

The Way of Perfection

Part 5: Our Father

Who art in Heaven:

Prayer of Recollection 2

Chapter 29 (summary)

Saint Teresa of Avila

Chapter 29 Continues to present means for obtaining this prayer of recollection. How little it should matter to us whether or not we are favored by the bishop.

... Let each nun strive to do what she ought; ... she can be sure that the Lord will repay and be grateful for it. We have not come here to seek a **reward** in this life. Let us always direct our thoughts to what is **lasting** and pay no attention to things here below ...

Today the bishop will favor one Sister, and tomorrow you if he sees more virtue in you ... It matters little. Give no room to these thoughts ... They can become very **disturbing** to you. Cut them off with the thought that your **kingdom** is not here below and of how quickly **all things come to an end**.

2. But even this **remedy** is lowly, not indicative of great **perfection**. It is better that this **disfavor** of your superior continue ... and that you accept this for the Lord who is with you.

Turn your **eyes inward** and look within yourself ... It is there that you will find your **Master**. He will not fail you. The less you have of **exterior consolation** the more He will favor you. He is very **merciful**, and He never fails persons who are **afflicted** and **despised** if they trust in Him alone. David says that the Lord is with the afflicted ... If you believe it then why kill yourselves?

3. O my Lord, if we truly knew You we wouldn't care at all about anything ... Believe my friends that it is a great thing to have knowledge of this **truth** so that you can see that all **favors** here below are a **lie** when they **divert the soul** somewhat from **entering within itself** ... and I ... have not succeeded in understanding, it as it should be understood.

4. ... How may this **holy fellowship** with our **Companion**, the Saint of saints, be experienced without any **hindrance** to the **solitude** enjoyed between the **soul** and its

Spouse when the soul desires to enter this **paradise** within itself to be with its God and **close the door** to all the **world**.

I say "**desires**" because this **recollection** is **not** something **supernatural**. It is something we can **desire** and **achieve** ourselves with the help of God — for without His help we can do nothing, not even have a good thought.

(Note:) This **recollection** is **not** the **silence** of the **faculties**: it is an **enclosure** of the **faculties** within the **soul**.

5. The soul gains from this recollection in many ways as is written in some books on mental prayer. But I am speaking only of how **vocal prayer** should be **recited**.

What I am trying to point out is that we should see and be **present** to the One with whom we speak without turning our backs on Him.

I don't think **speaking with God** while thinking of a thousand **vanities** would amount to anything else but **turning our backs** on Him.

All the **harm** comes from not truly understanding that He is **near**, but in imagining Him as **far away**.

If people aren't looking at us when we speak, it doesn't seem to us that they are listening ...

In order to **acquire the habit** of easily **recollecting our minds** and understanding **what we are saying**, and **with whom we are speaking**, it is **necessary** that the **exterior senses be recollected** and that we **give them something** with which to be **occupied**. For indeed we have **heaven** within ourselves since the **Lord of heaven is there**.

We must, **disengage** ourselves from everything to approach God interiorly. Even in the midst of occupations withdraw within ourselves. Although it may be for only a moment that I remember I have **Company** within myself. Doing this is very **beneficial**. In sum, **It isn't necessary to shout** in order to speak to Him, for His Majesty will give the **experience** that He is present.

6. With this **method** we shall pray **vocally** with much **calm**. **Difficulties** will be **removed**. For the time we take to force ourselves to be close to this Lord, He will understand us as if through sign language. If we are about to say the **Our Father** many times, He will understand us after the first. He is very fond of taking away our difficulty.

Should we only recite this prayer once in an hour, we can be aware of being with Him. Therefore, Sisters, out of love for the Lord, get used to praying the Our Father with this **recollection**, and you will see the **benefit** before long.

This is a **manner of praying** that the **soul** gets quickly used to. It doesn't go astray, nor do the **faculties** (will, memory, intellect) become **restless** ...

Try this method, yes, there may be some **struggle**; but everything involves struggle before the **habit** is acquired. Before long, it will be consoling for you to **know** where to **find** this holy Father ...

7. ... I never knew what it was to **pray with satisfaction** until the **Lord taught me** this **method**. I have enlarged on it because I have always found so many **benefits** from this **habit of recollection**.

Whoever wishes to **acquire this prayer** that **lies within our power**, should not tire of **getting used to** it. It involves a gradual increase in **self-control** and an end to **vain wandering** from the right path.

It means **conquering**, which is **making use of one's senses for the sake of the inner life**.

If you **speak**, strive to remember that the One with whom you are speaking is **present within**.

If you **listen**, remember that you are going to **hear** One who is **very close to you** when He speaks.

In sum, bear in mind that you can, if you want, **avoid** ever **withdrawing** from such good company. Be **sorry** that for a long time you left your Father alone. You are so much in need of Him.

If you can, **practice** this **recollection** often during the day. If not, do so a few times. As you become accustomed to it you will experience the **benefit**, sooner or later.

Once this **recollection** is **given by the Lord**, you will not exchange it for any **treasure**.

8. As nothing is learned without a little **effort**, consider, Sisters, as **well employed** the attention you give to this **method of prayer**.

I know if you try, that within a **year**, or perhaps **half a year**, you will **acquire** it, by the **favor** of God.

See how little time it takes for a **gain** as great as is that of **laying a good foundation**.

If the Lord should desire to raise you to **higher things** He will discover in you the **readiness** finding that you are **close** to Him. May it please His Majesty that we not consent to **withdrawing** from His presence. Amen.