

4/ Communion in Friendship

A. Prayer of Quiet & of Union

Chapter 4

Meditations on the Song of Songs
by Teresa of Avila

Speaks of the prayer of quiet and of union and of the sweetness and delight they cause in the spirit; in comparison, **earthly delights** are nothing.

Your breasts are better than wine, and give forth the most sweet fragrance. (Sg. 1:2-3)

Oh, my daughters, what deep secrets there are in these words! May the Lord give us experience of them, for they are very difficult to explain. When His Majesty, desires to answer the petition of the bride, He begins to commune with the soul in a friendly way ...

2. In the interior of the soul a **sweetness** is felt so great that the soul feels clearly the **nearness of its Lord**. This experience is one of **devotion** moving a person to shed many **tears** ... In this prayer ... that I call "**quiet**" because of the **calm** felt in all the faculties ... it seems that the whole man inside and out is **comforted**. It's as though a **sweet ointment** with a **powerful fragrance** had been pour into the **marrow of one's bones**. If we were to enter a place where this fragrance was strong ... permeating everything, we would have some idea of this most sweet love of our God. He enters the soul with a wonderful sweetness. He pleases and makes the soul happy. It cannot understand how or from where that blessing enters ... It would not want to lose that good; to stir or speak or even look lest the blessing go away.

3. [And this is what the bride says ... that the breasts of the Bridegroom give forth **fragrance** greater than that of **precious ointments**.] My purpose here is to explain the **type of prayer** ... In this **friendship**, the Lord shows

the soul that He loves it so much that there is nothing that can separate them. The **Light** dazzles the soul and allows it to see the **vanities of the world**. The soul does not see the good Master who teaches it, but understands He is with it. It is so well instructed, with great **effects** and **virtues**, that afterwards it doesn't recognize itself. It only wants to **praise the Lord**. While in this joy, it is so absorbed, that it seems to be in a **divine intoxication**. In sum, it doesn't know itself; but it is not outside itself to the extent that it fails to understand what is going on.

4. When this most wealthy Bridegroom desires to favor the soul more, **He changes it into Himself** ... it seems to the soul that it is suspended in those **divine arms**, leaning on that **sacred side** and on those **divine breasts**. It rejoices, sustained by the **divine milk** with which its Spouse is nourishing it and making it better so that He might favor it and it might merit more daily.

When it awakens from that **sleep** and **heavenly inebriation**, it remains **dazed** with a **holy madness**. It seems it can say these words; *Your breasts are better than wine*.

While in that **intoxication**, the soul thought it had no farther to **ascend**. But when it saw itself in a **higher degree** ... it makes a delicate comparison and says: *Your breasts are better than wine*.

... the soul is completely ignorant. It knows neither how nor from where this great blessing came ... It knows that the **blessing** is the **greatest** that can be tasted in **life** ...

It sees that it is nourished and made better but not when it deserved this. It is instructed in great truths without seeing the Master who teaches it; ... It can only compare His grace to the great love a mother has for her child ...

5. The soul is so **elevated** and beyond the ability to benefit from its intellect ... For in the sleep coming from the divine inebriation, the soul is still functioning because it understands that God is near, and

thus it has reason to say: *Your breasts are better than wine.*

6. Great is this favor, my Spouse; a pleasing feast. Precious wine do You give me, for with one drop alone You make me forget all of creation and detach from creatures and from myself, to no longer want the joys and comforts that my sensuality desired up until now. Great is this favor; I did not deserve it. After his Majesty granted the soul a greater favor (**union**) and brought it closer to Himself, it rightly says: *Your breasts are better than wine.*

The **past favor (quiet)** was a great one (**union**), my God, but much greater is this one because I do less in it The **joy and delight** of the soul are **great** when it arrives here.

7. Oh, my daughters, may our Lord give us a taste of what the soul's joy is in this state. Let worldly people worry about their ... riches, ... and honors-- for even if a person were able to enjoy all this without the **accompanying trials**—which is **impossible** – he would not attain in a thousand years the happiness that in one moment is enjoyed by a soul brought here by the Lord ...

There is **no comparison** between this delight and the baseness of worldly things... Nor can one **merit** so delightful a favor from our Lord, so **intimate a union** ...

It would be ridiculous to compare the trials of worldly people with those suffered here by the soul. If trials are not suffered for God, they are worth nothing; if suffered for Him, He adapts them to our strength ...

8. Oh, Christians and my daughters! Let us ... behold that He does not keep the **rewards** of loving Him for the **next life**. The **pay** begins in this life.

Jesus who could explain the benefit that lies in throwing ourselves into His arms and in making an **agreement** with Him that **I look at my Beloved, and my Beloved at me**, and that **He look after my things and I look after His!**

God, I beg You to grant me this favor: *Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth*, for without You, what am I, Lord? ...

9. What greater good could I want in this life than to be so close to You? ... With this companionship, what can be difficult? What can one not undertake for You being so closely joined to You? ... I beg You with full determination, that You “**give me what You command and command what You will.**” **Never**, with Your favor and help, **will I turn my back on You.**

10. Now I see, my Bridegroom, that You are mine. I cannot deny it. You came into the world for me; for me You underwent severe trials; for me you suffered many lashes; for me You remain in the most Blessed Sacrament; and now you grant me so many wonderful favors.

Well then, O most holy Bridegroom, with what ardor I have said what you say: “**What can I do for my Spouse?**”

11. Indeed, Sisters, I don't know how to go on from here. How can I be Yours, my God? ... Why does a Lord so powerful need her? ... Love alone ... can dare say with the bride, *I am my Beloved's*. He gives us permission to think that He, this true Lover, my Spouse and my Good, needs us.

12. Since He gives us permission, let us repeat, daughters, *my Beloved is mine and I am my Beloved's*. You are mine, Lord? If You come to me, why do I doubt that I will be able to serve You? From here on, Lord, I

... only look at how I can serve you and ...
do Your will ... You are the powerful One.
What I can do is be **determined**; thus from
this very moment I am **determined to serve**
You through deeds. Amen

