifice** as beautiful as a soul **pure** and **full of virtues**. The **greater** the **virtues**, the more **magnificent** the **jewels**.

Imagine, also, that this mighty **King**, your Father, **dwells** in this **palace**. He is seated upon an extremely valuable **throne**, your **heart**.

10. ... It is important to truly understand that **within us** lies something incomparably more **precious** than what we see outside ourselves ... I consider it impossible to pay much attention to worldly things if we remember we have a **Guest** such as this within us ...

11. ... I understood that I had a soul, but what the soul deserved and who dwelt within it I did not understand because I had **covered my eyes** with the **vanities of the world**.

If I had understood as I do now that in this **little palace of my soul** dwelt so great a King, I would not have **left Him alone** so often. I would have **remained** with Him more often and striven to not be so **unclean**.

... That He who would fill a thousand worlds would enclose Himself in something so small! (And so He wanted to enclose Himself in the womb of His most Blessed Mother.) But, as Lord, He is **free** to do what He wants, and since He loves us He **adapts** Himself to our **size**.

12. ... The Lord **enlarges** the **soul** little by little and it has the capacity to receive what He will place within it ... and He has the power to enlarge this **palace**.

The point is that we should give ourselves to Him with complete **determination**. We should strive to empty the soul so that He can add or take things away from it as if it were His own **property** ... so let us not oppose Him ... He doesn't force our will, He takes what we give Him; **He doesn't give Himself completely until we give ourselves completely**.

He never works in a soul as He does when it is totally His with **no obstacle** ... Now then, if we fill the palace with **lowly people** and **trifles**, how will there be room for the **Lord with his court**? ...

13. Do you think, daughters, that He comes alone? Don't you see that His Son says, "**who art in heaven**"?

Since He is a King, His **court attendants** would never leave Him alone, they will always be with Him. They **beseech** Him on our behalf since they are **full of charity**. Don't think that things in heaven are like they are on earth.

If here below a lord ... **favours** someone, the **envy** of others is immediately stirred and that poor person is **hated** without having done anything against him. amen

