

The Heart to Heart

Lord teach us to Pray Series

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Silence and Listening

We are at last in our heart. What is difficult though, is to remain there and to listen to our Lord. Our first reflex is to want to **talk** to Christ but remaining **silent** and **listening** for our Lord is preferable.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that **silent prayer** is about silence, a **silent love** where words are merely **fodder** to **keep the fire of love alive**.

It is in this **silence**, intolerable to the man in the world, that the Father tells us that His Incarnate Word suffers, dies and is resurrected. It is here that the **filial spirit** allows us to participate in the prayer of Jesus. The key word is **silence**.

Man lives at the **surface of himself** ...

Let's dare though to learn to live within.

You can see the **importance of silence**. It makes us **available** to the Divine Presence who doesn't speak to us in words. We can only **hear** Him by **pure faith**. The more we listen for Him, the more we want remain quiet to allow Him to speak.

It's true, in the **beginning** an effort is necessary to be silent, but if we **persevere**, with time something from within our silence draws us into an even greater silence.

Interior silence allows us to enter what is called the **place of spiritual prayer** or if you prefer, **pure prayer**, the **house where the Christ lives**.

The place of prayer is inhabited by God and the soul. It's a **reserved sanctuary**, a new

heaven, the kingdom of God where **silence** and **solitude** must reign. God is alone with Himself. 5:14

In the **heart to heart**, there can be two **extremes: activity** and **passivity**. We don't want to skip over the necessary steps that lead us into God's presence. We don't want to hurry into God's presence or in the other extreme we don't allow enough silence in our spiritual lives.

In this case, it's not the heart to heart that is experienced but a **meditation** where we can read but we no longer can hear Jesus in our deep heart.

The soul needs to be available to hear God, to allow Him to act in our souls and lead us where He will. To accomplish this, the soul adopts a posture of **silent expectation** of the Lord's arrival. We allow Him to speak. We say we believe that God lives within us but we allow Him so little freedom to act.

We are determined to act rather than to allow Him to act.

The silent heart finds God in the **intimacy of contemplation**. So once **settled in silence**, we are able to hear God. We can begin by taking a short Gospel verse and answering Him.

Teresa of Avila tells us that: "**Words spring forth from your heart which God truly loves.**" The soul breaks the silence by bearing its deepest self.

The Lord Speaks

So you see, we **alternate** in this heart to heart, between **silence** and **talking** depending on the soul's state. One thing is sure Saint Teresa tells us in the Way of Perfection is that: "**The Lord doesn't want us to force ourselves to talk to Him a lot.**"

We often have the impression that God is silent. I often hear people say that they tried to talk to God, but He doesn't say anything. Teresa answers by asking if we think that God is silent when we can't hear Him. She goes on to tell us that **He speaks loudly to the heart when we ask Him from the heart.**

She is convinced that the Lord never stops acting in the soul that seeks Him. She goes on to say that **nothing prevents Him from showing Himself in different ways if you truly desire to see Him.** If you deeply desire to see Him, He could very well show Himself to you. If you make yourself available to Him, He will find a way even if we don't realize it. Once the Lord sees that the soul is completely His, He never stops communicating with it in all sorts of ways. The **Lord's answer** in the **heart to heart** isn't necessarily in words but by **His action** in the **deepest part of the soul.** When you are truly peaceful, a peace that the Lord can give you that comes from happiness for example. It's a happiness stemming from a belief and hope in our Lord in spite of circumstances.

Spiritual Desire

Do we really **thirst** for God? Do we desire to see Him face to face? Do we seek God? What is your **spiritual desire**?

These times in silent prayer are truly **grace-filled moments** that not only deepen our relationship with God but also allow us to abandon ourselves more fully to Him.

It is important to understand that the more we **advance in prayer, in union with God,** the more our **spiritual life is simplified.** It tends to be nothing more than a state of **welcoming God's grace.**

The soul is in a state of **silent openness** to the **Holy Spirit's gifts** which can seem to dry. 12,42

This path, if you are faithful, will be simplified. Once again St. Teresa tells us that we now have the **keys to open the secret chamber of the soul.** She says that now all we have to do is to go in because the **Lord is there waiting for us.** Of course, all of this takes time, but in the interim it is important not to get discouraged.

A Voice without Words

In a **life of prayer,** the moment will come when you will hear the voice that speaks without words. John of the Cross tells us that this moment brings with it a **peaceful tranquility,** an **interior fulfillment.**

This silence is not the absence of words, but a **peace of the soul** that only **hears words** that **resound in eternal silence.**

Our spiritual life has to be **pacified, unified.** It has to **unify our whole life.** Thus the importance that our soul not be overtaken by our passions or by all sorts of irrational attachments. No, to the contrary, as John of the Cross tells us in the **Ascent of Mount Carmel,** the soul joins its Beloved in a **union of simplicity, purity and love.** Our prayer becomes a contemplation, **communication of silence** and above of the **simplicity of God.**

The more the soul **advances into the desert,** the more likely it is to hear God; the more it desires to **embrace solitude** ---yes, when God enters into a soul, He makes it a **desert.** So, you can understand perhaps then why this **heart to heart** is a **unifying force** of the soul and a **source of peace.** 16.17

How long then should we pray? Each person decides for himself how long to pray.

If you reach two hours, you can enter the Carmel! 1630

Intercession: 3rd Stage of Prayer time

This is the **last stage** or **third stage** of a time of prayer. Let's say we spend ten minutes in the **first stage, putting yourself in God's presence**; ten minutes in the **second stage** or the **heart to heart** and then ten minutes in **third stage, intercession**.

But before doing this, try to remember one word from God. It's an **effort** the Lord is asking you to put forth in this heart to heart. As Teresa tells us: "**Strive at the beginning and at end of your time of prayer, even if you have attained the height of contemplation, to always seek a better understanding of yourself. This knowledge is a source of joy because now I can look at myself with God's eyes**"

This is the **key to sainthood**. Now you can intercede. Asking **to benefit another**.

Asking is the characteristic of a heart in tune to the **mercy of God**.

Intercession is the **expression of the communion of saints**. In intercession, the one praying isn't seeking his own interests but those of others. It concludes the time of prayer. Thus we avoid a withdrawal into oneself and a kind of false spiritual comfort, our prayer expands to a universal plane. We must not forget those who have asked us to pray for them. Having interceded, you can conclude with an **Our Father**. This is a beautiful **path of perfection**.

Fixed Times of Prayer

Once again, Teresa of Avila tells us : "**To live such a communion, our life must be ordered with fixed and precise times of prayer.**"

It is important to **make appointments** with God and to keep them. Incorporating **works of charity** into our lives is as necessary as **avoiding sin** and **striving to acquire virtue**. By ordering our external world, such as our behavior and speech, we become a **shining reflection of our interior world**.

If you are **faithful** to keep these appointments with God, you will acquire a **facility in recollecting yourself and descending into your heart**. It is so important to **simplify the meeting with God**.

A Look of the Soul

You can of course imagine a scene from the gospel but in reality the Presence of God is enough. Your intelligence will lose interest in reasoning, in meditations. No more words, but only **inner movements**, a **simple look of the soul**, a **peaceful rest** in the Lord. Silence and rest are the attitudes of love. 20.36

Prayer becomes nothing more than a **gaze on Truth** and on the silence it produces. It is this rest that needs to be maintained by always bringing our faculties back to the object to be considered.

Our prayer needs to become contemplation or a **simple gaze on the Truth** under the **influence of love**. That is a beautiful **definition of Prayer**.

The **giving of self, humility, silence, solitude and the gifts of the Spirit all contribute to our prayer experience**. It is love that simplifies the gaze and causes it to

be fixed on the subject to contemplate. It is through love that the soul enters and comes to know the very **mystery of God**. The **fruit of contemplation is the development of love**.

But don't worry, this all takes time! 22.01

Conclusion

In conclusion then, I would like to emphasize the **simplicity of prayer**. Strive not to complicate your encounter with the Lord by wanting at all costs to stick to a **technique** because this prevents the Lord from speaking. There are of course others, but I am offering the **Carmelite path of prayer 23.06 24.35**

The **fruit of silent prayer** is to look reality in the face. It is not an escape from this world, on the contrary, it is a **deep look** where you will find God in the depths of your heart.

Faith, true and alive, is like taking possession of God. God becomes ours, the beloved guest of our soul now freed from things. The soul can now turn to Him through a loving thought. This is how the interior life comes to be and how faith allows me to step back from my life.

Take time as well to meditate on God's word. God is love, that's enough. It's in His word that you will find answers to all your doubts and consolation for all your sorrows. God gives Himself completely; that's His being, His life and His joy to give Himself to each one of us

The weaker we are, the more empty we are, the more ability we have to receive Him.

Our love consists above all in being able to welcome His infusion of life, His love underlies everything, but it has to be discovered through faith.

The soul sees in each man and in each thing what God Himself sees. It can see by its **spirit of love**, it sees only this love that gives itself in all. This is also one of the **fruits of prayer**, the belief that God loves us and that He is there. He lives in our soul and it is there that He gives Himself to us. This life of God that we receive within us is our life in Him. It is here that we are truly at the **heart of communion** or of **divine union**. 27.01

So let's continue to immersing ourselves both in **prayer** and in **charity** towards others. Prayer and charity are **linked**, The great St. Augustine said that if your prayer is lukewarm, so is your charity. It can be an indication that if we are annoyed, it might be a sign that we need to pray more.

In a complete **self-forgetting** and in a total **trust in God** who is love, we can say that we are at the **heart of silent prayer**.

In a boundless confidence in God who has only love then yes, you are at the **heart of prayer**. 27.50

Conclusion

I would like to end with Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity. It will serve as a **transition** since the next conference will be precisely on St. Elizabeth of the Trinity. Her life provides a **synthesis** of everything we have learned about prayer in the last three conferences.

She states: "**I love you, I love you more than anyone else in this valley. I come and I bring you unknown joy. I'm going to enter deep inside you.**" She enters the depths of God by entering into the depths of her soul.

She continues: **“Oh my Spouse, I have stopped and rested in you. 28.55**

She stopped. This is our difficulty. Do we rest? **“Stop and rest in me.”** What a beautiful dialogue! She dares to ask the Lord to rest in her heart!

She continues: **“Love me, my whole life will please me as long as you love me.”**

But to have this experience, to know that God loves me, is the result of this life of silence, solitude and prayer.

“I will do great things in you. I will be known in you; glorify, clarify.” These words were taken from a retreat she preached to herself. **(Allow yourself to be loved)**

That our times of prayer be just like this, that our souls always be the resting place of the Holy Trinity. Amen