

## Vade mecum for Teresian prayer

(A Compact Prayer Guide)

Carmelite Friars, Toulouse

*Catechism of the Catholic Church 2709*: "What is prayer? St. Teresa [of Avila] replies: "Mental prayer is, in my opinion, nothing more than an intimate exchange of friendship where you speak often one-on-one with that God whom you know loves you" (Vida 8). »

*St. John of the Cross*: "Above all, it is necessary to know that if the soul seeks God, its Beloved, who is God, seeks the soul with infinitely more love."

*Lawrence of the Resurrection*: "It is not necessary to always be in church to be with God; We can make our heart an **chapel** where we retire from time to time to converse with Him, gently, humbly, and lovingly. Everyone is capable of these intimate conversations with God, some more, others less capable: He knows what we can do. Let us begin, perhaps He is only expecting nothing more than a generous intention to do so from us. »

*St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face* (ms. autob. C 25r, cf. CCC 2558): "For me, prayer is an impulse of the heart, it is a simple glance at heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as in the midst of joy."

**1. Be prepared**: *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Jn 14:23*

To arrange my life to be in sync with my desire for prayer: read the Gospel, do not to look at just anything, think of God during the day, live the sacraments of the Church with regularity and attention...

Carefully choose the place, time and duration of my prayer:

**Where**: a specific place that is both silent and beautiful and that is conducive to contemplation.

**When**: Daily. There is nothing more important than my meeting with Jesus, if only for a short time. So that's what I establish first in my day. Experience shows that the morning is usually best time.

**How long**: in order for my will and my intelligence to be truly engaged in prayer and able to move beyond the fantasies of my imagination and my moods, it is important to choose how long I'll pray. It is important to stick to the decided time without decreasing or increasing it. Using discernment, we can decide to increase the duration, but the goal is to stick to a regular time of prayer over the long term.

What is important is to keep this appointment faithfully. And if we miss it, even several times, we return with confidence: God is there and waiting for us.

**2. Enter into Prayer** : *When you pray, retire to your room, close the door on you, and pray to your Father who is there in secret. Mt 6:6*

Your position is important: it must be comfortable enough that I am not constantly thinking about it, but not so comfortable that I fall asleep.

Start with a **Sign of the Cross**, a **Prayer to the Holy Spirit**:

Come, Holy Spirit, come into our hearts and send us a ray of your light from heaven. Come into us, Father of the poor, come, giver of gifts, come, light of our hearts. Sovereign comforter, most gentle host of our souls, softening freshness. In toil, rest; in fever, freshness; in tears, comfort. O blessed light, come and fill the hearts of your faithful to our very core. Without your divine power, there is nothing in any man that is not perverted. Wash what is defiled, bathe what is arid, heal what is wounded. Soften what is stiff, warm what is cold, make straight what is distorted. To all who have faith and trust in You, give Your seven sacred gifts. Spirit of fear of God, Spirit of wisdom and understanding, Spirit of counsel and strength, Spirit of knowledge and godliness. Give merit and virtue, give final salvation, give eternal joy. Amen

**An act of faith:** a personal statement: e.g., "Jesus, I believe in you, in your living and close presence"; "My God, I believe in you, I adore you, I hope in you, and I love you." A little examination of conscience, to place oneself humbly in his presence: who I am, in the face of this God so great, my Creator and Savior.

**3. Endure:** *Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation: the spirit is ardent, but the flesh is weak.* Mt 26:41

Set an alarm to avoid looking at your watch every two minutes. Take a pen and paper, so that if you think of something important that you are afraid of forgetting, write it down and go back to your prayer.

Dealing with Distractions: base an act of faith on God's personal and living presence in us, with us.

Using distractions as stepping stones to return to Christ, I think of this person, this situation, so I pray for them, I entrust them to Jesus. A simple and repeated prayer is successful for many people: to repeat the name of Jesus, or a little prayer that I love: "Lord Jesus, son of God the Savior, have mercy on me a sinner"; "Jesus is meek and humble of heart and make my heart like yours"...

Be aware of the humanity of Christ. For example, in a small Gospel passage, watch Him listen to Him. Mt 17:5 "*This is my Son, the Beloved, who is in my favor: listen to Him!*" Mk 4:35-41; Mk 10:17-21; Mk 10:46-51; Jn 21:4-17

Pray the **Lord's Prayer** slowly, pausing on each request.

**St. Elizabeth of the Trinity:** "Make Him alive by faith, think that He dwells in your soul, and keep Him company." "It is very consoling, is it not, to think that He who is to judge us dwells in us to save us all the time from our miseries and to forgive us for them."

**4. Conclusion:** *And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* Mt 28:20

Don't judge your prayer. The essence of what it is, is invisible to the eye, difficult to comprehend. Careful! Prayer is not for our well-being, it is for our **union with the Lord**.

Be certain that it is a **transformative relationship**. Through recollection and acceptance of God's presence, I let the Divine Gardener cultivate the garden that is my soul. This friendship enriches, because God's love is always diffuse. Just as one cannot plunge one's hand into water without getting wet, or into a blazing fire without burning oneself, so in contact with Love, with

Jesus, with His Heart, my soul is impregnated with Him without me always feeling its effects immediately.

Give thanks. And to think of an effort to introduce into our daily life or our prayer, simple and realistic... For example: pray for a more contemplative life, spend a day without the internet.

Putting yourself into Mary's hands:

Hail, Star of the Sea, Holy Mother of God, and Ever-Virgin Mother, happy Gate of Heaven. You who were greeted by the angel Gabriel, Mary, New Eve, Establish us in peace. Deliver sinners, restore sight to the blind, drive away misfortune, obtain happiness for us. Show thyself our mother, and bring our prayers to Him who willed to be born of thee for us. O unequalled Virgin, sweet virgin of all, obtain for us forgiveness, a humble heart, a pure heart. Grant us to live on the path of goodness, so that when we see Jesus our joy may be perfect.

## **5. A Few Quotations from the Saints of Carmel**

*St. Teresa of Avila, The Way of Perfection (V.) 26:3:* "I am not asking you to think of Him, nor to reason much, nor to apply your understanding to great and delicate considerations; I am only asking you to look at Him. What is preventing you from turning the eyes of the soul, if only for a moment, if you cannot do it longer, towards this Lord?"

If you are able to look at very ugly things, then you should be able to look at the most beautiful thing imaginable? For never, my daughters, does your Bridegroom take His eyes off of you. He has tolerated a thousand insults and abominations from you, and this has not been enough to cause Him to look away; Is it asking that much of you to turn away from external things in order to look at Him from time to time? Consider, as He said to the Bride, He is waiting for us to look at Him; When you truly desire it, you will find Him. It is so important to Him that we look at Him often that He helps us do so. »

*St. John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle A, 1:* "It must be noted here, that in order to find this Bridegroom as much as is possible in this life, the Word, in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit, reside essentially in the inner most part of the soul where He is hidden. Therefore the soul finds Him by union of love must detach its will from all created things, enter into a deep recollection inner most depths of itself, and there maintain a relationship full of affection and love with God, while considering that the whole world as if it did not exist. This is why St. Augustine, addressing God in his Soliloquies, said to Him: "Lord, I have never found you outside of myself; I was in error looking for You outside of myself, since you are within me." God is hidden in the soul, and it is there that the true contemplative must seek Him. »

*St. John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle B, 1:11:* "You now know, dear soul, what you have to do to find the Bridegroom in the depths of your heart. If, however, you desire something more, listen to a substantial word, a truth inaccessible to human understanding. Seek your Bridegroom in faith and love, without taking your pleasure in anything, without tasting anything, without hearing anything beyond what you need to know. Faith and love are the two leaders of the blind who will lead you, by paths unknown to you, to the secret abysses of God. Faith, that secret of which we have spoken, plays the part of the feet that carry the soul to God; Love is the guide that shows him the way. »

*St. Elizabeth of the Trinity:* "O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me to forget myself entirely in order to establish myself in you, motionless and peaceful, as if my soul were already

in eternity. Let nothing disturb my peace, nor cause me to depart from you, O my Immutable, but let every minute carry me farther into the depths of your mystery. Pacify my soul, make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling place, and the place of your rest. May I never leave you alone, but may I be there entirely, fully awakened in my faith, all adoring, all given over to your creative action. O my beloved Christ, crucified by love, I would like to be a bride for your Heart, I would like to cover you with glory, I would like to love you... to the point of death! But I feel my powerlessness and I ask you to "clothe me with yourself", to identify my soul with all the movements of your soul, to overwhelm me, to invade me, to substitute yourself for me, so that my life may be but a ray of your Life. Come into me as a Worshipper, as a Repairer, and as a Savior. »

***St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face:*** "Look at the Face of Jesus ... There you will see how much He loves us.