

# Love for Love: The Life and Works of St. Teresa of Avila

## 6. The School of Suffering: Interior Life

By St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

## 6. The School of Suffering : **Interior Life**

Pedro Sanchez gave Teresa the Third Spiritual Alphabet by Osuna about the Prayer of Recollection which was to become her spiritual guidebook.

In spite of her pain she continued her contemplative prayer; God rewarded her by raising her to a high level of Interior Life.

- Soon after her profession, (November 3, 1537), Teresa developed heart problems. She bore the trial with the patience of the nun who had amazed her & won the love of the other sisters;
- Her father decided to take her to a healer;
- While at Maria's farmhouse Teresa maintained her solitary prayer & remained faithful to her vocation outside the monastery;
- In her writings, this doctor of prayer would present the mystical life of grace in all its stages with incomparable clarity.

## 6. The School of Suffering : **Interior Life**

Prayer is the communication  
of the soul with God.  
God is love, love is goodness  
giving itself away.  
It is fullness of being  
that doesn't want to  
remain enclosed in itself,  
but rather to  
share itself with others...  
All of creation exists thanks to  
Divine Love spending itself

- Prayer is the highest achievement of which the human spirit is capable;
- Prayer is a Jacob's ladder on which the human spirit ascends to God & God's grace descends to people;
- When the soul is no longer active, but is simply a receptacle for grace, one speaks of a mystical life of prayer;
- Vocal prayer is the lowest stage; Meditative prayer is one stage higher.

## 6. The School of Suffering : **Interior Life**

We are now standing at the border of the mystical life of grace that cannot be entered by virtue of human energy, for here only God's special favor grants admission.

- St. Teresa calls the next stage the prayer of quiet or simplicity. The soul is engaged by God's presence who allows her to rest in him;
- Union with the Lord surpasses the soul's happiness in the presence of God; it usually lasts but a short time; Ecstasies & Visions may accompany union;
- The Lord wishes to bind these souls to himself. He enters into a covenant with them called 'spiritual betrothal;'
- Teresa calls the highest state of blessedness "spiritual marriage."

## 6. The School of Suffering : **Interior Life**

I bore these sufferings...with joy...  
I was completely surrendered to  
God's will...all I wanted was to  
withdraw into solitude...  
the other sisters wondered at  
my God-given patience...  
I understood how prayer is a  
blessing. It showed me what God's  
true love was... I felt new virtues  
developing in me...I never said  
anything bad about others... (L,6, 3-4)

- The effect of her prayer life was an ever-increasing love of God & souls; her supernatural power to love gave her an almost irresistible force;
- After her return to Avila, Teresa was unconscious for 4 days, her grave dug; she finally opened her eyes;
- Teresa was confined to bed for three more years suffering much pain; she decided to beseech heaven to end her suffering;
- She ascribed her healing to St. Joseph...through him I regained my strength. I stood up, walked, & was free of the paralysis. ( L, 6, 6-8)