



Carmel Clarion

Winter 2020

Volume XXXVI, No. 1





Carmel Clarion

CONTENTS

- 2 From The Provincial Delegate
Fr. Salvatore Scieurba, O.C.D.
- 4 The Counsel of St. Teresa:
A Practical Means of Health
Patrick DiVietri, O.C.D.S., Ph.D., MA,
CPC, FAAPC
- 13 Jesus Christ in Carmelite Prayer
Margaret Dorgan, D.C.M.
- 24 Growth in Prayer
Ruth Burrows, O.C.D.
- 31 St. Teresa... Some Prayers

With gratitude and thanks to Joseph "Joey" Chee for his contribution to this issue and to Fr. Salvatore for his editorial assistance. Articles reprinted with permission.

Cover Photo: Simon Vouet, *Carmélite en Extase*, 17th century, oil on canvas, 175 x 100 cm. Sermontizon, Chateau d'Aulteribe.

The Carmel Clarion is a Catholic Publication of the Washington Province Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Inc.

OCDS Main Office
2131 Lincoln Road, NE
Washington, DC 20002-1101

Phone: 202-269-3792

Email: ocdsmainoffice@gmail.com

Editor: Mary E. Rodriguez-Harrington, O.C.D.S.
clarioneditor2015@gmail.com

Provincial
Delegate: Fr. Salvatore Scieurba, O.C.D.

Regional Assistants:
Northeast: Fr. Leonard Copeland, O.C.D.
Mid-Atlantic: Br. Robert Sentman, O.C.D.

Change of Address: Please notify us in advance by using the form found on the ocdswashprov.org website. Independent subscribers: please write us with your new address.

A U.S. subscription is \$20.00 a year. Extra copies are \$4.00 (if available) plus shipping and handling. Clarions are **not** forwarded.

International Clarion subscriptions are no longer available due to high postage costs.

For an independent subscription use the form found at: <http://www.carmelclarion.com>

Official website: Washington Province Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Inc.
<http://www.ocdswashprov.org>

http://www.flowerofcarmel.org/clarion_index.htm
for Clarion Subject Index.

Permission to copy is granted for individual articles if not for profit. It is not granted for duplication of the entire issue.

From the Provincial Delegate

Two men went up to the temple to pray, Jesus tells us. But only one really did. The Pharisee boasted about his so-called virtue. He was really just talking to himself, praising himself. To make matters worse, he did this at the expense of others. He belittled the tax collector behind him. The tax collector, however, simply prayed: Have mercy on me, O God, a sinner. Jesus tells us that he was the one who went home justified, in right relationship with God. His sincere prayer was pleasing to God.

This parable suggests that the starting point for prayer is the humble admission of our need and desire for God. In poverty of spirit we acknowledge our dependence on God. St Teresa speaks of the trilogy of virtues that form the foundation for the spiritual life. Love, when we are supportive of others and are tolerant of their shortcomings. Detachment, when God and the kingdom are the priority in our lives and we let go of any attachment that might get in the way. And humility.

Humility is the search for the truth, authentic self-knowledge. We recognize our limitations but also our giftedness. It is not low self-esteem. It is the silence of Job before the mystery and the transcendence of God. It is the awareness of Peter at the time of the miraculous catch of fish. Depart from me, Lord for I am a sinful man.

Prayer is a gift. It is our communication with the Lord who loves us. It is our response to his love. We

can pray because God has revealed himself to us. We can pray because God has addressed us in his Word made flesh, in the Person of his beloved Son. In him God has said everything.

Traditionally there are three approaches to prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplation. Vocal prayer is when we express what lies within our hearts: our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears. Saint Thérèse tells us:

How great is the power of prayer...To be heard it is not necessary to read from a book some beautiful formula composed for the occasion. I do like children who do not know how to read. I say very simply to God what I wish to say and he always understands me. For me prayer is an aspiration of the heart, a simple glance directed to heaven. It is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy. Finally it is something great, supernatural, that expands my soul and unites me to Jesus. (Ms C, 25r)

Meditation is when we take a text of Scripture and use our intellect and imagination to understand it and to apply it to our lives. We think about the text. We might use a format or method including various steps leading to some resolution. Saint John of the Cross tells us that when meditation is no longer helpful, and the soul seeks greater silence and solitude, it may be time to let it go.



Fra Angelico, *Annunciation (Cell 3)*, 1440-42, fresco, 176 x 148 cm. Florence, Convento di San Marco.

Contemplation is a more passive, silent awareness. Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the moment of the Annunciation assumes a contemplative stance before God. She has no agenda of her own. She is listening; she is receptive and open. God reveals himself to her and chooses her as his instrument. She surrenders.

Saint Teresa tells us that if we faithfully practice recollection we are likely to be led into the beginning of contemplation which she describes as the supernatural prayer of quiet. Here the Lord places the soul at peace by his presence. We cannot

achieve this by our own efforts. We can only dispose ourselves to receive this gift.

Saint Teresa gives us the example of Simeon in the temple. She writes: "Simeon could have easily judged the babe to be the Son of poor people rather than the Son of our Heavenly Father. But the child himself made Simeon understand. The soul sees it is near the King who will give it the Kingdom." May the Lord so reveal his presence to us.

Fr. Salvatore Scieurba, O.C.D.

The Counsel of Teresa of Avila: A Practical Means of Health

Teresa of Avila was the first woman to be declared Doctor of the Church.¹ For nearly thirty years, her works and those of St. Thomas Aquinas have had the greatest influence upon my life, education, and enterprises as an author, educator, and counselor. The richness of their works is inexhaustible. Yet, Teresa of Avila's counsel concerning distractions to prayer has been of particular significant professional and practical value. It is simple and yet so profound that, in my opinion, its benefit to psychological well-being is beyond any insight from the entire field of modern psychology. Everyone can benefit from this counsel, especially those dealing with mental health and pastoral counseling.²

Without the advantage of a formal education, Teresa had to grapple with the abstract complexities of her own psychology as she struggled to understand and explain the profound actions of the mystical life upon her soul and its faculties as well as the difficulties of living virtuously within the religious experience of Carmel. She created a language of similes and metaphors using hundreds of analogies in order to explain what she meant. Her grappling has produced wisdom and understanding of the human person that includes insight and practical application for personal health and well-being in a language that can be understood.

A Book On Prayer

Teresa of Avila was asked by her daughters in Carmel to write a book that would instruct them in prayer. In

her response, she discussed aspects of vocal prayer, mental prayer, and recollection.³ Earlier in her life, Teresa had considered the question: "What does one do with the mind while reciting vocal prayers?" In her common-sense manner, Teresa concluded that while words are being spoken to God, one would turn their mind to focus upon him and what was being said. It seemed absurd to her that one would not think of the person to whom one was speaking and what was being said during the vocal prayer. It is foolish to pray words to God while the mind wanders to other things.

Teresa used the vocal prayer of the Our Father as she advised her daughters to imagine Our Lord as they prepare themselves for prayer.

As you know, the first things must be examination of conscience, confession of sin, and the signing of yourself with the cross. Then, daughter, as you are alone, you must look for a companion—and who could be a better companion than the very Master who taught you the prayer that you are about to say? Imagine that this Lord himself is at our side and see how lovingly and how humbly he is teaching you.⁴

In her method, one begins by withdrawing to a place of solitude within oneself and the meditation follows as the imagination forms some conceptualization of the material or words. The intellect works to construct detail and imagery leading to discursive prayer.⁵

Distractions and The Wandering Imagination

Keeping this focus proved to be a great difficulty since the mind can be so easily distracted. These difficulties with mental prayer, forming and maintaining images as the problem of distractions and the wandering mind, were a part of Teresa's own struggle. Teresa found that when she went to prayer, the imagination would run wild. It seemed to her that everything would rush to her mind when she sat to pray. These distractions could be spiritual, physical, emotional, or mental; and they would displace the images of Our Lord that she struggled to maintain. The distracting thoughts were so vivid and vehement that she could not push them back out of her mind. The stronger the vehemence, the more quickly the image of Our Lord that she had been trying to hold would diminish. By nature, all images fade; but the distractions exacerbated the problem of concentration to a point of futility.

Turn Away From One Image and To Another

Teresa found that by directly resisting the distracting thought, one keeps it in place longer. For example: "Don't think about the red horse. Don't think about the red horse." So what are thinking about?—a red horse. Focusing on an image without doing anything to change it didn't make any sense because it kept the image in mind. Teresa decided to respond indirectly, i.e., to ignore it by turning away. She treated the distraction in a manner similar to parental advice to children when dealing with teasing or obnoxious behavior on the part of another, i.e., ignore the other person because responding to them only feeds their desire to tease. Without the desired response from the victim, the teaser loses interest and dissipates their efforts. Likewise, distractions will fall away when ignored.

Trying to turn back to the mental image of Our Lord and thus away from the distractions was

quite effective to some degree. The focus upon the prayerful image occupied the mind and the distractions, like the teasing child gives up and falls from view. This critical action comes into play for people in many situations of daily life and most all forms of mental illness. The most severe being schizophrenia where one "hears audio hallucinations or 'voices.'" The principle in counsel in this situation is: "You may have heard these 'voices,' but you don't have to listen to them." One can turn away and not pay attention to them. It is like being in an apartment and the neighbor is playing their stereo loudly that the sound is coming through the walls. The object of hearing is sound, and thus the sense of hearing is stimulated by the sound. However, one does not have to listen for the lyrics, what the guitarist is playing, how the sounds from the base, drums, and other vocalists might be contributing, etc. One can literally "tune out" what is being said.

Turn To a Sensible Aid

The practice of turning away from the distraction helped a great deal, but Teresa found that it remained difficult to do.⁶ Also, the distracting images stimulated various passions that created a sense of vitality, delight or pleasure, or some painful passions such as anxiety, fear, sorrow, or even anger. The sensible nature of these passions made it more difficult. The distraction always seems more interesting or more powerful than those thoughts and images related to the knowledge of the truth and God because of that sensible nature.⁷

Through experience in dealing with both the mental distractions and physical or emotional maladies as well, Teresa discovered that it was easier to form and maintain a mental image of Our Lord if there were some sensible object to aid her imagination. If she could turn to an object that could hold her

attention and feed her imagination, it was easier to meditate. In her autobiography, she relates this to the wandering mind.

For it was not usual with me to suffer from aridity: this only came when I had no book, whereupon my soul would at once become disturbed and my thoughts would begin to wander. As soon as I started to read, they began to collect themselves and the book acted like bait to my soul.⁸

In *The Way of Perfection*,⁹ she said:

Those of you whose minds cannot reason for long or whose thoughts cannot dwell upon God but are constantly wandering must at all costs form this habit.¹⁰

I myself spent over fourteen years without being able to meditate except while reading.¹¹

Since it was easier for the imagination to hold on to an image if it was aided by the senses, Teresa would not go to prayer without a book, a picture, statue, or Scripture of some sort. Rather than struggling to imagine Our Lord, she would look at a picture or statue of him. Or she would read from a book or Scripture about some scene and allow the words she was focusing upon to help her form the images in her imagination. This is the counsel she gave her daughters:

You will find it very helpful if you can get an image or a picture of this Lord—one that you like—not to wear round your neck and never look at but to use regularly whenever you talk to him, and he will tell you what to say.¹²

Giving her attention to the images provided by these sensible aids facilitated and hastened the dissipation of the distractions without direct effort on her part to repel them. These physical aids to prayer assist the imagination's retention of the sense data related to the object of the meditation.

This method of turning to aids to prayer and away from distraction is common knowledge to all those in the Carmelite community. I first encountered Teresa's method when it was the subject of a presentation made by Father Anthony Morello, O.C.D., more than twenty-five years ago at a Carmelite conference in San Jose, California.¹³ The perspective gained through study of the philosophic psychology of Thomas Aquinas helps understand the impact of Teresa's insight.

In the Thomistic view, Teresa used the physical aid to allow her imagination to find sensible data to focus on. Reading or looking at the picture or statue allows images based upon that sensible information to form in the imagination. The sensible data that came from the reading, the pictures or the statues that were all descriptive and visual, by their very nature, made it easier for the imagination to form a conceptualization and to hold or maintain it. Ask yourself: Is it easier to close your eyes and imagine something that is not present or to look at a picture of that thing and focus upon it? It is much easier to imagine what Uncle Joe looks like if you are looking at his picture. In this light, Teresa instructs the sisters: "It is also a great help to have a good book, written in the vernacular, simply as an aid to recollection. With this aid, you will learn to say your vocal prayers well."¹⁴

The act of the imagination is to hold the sense impression made on the external senses long after stimulation has ceased.¹⁵ So Teresa would focus upon the external aid until a strong impression formed in her imagination. She would then close her eyes and imagine as much as she could about the people, the scene, the sounds, colors, and sensible information. She would think about where everyone was positioned including self, what was being said, and think of what she would say to

Christ. When her mind would wander, she would simply open her eyes and return to gaze upon the physical object or continue reading.¹⁶ In this way, she made it easier for the imagination to retain the impression and conceptualizations from the senses. This focus left no room for the distracting thoughts, and they simply diminished and fell away. Thus, while the focus was upon the sensibly aided images, the distracting thoughts were left on the outside and slipped away. For St. Thomas, this represents "regal control" of the passions in that we can deny them the image of their object in the imagination by replacing it with a different image that does not contain the object that stimulates the passion.¹⁷

This comprised the first way of changing an image in that one simply gets rid of it and in Teresa's method a sensible aid is used to replace it. This practice applies to the majority of cognitive behavioral experience¹⁸ that enters counseling. It also applies to all distractions to one's focus and mental discipline from cases of attention deficit to the discipline of maintaining focus during a lecture or discussion within an academic educational setting.

The experience of depression can be assuaged by turning from the image that is causing the sorrow and thinking of another image that brings hope. Depression is an effect of pain where the will has little or no hope to end it. This is why hope will assuage the pain and diminish the depression. This is also one of the reasons the counsel of a priest assuages those in sorrow or depression when he provides them with some hope of the future good and the present consolation of faith. The priest counselor or even friend can also help the person to see things differently. This leads us to a second way to change an image and Teresa discovered that one

as well. It proved to be even more profound than her first discovery.

Turning Into The Image

We have discussed turning away from distracting thoughts and painful images. Experience shows that if the distraction is related to personal suffering, either emotionally or physically, the difficulty of turning away from it increases proportionately. Everyone knows how hard it is to concentrate when one has a severe headache or other physical ailment or has received some very bad news.

Teresa provided a way of dealing with emotional or physical suffering. In this case, she did not necessarily turn away from the suffering but changed the image that relates to the sorrow by turning into it through the use of reason. That is, by looking at it in relationship to the suffering Christ:

If you are suffering trials, or are sad, look upon Him or His way to the Garden. What sore distress He must have borne in His soul, to describe His own suffering as He did and to complain of it! Or look upon Him bound to the column, full of pain, His flesh all torn to pieces by His great love for you. How much He suffered, persecuted by some, spat upon by others, denied by His friends, and even deserted by them, with none to take His part, frozen with the cold and left so completely alone that you may well comfort each other! Or look upon Him bending under the weight of the cross and not even allowed to take breath: He will look upon you with His lovely and compassionate eyes, full of tears, and in comforting your grief will forget His own because you are bearing Him company in order to comfort Him and turning your head to look upon Him.¹⁹

Teresa made it easier for the imagination to deal with emotional or physical pain by turning one's focus upon the suffering of Our Lord.²⁰ This identifies the suffering of the individual with that of Our Lord's and

changes the perspective on the suffering itself.²¹ The person will have little difficulty empathizing with the passion of Christ during such times. The more vehement the suffering the more sensibly aware the person is of the experience of pain and sorrow. They possess active knowledge of pain and in that knowledge they find some identification with the knowledge of Christ's suffering and thus become aware of being united with him in pain. They can



Philippe de Champaigne, *Ecce Homo* (Le Christ aux outrages), 1655, oil on canvas, 186 x 126 cm. Musée de Port-Royal des Champs.

see it in some proportion to his suffering. To be clear, nothing in the sensible world can bear any proportion to God, who is spirit. Thus, the "feeling" that God is present has absolutely nothing to do with his true presence. It is the knowledge that he is omnipresent that is reliable, not our feelings. One

would ignore the feelings and turn to faith in the knowledge of the truth confirmed by the Church and Scripture. This is a hard and fast principle that is the foundation for Teresian Spirituality's prudent approach to the mystical life.

However, it remains that the human sensible experience of suffering can find some proportion in the sufferings of Jesus Christ and his passion. Since Jesus shares our humanity, he suffered the way our humanity suffers. Though his suffering was so great, there is some proportion to it in every pain we suffer. It is precisely his sacred humanity that we can identify with and draw ourselves into the mystery of his passion.

Take no heed of what they say to you; be deaf to all detraction; stumble and fall with your Spouse, but do not draw back from your cross or give it up. Think often of the weariness of His journey and of how much harder His trials were than those which you have to suffer. However hard you may imagine yours to be, and however much affliction they may cause you, they will be a source of comfort to you, for you will see that they are matters for scorn compared with the trials endured by the Lord.²²

Teresa changes the meaning of the suffering by reforming the images related to it to include the images of Christ's suffering. This brings consolation to the person but also empathy with Christ.

He will look upon you with His lovely and compassionate eyes full of tears, and in comforting your grief will forget His own because you are bearing Him company in order to comfort Him and turning your head to look upon Him.²³

Imagine, meaningless human suffering now becomes a means of comfort to the suffering Christ. Who, among those who love God, has not wanted to be there with him to console him in his suffering?

Teresa shows that it is possible today. Compassion of friends assuages pain according to St. Thomas because one sees oneself loved by the Beloved, and the Beloved sorrows for the friend. One sees the sorrow in the face of the Beloved who loves them, and it feels as if they are sharing the burden and it becomes lighter. That is the meaning of compassion. Teresa is showing how one may be compassionate to Christ through suffering as they look to him, and he looks at them as they co-suffer with him. Now there is great meaning to this suffering. Christ gives it his identity and his meaning.

Reformulation

Viewed in the terms of the psychology of St. Thomas, this second way to change an image is through reformulation. Rather than turning away from an image, reformulation involves turning to the image and altering it through reason. It involves changing the image to present a particular good. Reformulation can be a healthy or unhealthy action depending upon whether the image is changed to an apparent good or a good in truth. The former is a means to every sin or mental illness, and the latter is a means to virtue and mental health.

Through her reflections upon the scenes of Christ's suffering to aid in meditation amidst one's own suffering, Teresa was using the images of Christ to reformulate the images of the individual's sufferings.

It is desire for good, for love, for the integrity and happiness of the things or persons that we love that is at the root of sorrow, as love is at the root of hate.²⁴

Contemplation of the truth is one of the remedies for pain and sorrow.²⁵ Compassion of friends is another.²⁶ All pleasures also assuage pain.²⁷ Teresa's remedy was to look at a picture of Christ's passion and contemplate the truth of it. She brings the

person into a compassion or them. Therefore the person no longer suffered alone but with Christ. Their suffering was no longer meaningless or indicative of their own evil, but it took on the meaning of Christ's suffering through union with him in truth. That suffering is the means of salvation and grace to the world. The person now has the hope that comes from such a union. There is also a pleasure to pain that we see to be for good purpose. Even physical pain can be diminished by the thought of good that can be derived.

We can, and often do, undergo these exterior pains joyfully, even eagerly, in the name of a higher good desired by our will—like caring for a sick baby or having gallstones removed.²⁸

Teresa brought the consideration of this higher and noble good to the vehemence of pain, which not only diminished but even became a consolation. Here she did not fight against the sensible experience but used the sensible experience as a means to identify with Jesus Christ and find oneself united to the actions of his sacred humanity. The presence of the physical pain is no longer a distraction from the image of God but now an aid to identify with him, console him, and hope in the good that he draws from all things.

Teresa of Avila saw all her actions united to those of the Lord. Is it not possible, then, for all of us to be united to him in the same way?

Conclusion

Teresa of Avila has made many practical contributions to the science of psychology and understanding the operations of the human person in their struggle for health and virtue. This article has considered one very important example of these contributions. It requires a larger enterprise to begin to explore them. At this time, it is worth the reader's effort to consider Teresa's counsel on changing the images in the imagination by turning away from them and how that can be facilitated

through the use of a sensible aid. One should also consider how the images can be changed by reformulation through reason. That consideration will lead the reader to begin to see how commonly this counsel enters into the daily life experiences related to mental health and illness.

Patrick J. DiVietri, O.C.D.S., Ph.D., MA, CPC, FAAPC
Our Lady of Mount Carmel—Washington, DC



*"...Prayer is our principal.
I should say
our sole occupation,
because for a
Carmelite
It must never cease."*

—St. Elizabeth of the Trinity
Complete Works, Vol. 2
Letter 142

Notes

¹ Certain ecclesiastical writers have received this title on account of the great advantage the whole church has derived from their doctrine. With St. John of the Cross, she represents the first authorities on the doctrine of spiritual and mystical theology. In reforming the Carmelite Order, she became a leader of the Counter Reformation.

² The ways in which meditation and custody of the mind bring health and order to the cognitive faculties is the subject of a work by this author being edited for publication "Hooked on a Feeling: Changing the image of Anxiety," and another opus operandi, focusing on meditation, which will be completed this coming year.

³ At the time Teresa was writing her first book, which was her autobiography, there was a conflict over the nature of mental prayer and vocal prayer. The predominant prayer form for centuries had been vocal prayer, but mental prayer was gaining more attention, some of which was unsettling. There was a great deal of distrust for mental prayer because of a moment of Quietism that was being promoted at the time by various sects. It does not add to the point of this article to expand on the difficulties for the important thing is that it was Teresa who resolved the conflict. Teresa resolved the difficulty by presenting one should be thinking about who is being addressed and what is being said in the vocal prayer. It was absurd that the mind would not be thinking of who was being spoken to and what was being said during the prayer. To pray words to God while the mind wanders to other things is totally foolish. Thus in Teresa's opinion, mental and vocal prayer were inseparable. "... mental prayer has nothing to do with keeping the lips closed. If while I am speaking with God, I have a clear realization and full consciousness that I am doing so, and if this is more real to me than the words I am uttering, then I am combining mental and vocal prayer. When people tell you that you are speaking with God by reciting the Pater Noster and thinking of worldly things—well, words fail me" (ch. 22).

⁴ Way of Perfection, ch. 26.

⁵ Discursive prayer is the form of prayer in which the reflections of the mind are more active than the affections of the will. It is called discursive because discursion is the act of the mind that proceeds from one truth to the knowledge of another truth, either about the same object or about something else. Discursive meditation today is common among not only Carmelites but also most religious and lay communities. Since it was utilized by the Jesuits and Dominicans as well, I would imagine it is taught by most spiritual directors in some form or another.

⁶ This constitutes the practice known as custody of the mind which is essential to mental and spiritual health.

⁷ Moral habits will obviously affect this dynamic.

⁸ Autobiography, ch. 4.

⁹ This is the book that Teresa wrote in response to her daughters' requests.

¹⁰ Way of Perfection, K. Kavanaugh, ch. 26.

¹¹ Ibid, ch. 16.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ It was this conference for Secular Order Carmelites with the various presentations on Teresa of Avila that moved and inspired this author to compose the Partita Teresiana, solo for the classical guitar that was performed and recorded for the centenary of St. Teresa in 1982. It is the subsequent work that followed that

conference that has led to the educational formation throughout these past thirty years.

¹⁴ Way, Ch. 26.

¹⁵ Fr. Chad Ripberger, FSSP, Introduction to the Science of Mental Health, Vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 32 (Denton NE: Sensus Traditionis Press, 2007).

¹⁶ The physical imagery has a great deal to do with passions that follow the images. In the negative fashion, we see how most young men who struggle with impurity begin with impure pictures. Thus, Teresa's approach offers the remedy for such things and a means of strengthening the imagination and will.

¹⁷ Summa Theologica, I, q.81 a.3, ad 2; ST 1-11, q. 9, a. 2, ad 3.

¹⁸ Cognitive therapy teaches you how certain thinking patterns are causing your symptoms. Behavior therapy helps you weaken the connections between troublesome situations and your habitual reactions to them.

¹⁹ Way of Perfection, ch. 26.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ A predominant theme for Teresa was that her human experiences were united to the experiences of Christ. Therefore, her obedience was united to his obedience on the cross and took on the purpose and meaning that Christ gave to obedience to his Father's will; i.e., the redemption of mankind. Her actions to teach would be united to his actions as a teacher and take on his purpose. This extended to everything including pain and sorrow, daily actions, all virtues. Thus, the simple daily events of Carmelite life took on infinite proportion. The profound insight into spirituality was manifest in Thérèse, the Little Flower and her "little way." Everything, no matter how small, is united to the actions of love of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ and the infinite love of the Father.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Farrell, Walter, O.P., A Companion to the Summa: II: The Pursuit of Happiness, (Corresponding to the Summa Theologica IA II AE), New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959, p. 122.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica I, II, a. 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.



Jesus Christ in Carmelite Prayer

Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega of Carmelite Prayer

In the spirituality of Carmel, prayer begins and ends with Jesus Christ. All that takes place from the first desire to pray up to the final goal of transforming union is rooted in Jesus Christ. He is the God-given model for prayer, the redeemer who leads one out of the quagmire of barren self-centeredness onto a path of freedom and exhilarating fulfillment in union with God.

In taking human nature, Jesus embraces all humanity in each one's specific humanity. One who is like us lifts us up in our very earthiness. We do not cease to be citizens of this planet, but in Jesus, everything that we are is raised to a new dimension of existence through him. By his invitation we are called to become what he is, a child of God. The wonder of this glory makes his followers eager to offer the riches of their lives in Christ to others. Sure of the treasures to be found in him, they are always reaching out to say "Look what we have in such abundance. We want you to have it too." Teresa of Avila shines as a seller of spiritual goods. No one has more persuasive enthusiasm than *La Madre*. She writes in the *Way of Perfection*, "A good means to having God is to speak with His friends, for one always gains very much from this" (WP 7.4). Teresa is such a friend who describes the stages of prayer which lead us to "supreme happiness for having found repose and because Christ lives in it" (IC 7.3.1).

John of the Cross, with the enthusiasm of an inspired poet, declares, "There is much to fathom in Christ, for he is like an abundant mine with many recesses of treasure, so that however deep individuals may go, they never reach the end or bottom, but rather in every recess find new veins with new riches everywhere" (SC 37.4). To John, each one of us is called to plumb the mysteries of the incarnation uniquely, for "...however numerous are the mysteries and marvels that holy doctors have discovered and saintly souls have understood in this earthly life, all the more is yet to be said and understood" (SC 37.4). That more is for every prayer to explore and feed upon. Jesus reveals himself to the incarnated reality I am as to no other. In the love song we begin to sing together, the harmony between lover and beloved moves one into new longing and new fulfillment. Words and melody point to deeper wonders that defy expression.

In nineteenth-century France, Thérèse of Lisieux, echoing the certainty of her Spanish forebears, points to the spiritual heights each one of us can hope to reach. "Ah! If all weak and imperfect souls felt what the least of souls feels, that is, the soul of your little Thérèse, not one would despair of reaching the summit of the mount of love. Jesus does not demand great actions from us but simply surrender and gratitude" (SS 188).

Yielding our whole being to Christ is not to lose anything but to gain all. Over and over again, Teresa

underlines the importance of Christ's humanity to succor the limitations of our own humanness and to open up for us the plenitude God wills to give us in the mysteries of the Incarnation. "And I see clearly... that God desires that if we are going to please Him and receive His great favors, we must do so through the most sacred humanity of Christ, in whom He takes His delight...we must enter by this gate...on this road you walk safely. This Lord of ours is the one through whom all blessings come to us" (BL 22.6-7).

Time takes on a new dimension because the one who is eternal has embraced all the ongoing moments from the beginning of the world. The incarnate one touches the human race in each member's personal journey onward. Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity writes that Christ wills that where He is we should be also, not only for eternity, but already in time...."¹

In each instant, we meet Christ who once smelled the air, felt the wind upon his face, shivered in the cold and perspired in the hot noonday sun. Now in me, he embraces all my human experience. With every happening, I encounter a friend who shares what I am undergoing and is always concerned for my welfare.

Identification with the Incarnate God

In the narrative of Jesus' thirty-three years, much attention is given to the beginning, the babe in a manger. Then St. Luke shows Jesus in the Temple just before he becomes a teenager. Afterwards the gospels describe the events of his public life. We can also ruminate on what has not been reported. There must have been times when Jesus laughed. Surely humor, the special gift that comes from the union of a physical body with a spiritual soul, enlivened walks along the Sea of Galilee. Wouldn't Peter's often awkward grasp of a situation make for comedy? Look at Zacchaeus up the sycamore tree.

We know the serious exchange that took place. But Jewish wit—that marvelous talent to provoke merriment and mirth—must have showed itself at such times. Prayer is more than strict solemnity. Reverence mixes with familiarity as we take all our human emotions to one who felt them in his lifetime.

Especially the agony of human pain reaches out to find strengthening in the chapters of the gospel that tell of Christ's suffering, the certainty that our death is not an end but only a passage. Christ's human Risen Life gives us comfort and assurance that we too will rise in glory. Thus we ponder all Jesus' earthly moments from birth to his ascension and link them to our own.

Contemplative Orientation for the Young

Prayer can establish a foundation in a child's life from its first awakening to what is around it. To show a picture or a statue of Jesus and of Mary, to urge the child to repeat their names, to tell stories adapted to the developing imagination is to nourish a hungry mind and heart. Liturgical events, church gatherings, feast days are celebrations that feed emotions. A child who is encouraged to pray in the earliest years will have images and thoughts that focus the young intelligence and can easily lead into happy silence, a peaceful wonder. Today's world is constantly offering stimulation to children so that the ability to settle into awe can be blocked or sadly centered on fantasy figures.

Yet there are favored children today who would understand Thérèse's answer at the Abbey school when she was eleven. Her teacher asked her what she did on free afternoons. "I told her I went behind my bed in an empty space," and that "...I think about God, about life, about ETERNITY..." (SS 74).

If prayer begins early enough in an atmosphere where vocal prayer is an ordinary part of the day, like the blessing at meals and turning to God in everyday needs, the first dark night may not be necessary since, as John of the Cross explains, this night is an adjustment. Meditation, which helps to quiet an older mind and introduces thoughts of spiritual realities, does not have the same work to do. If the younger boy or girl is in contact with religious symbols, pictures, and tales, and if spontaneous prayer is heard often, then the task of meditation may be already accomplished. Simplified prayer becomes the normal contact with God.

Though Scripture tells us little about it, we can ponder Christ's so-called hidden life. We know Jesus was a teenager. What was he like? Surely his mother took notice when his voice changed. Did his foster father smile to see a beard begin to show on his cheek? How did he move through the decade of his twenties?

In our modern world, these years of passage into maturity are especially problematic. Jesus, the companion of young people, can be friend and confidant, reliving his youth with girls and boys growing into adulthood. His body underwent the physical changes that mark these years. Teenagers can bring him their hopes and anxieties, trusting in his empathy as a fellow traveler along a course with which he is familiar. Do we ponder enough how truly human Jesus was and is for us today? Teresa speaks to Christ with a blunt directness: "Since You possess our nature, it seems You have some reason to look to our gain" (WP 27.3).

Prayer in the beginning years of life helps to establish a habit that will be a source of strength and encouragement as body and psyche develop. When children and adolescents become accustomed

to the companionship of Jesus in all the ups and downs of their days, they have someone to turn to who understands fully what they are going through. This turning to Jesus is true prayer. At any point in our lives we can begin what Teresa describes as "looking at Him." We are taking the first step on a path of awareness of Christ. She writes, "I'm not asking you to do anything more than look at Him. For who can keep you from turning the eyes of your soul toward this Lord, even if you do so just for a moment if you can't do more? ... your Spouse never takes His eyes off you... In the measure you desire Him, you will find Him. He so esteems our turning to look at Him..." (WP 26.3).

Gazing on Jesus

When we move our gaze to Jesus, we find that his eyes are on us, wholly concerned with whatever occupies us. Teresa advises us to seek him according to what we are undergoing, to match our feelings with an event in his life that called forth the same kind of human response in him. "If you are joyful, look at Him as risen. If you are experiencing trials or are sad, behold Him on the way to the garden..." (WP 26.4-5)

The adjustment is all on the part of Christ. He will always meet us where we are, stooping to our lowliness. Teresa asks only that we shift from giving sole attention to our daily concerns and glance at him, a glance she hopes will become a more steady gaze. "Draw near, then, to this good Master with strong determination to learn what He teaches you..." (WP 26.10).

Going Within

This is the start of a process that takes us inward to find there a sanctuary where we meet our God in all that transpires. Teresa explains how we mute the exterior voices we have been listening to, no longer

absorbed in pursuing the profits and pleasures our external world is always offering us. And if we are ardent consumers of such goods, we stop to realize we are at the same time being consumed by what we seek with so much energy. Now a different kind of seeking is arousing our minds and hearts. We bring Jesus into our ordinary affairs and also pause at times to give our whole attention to him through extended prayer. We focus on one who is always focused on us. This quieting-down spills over into the rest of our daily existence.

Teresa tells us: "Life is long, and there are in it many trials, and we need to look to Christ our model..." (IC 6.7.13). And she says that "He reveals Himself to those who He sees will benefit by His presence. Even though they fail to see Him with their bodily eyes, He has many methods of showing Himself to the soul..." (WP 34.10).

For Teresa, the most Blessed Sacrament is the supreme revelation of God, a sure presence of Christ that nourishes us in communion through our very bodies. She seems to congratulate God for finding a way so simple and so available. "Beneath that bread He is easy to deal with," she says, and urges us, "Be with Him willingly, don't lose so good an occasion for conversing with Him as is the hour after having received Communion...If you immediately turn your thoughts to other things,...and take no account of the fact that He is within you, how will He be able to reveal Himself to you?" (WP 34.10). She goes on, "Though He comes disguised, the disguise...does not prevent Him from being recognized in many ways, in conformity with the desire we have to see Him" (WP 34.12).

Moved by Desire

Desire is the force that moves us. Longing pushes us forward in our quest for God. John of the Cross

affirms that "God does not place his grace and love in the soul except according to its desire and love." (SC 13.12) Teresa rejoices in Jesus' desire for us. He is "...our Companion in the most Blessed Sacrament; it doesn't seem it was in His power to leave us for even a moment" (BL 22.6).

Thérèse reflects on the sacramental presence, which through communion deepens the dwelling of God within us: "It is not to remain in a golden ciborium that He comes to us *each day* from heaven; it's to find another heaven, infinitely more dear to Him than the first: the heaven of our soul, made to His image, the living temple of the adorable Trinity!" (SS 104). Partaking of Christ in the sacred bread and wine deepens our ongoing communion with him afterwards. Teresa, looking back on her life, declares that "...in seeing You at my side I saw all blessings" (BL 22.6).

Christ opens our eyes to find the sacramental dimension in created beings everywhere. John of the Cross explains how Jesus "...took on our human nature and elevated it in the beauty of God, and consequently all creatures, since in human nature he was united with them all" (SC5.4). John says that "since creatures gave the soul signs of her Beloved and showed within themselves traces of his beauty and excellence, love grew in her and, consequently, sorrow at his absence" (SC 6.2). Prayer feeds on the revelation of Christ in nature, sometimes murmuring the words of the psalms that celebrate creation. A hillside, a body of water, a rural pathway can take us to scripture passages that incorporate them. We are led to gospel incidents that hold our minds in quiet attentiveness. Thérèse writes that "... it is especially the *Gospels* that sustain me during my hours of prayer, for in them I find what is necessary for my poor little soul. I am constantly discovering in them new lights, hidden and mysterious

meanings" (SS 179). We never abandon this kind of reflection, though gradually we need less input from meditation to stir our hearts and to settle into a loving silence before God. A single word or phrase shuts down the noise. Then at times a compelling stillness beckons. We respond to its bidding gladly.

John of the Cross invites us to this inward hush, which in prayer blocks out all the external voices soliciting our notice. "The Father spoke one Word, which was his Son, and this Word he always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence must it be heard by the soul" (SL 100).

Today many forms of silencing techniques are offered in the spiritual marketplace. Human consciousness can undergo a training in mental practices that move it into a more passive mode. This is a natural process and one with recognizable benefits. Our wide-ranging imagination is lured inward; analysis and planning come to a stop. A very cut-down diet is imposed on all our thinking.

When we pray, this pulling in of the attention also takes place, yet, with an important distinction. Christian prayer is primarily a *relationship* with one who calls us to intimacy, inviting us to believe in him. John of the Cross depicts the pray-er who "longs for union [with the Bridegroom]..." (SC 1.2). John rejoices with that happy person: "There is reason for you to be elated and joyful in seeing that all your good and hope is so close as to be within you or, better, that you cannot be without him. 'Behold,' exclaims the Bridegroom, 'the kingdom of God is within you'" [Luke 17:21] (SC 1.7). What draws us is a living person, Jesus Christ, who called himself the Way. With Jesus our companion who provides a map for us, we do not walk on side roads that use up our energy without advancing us.

Living Our Prayer

Authentic prayer affects our moral understanding and gives strength for virtuous behavior. Teresa in her straightforward manner, declares, "Fix your eyes on the Crucified...How is it you want to please Him only with words?" Teresa adds that "... it is necessary that your foundation consist of more than prayer and contemplation. If you do not strive for the virtues and practice them, you will always be dwarfs" (IC 7.4.8-9). Our praying should spill over into our actions, leading us to a more accurate appraisal of circumstances and what they call for. Prayer helps to establish virtue as a habit that does not stand still but grows. Detachment from our false self and its demands gives way to a greater recognition of the needs of others and the response God is asking of us. We become more sensitive to the requirements of social justice and to environmental concerns. It does not mean that virtue always becomes easier although, as with any habit, it is more spontaneous. But the willingness to respond virtuously increases, and the recognition of failure in virtue is more acute. We become less defensive of actions that do not respond to grace.

Prayer in the New Millennium

"But, we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). Yes, but not fully. In every age, Christ speaks with a fresh voice. We are far more aware in our contemporary world of the needy and helpless. Christ appeals to us in the homeless and in the marginalized. Since the sixteenth century of Teresa and John, the Church has had to face issues that the European culture of their time hardly dealt with. That many philosophies have challenged our understanding of Christian faith has forced us to wrestle with questions earlier centuries rarely considered. The legacy of the Enlightenment, as one example, has made us ponder the claims of reason, the rights of the individual, the values embodied in a democratic

system. Feminism in its various forms raises the issue of the treatment of women in past ages and in our own. We have been made to examine more closely what was taken for granted.

We turn to scripture and find there meanings not previously uncovered. The mind of Christ is not a closed book but one we are constantly reading as time moves forward. Jesus Christ is the Truth but our vision is too nearsighted to take in the fullness he expresses. The church fathers used the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle to explain doctrine. The church in Ireland happily embraced Christianity without cutting itself off from its Celtic heritage. Today we are in contact with spiritual systems that can expand our own limited understanding. Close at hand, we see the vision of Native Americans. Farther away, practices from the Far East invite our consideration. If we treat other systems only as adversaries, we shut off the possibility that they can awaken us to new dimensions in the deposit of faith. At the same time, we evaluate what is offered and see its implications as measured by our Christian legacy.

We turn to the Holy Spirit, who empowers and enlightens us, to recognize what is according to the mind of Christ. In prayer, for example, we are aiming at something different from a species of altered consciousness, which can entice and sometimes deceive.

Prayer Becomes More Simple

The tendency, as prayer matures, to need less cognitive input for arousing the heart has particular attraction in our hectic contemporary world. We are drawn to what calms our mental faculties. Special attention is given to spiritual exercises that foster this development. In previous times, pray-ers often had no encouragement to leave meditation practices and could grow weary of their repetition.

Yet every technique needs to be weighed in order to test when it is appropriate. With proper timing, simplifying our prayer can release us from the burden of too much thinking. We are drawn to a serene attentiveness that focuses on some aspect of divine mysteries. When our praying needs less input from the mind, we do not compel it to think but neither do we starve it. Very little mental food is nourishing, and spiritual techniques like Centering Prayer, Christian Meditation, the Jesus Prayer, and Mindfulness lead it into deeper peace where God awaits.

Teresa always urges gentleness, no forcing. "Taking it upon oneself to stop and suspend thought is what I mean should not be done..." She tells us that in regard to "...this effort to suspend the intellect... labor will be wasted..." (BL 12.5). She warns against a kind of mental coercion to empty ourselves of thoughts in order to achieve a held absorption. St. Teresa was familiar with this experience in herself and in others, based on a too-demanding cut-down of outside stimuli, that could lead to quietism. "To be always withdrawn from corporeal things...is the trait of angelic spirits, not of those who live in mortal bodies...How much more is it necessary not to withdraw through one's own efforts from all our good and help which is the most sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ" (IC 6.7.6).

In prayer, we assess our inner atmosphere to determine how much mental content helps us to pray. Many variables affect our need: fatigue, physical pain, the pressure of external events. God can lead us to the passive mode of contemplation on this path we move forward with Jesus. John of the Cross tells us that "...you will discern hidden in him the most secret mysteries, and wisdom, and wonders of God..." (A 2.22.6).

Prayer that Purifies and Illumines

This path of contemplation is a way of purification and illumination. "The gate entering into these riches of God's wisdom is the cross, which is narrow and few desire to enter by it, but many desire the delights obtained from entering there" (SC 36.13). Contemplative prayer causes an experience of interior darkness, which is actually an excess of light overpowering our very human faculties. This light that darkens is a positive inflowing of God which we, however, experience as loss—though not entirely. The pray-er raised to contemplation will recognize fresh strengths even while being more acutely aware of personal weakness. New powers of perception discern with remarkable clarity what leads to God and what does not lead to God. There will be an immersion in darkness and sometimes confusion about oneself; but in dealing with others, light penetrates to the reality of a situation and its ramifications.

Inner purification wrestles with wounded human nature in order to heal it. The pain forces one to cry for a savior. In this world of time, many forms of suffering assail us. Disappointments, loss of material resources, physical agony, the death of loved ones—these tragedies come into our lives like unwelcome visitors, sometimes unexpected and always unwanted. This burden of earthly misery becomes allied to our spiritual purification, a purging that leads us deeper into the experience of Christ.

Teresa comforts us as she did herself with the reflection: "There is no trial that it wasn't good for me to suffer once I looked at You as You were, standing before the judges. Whoever lives in the presence of so good a friend...who went ahead of us to be the first to suffer, can endure all things. The

Lord helps us, strengthens us, and never fails; He is a true friend" (BL 22.6).

John of the Cross turns to the Epistle to the Colossians (2:3): "In [Christ] are hidden all treasures and wisdom," and John comments: "The soul cannot...reach these treasures if...she does not first pass over to the divine wisdom through the straits of exterior and interior suffering. For one cannot reach in this life what is attainable of these mysteries of Christ without having suffered much..." (SC 37.4).

In an extremity of pain, Thérèse cries out: "Do not believe I am swimming in consolation; oh, no, my consolation is to have none on earth. Without showing Himself, without making His voice heard, Jesus teaches me in secret" (SS 187). Elizabeth of the Trinity wants to use all the negativity of human living and turn it into something positive: "My weaknesses, my dislikes, my mediocrity, my faults themselves tell the glory of the Eternal!...If I take up this cup crimsoned with the Blood of my Master and...mingle my blood with that of the holy Victim, it is in some way made infinite..."² One who is eternal has endured, as we do, the drop by drop experience of pain with each moment moving on to the next, which carries its own fresh measure of sorrow.

Suffering is never enclosed in its own anguish. Faith and hope leap forward to the divine recompense granted for every instant of agony here below. Elizabeth finds comfort in the realization that "He [Christ] wants to associate His Bride in His work of redemption and this sorrowful way which she follows seems like the path of Beatitude to her, not only because it leads there but also because her holy Master makes her realize that she must go beyond the bitterness in suffering to find in it, as He did, her rest."³

But such rest is not easily come by, and for many of us, *rest* will be too consoling a word. Of all human experience, pain and loss in their devastating diminishment can make us doubt the merciful love of our creator. Why, why, why rises in our throats. We feel ourselves trapped in our agony. Prayer in the desert of our sorrow can only long for what had been and is no more. Pain is what I undergo in my terrible isolation. Who else can feel what breaks my body or breaks my heart?

Thérèse tried to answer those questions for her sister Céline: "Doesn't He [Jesus] see our anguish, the weight that is oppressing us?...He is not far; He is there, very close. He is looking at us and He is *begging* this sorrow, this agony from us. He needs it for souls and for our Soul."⁴ We are never alone, for one who is both divine and human enters into what we undergo, experiencing with us the excruciating pain and urging us to make use of it to reach out to others. We ask that the fire of pain consuming our substance be applied to relieve the terrible coldness someone is enduring. In Jesus, we are all brothers and sisters, one family caring for every member. Then my sorrow is not what cuts me off, but rather a bridge to the agony endured by a grieving sibling.

Thérèse understands that one who was destined for crucifixion felt the burden of apprehension and dread. "It is very consoling to think that Jesus, the Strong God, knew our weaknesses, that He trembled at the sight of the bitter chalice, this chalice that He had in the past so ardently desired to drink."⁵

Prayer in the intensity of pain, in the misery of betrayal and destruction, moans and wails. Demonic voices incite us to doubt the good news proclaimed by Christ, telling us it is only a counterfeit assurance meant to deceive us. Doubt gnaws at the foundation of a relationship grounded in love.

Beyond the tragedies in our own smaller world, we ask: How could a merciful God who sent the divine Word to take on a Jewish body, allow the Holocaust of six million Jews? Why are there plagues, the slaughter of innocent children, weather disasters that wipe out whole communities? Prayer does not mean the absence of questions, but rather probing them in the obscurity of faith, sinking into the abyss of mystery where we feel there is no foothold to steady ourselves. The depths of human misery call out for a redeemer who assures us "I will not leave you orphaned. I am coming to you" (John 14:18); "... your pain will turn into joy" (John 16:20); "...your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:22).

But what if these words sound in the heart like a beautiful message of long ago that no longer convinces the mind? Thérèse describes her Night of Faith: "[Jesus] permitted my soul to be invaded by the thickest darkness, and that the thought of heaven, up until then so sweet to me, be no longer anything but the cause of struggle and torment... One would have to travel through this dark tunnel to understand its darkness" (SS 211-12).

John of the Cross describes such purification as part of the ascent up the mystic mountain to transforming union. Spiritual climbers will encounter storms that shake their inmost being. The tempests will rage according to the personal purification needed. They will fit my personality exactly. "All is meted out according to God's will and the greater or lesser amount of imperfection that must be purged from each one. In the measure of the degree of love to which God wishes to raise a soul, he humbles it with greater or less intensity, or for a longer or shorter period of time" (DN 1.14.5).

A God who becomes incarnate is united to every member of the human race in a new connectedness, which is fellowship. Prayer worships a transcendent divine being, but in Christ the pray-er also finds God on a level of intimacy that has submitted to our own existential boundaries. My subjection to change, human pleasure, and disappointment are now familiar to my God. John writes of "...the deep mysteries of God's wisdom in Christ, in the hypostatic union of the human nature with the divine Word, and in the corresponding union of human beings with God, and the mystery of the harmony between God's justice and mercy with respect to the manifestations of his judgments in the salvation of the human race. These mysteries are so profound...because of the depths of God's wisdom in them" (SC 37. 3).

This wisdom is imparted by degrees as prayer advances. Some on the journey forward will have visions of "Christ, or a saint, or His most glorious Mother" (IC 6.8.6), as Teresa describes them. "The Lord leads each one as He sees is necessary... sometimes God leads the weakest along this path. And so there is nothing in it to approve or condemn" (IC 6.8.10).

Prayer in the Bridal Tradition

Prayer, being a movement of the heart, reaches for imagery that depicts the closest union of the lover with the beloved. Spousal and bridal symbolism abound in scripture and in the writings of mystics. John of the Cross describes the yearning of the lover still tied to this world: "...the soul, enamored of the Word, her Bridegroom, the Son of God, longs for union with him through clear and essential vision. She records her longings of love....Through this love she went out from all creatures and from herself, and yet she must suffer her Beloved's absence, for

she is not freed from mortal flesh as the enjoyment of him in the glory of eternity requires" (SC 1.2).

In the *Spiritual Cantic*, Jesus the Bridegroom and the bride/soul speak to each other in words that mix supplication with praise for what is being accomplished. The goal is spiritual marriage where "...the Bridegroom reveals his wonderful secrets to the soul as to his faithful consort.... He mainly communicates to her sweet mysteries of his Incarnation and the ways of the redemption of humankind, one of the loftiest of his works and thus more delightful to the soul" (SC 23.1).

Teresa considers Christ's life on earth and sees every separate incident as taking place for her benefit: "Now I see, my Bridegroom, that *You are mine*.... 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..."⁶

In using marriage similes for spiritual union, writers mirror the customs of their time, as Teresa does in describing the step-by-step progression from the initial meeting of a couple through further acquaintance to the engagement that leads to nuptial vows. The love relationship with Jesus the Bridegroom reflects the familiar pattern of an earthly progress in human love.

In the Romantic period of nineteenth-century France, with its high emotional overtones, bridal imagery is especially prevalent as we see with Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of Dijon, although it is often used in an almost exclusive manner for vowed religious. John of the Cross's commentary *The Living Flame of Love*, however, was written for a widow, and John is explicit elsewhere: "Each holy soul is like a garland adorned with the flowers of virtues and gifts, and all of them together form a

garland for the head of Christ, the Bridegroom" (SC 30.7).

United with Christ, through him and in him, we have unique access to the other two persons of the Trinity. In fellowship with Jesus, we make contact with the inner life of the divine Three in their eternal relationships. Each of the divine Persons becomes an object of worship and love in the divine singularity that makes Father, Word, and Holy Spirit. God "... has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading..." (1 Pet 1:3-4).

John of the Cross in his commentary *The Living Flame of Love* says this: "The Blessed Trinity inhabits the soul by divinely illuminating its intellect with the wisdom of the Son, delighting its will in the Holy Spirit, and absorbing it powerfully and mightily in the unfathomed embrace of the Father's sweetness" (LE 1.15). Commenting on a later stanza, John adds that "...the soul loves through the Holy Spirit, as the Father and the Son love each other, according to what the Son Himself declares through St. John: 'That the love with which you have loved me be in them and I in them'" (John 17:26 [LF 3.82]).

The pray-er has climbed to the peak of the mystic mountain after many trials and interior purification. Now "...God favors [the soul] by union with the Most Blessed Trinity, in which she becomes deiform, God through participation.... No knowledge or power can describe how this happens unless by explaining how the Son of God attained and merited such a high state for us..." (SC 39.4-5).

For us—Jesus is always *for us* from the first turning to him in prayer, *for us* as we advance along the passive way of contemplation in darkness or walk

a more active path. At the end of the journey, all the difficulties encountered, the struggles to keep going, the exhaustion endured are forgotten in the wonder of what is communicated. There at the summit of union, "...in the taste of eternal life which it here enjoys, it feels the reward for the trials it passed through... It feels not only that it has



Francisco Antonio Gijón, *Saint John of the Cross (San Juan de la Cruz)*, 1675, polychromed and gilded wood with sgraffitto decoration (estofado) 167.96 x 93.35 x 74.3 cm. Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art.

been compensated...but that it has been rewarded exceedingly. It thoroughly understands the truth of the promise made by the Bridegroom in the Gospel

that He would repay a hundredfold (Matt 19:29). It has endured no tribulation or penance or trial to which there does not correspond a hundredfold of consolation and delight in this life..." (LF 2.23).

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity asks the Holy Spirit to come upon her "...and create in my soul a kind of incarnation of the Word: that I may be another humanity for Him in which He can renew His whole mystery."⁷ Each one of us, unlike any other—a true created original and in the purpose of our existence—is called into time to show forth the wonders of Christ as no one before and as no one after.

Thérèse, whose little way takes hold of all the ordinariness of everyday life, explains the basis for her confidence and hope: "... [Jesus] teaches us that it is enough to knock and it will be opened, to seek in order to find, and to hold out one's hand humbly

to receive what is asked for" (SS 257). She writes in capital letters about "...PRAYER which burns with a fire of love. And it is in this way, [the saints] have *lifted the world*; it is in this way that the saints still militant

lift it, and that, until the end of time, the saints to come will lift it" (SS 258).

Margaret Dorgan, D.C.M.

¹ Elizabeth of the Trinity, *I Have Found God*; Complete Works, vol. 1; trans. Alethia Kane (Washington, D.C.: 1984), 94.

² *Ibid.*, 149.

³ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴ Thérèse of Lisieux, *General Correspondence*, vol. 1, (1877-1890); trans. John Clarke (Washington, D.C.: ICS, 1982) Letter 57, pp. 449-50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2 (1890-1897), Letter 213, p. 1042.

⁶ *Meditations on the Song of Songs*, 4.10, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2; trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez Washington, D.C.: ICS, 1980).

⁷ Elizabeth of the Trinity, *op. cit.*, 183.



Growth in Prayer

As soon as we would talk or write about prayer and growth in prayer we are faced with huge difficulties. We are talking and writing not merely about the deepest thing in human life but about its very essence - more, about the mystery of God himself. We are daring to use terms such as 'intimacy', 'friendship', for that we are called to such is beyond doubt for the believer. We find a breathing of it in the first pages of Genesis where, it is intimated, God was wont to walk with his man and woman through the garden in the cool of the day. Though sin came to rupture this blessed state, still, throughout the pages of the Old Testament with its history of humans as they really are - sinful, blind, obstinate, hard of heart - there shine stars, 'friends of God', who in some measure attained or were granted intimacy with the awful mystery. Such intimacy is still possible. Amidst a perverse and corrupt people 'Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him' (Gen 5:24). Here, it is suggested, was someone for whom God meant so much that he was swallowed up by him. Enoch disappeared, only God shone out. In this pregnant phrase of scripture we have a summing up of holiness, of the perfection of a human life.

Moses spoke with God face to face and through this terrible exposure was transformed in such a way that he became 'God' for the people at large, a people too sensual and selfish to want God himself. They were not prepared to pay the price.

We have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; we have this day seen God speak with man and man still alive. Now, therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire, as we have, and has still lived?. Go near, and hear all that the Lord God will say; and speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you; and we will hear it and do it (Deut 5:24-27).

This is an authentic human cry. If we use the term 'friendship with God' then we must know what we are doing, we must speak with utmost seriousness and with deep awe. There is no place for 'lightness', for trifling. What did it mean for Enoch, what did it mean for Moses - and, we shall ask, what did it mean for Jesus - to be a friend of God, to be on that lonely, dreadful mountain exposed to we know not what? And yet intimacy with God is the blissful fulfilment of us all. It is what we were made for and for what we endlessly yearn. It is to this that we blindly reach out in our human search for friendship and intimacy, but whereas even the richest human friendship, even that which has truly made of two one flesh, is only part of an existence and life; our relationship with God is our very meaning as human beings. Man—and that means you and me — is, by definition, a relation to God. We become human, become what we are meant to be, in the measure that, like Enoch of old, we are lost to ourselves and taken up into him. Prayer, on our side, is a conscious affirmation

of this truth, an effective desire and willing that it be accomplished.

How do we attain to intimacy with God or rather, how do we enter into the intimacy offered? We must be certain that no wooing is necessary. We do not have to find ways of attracting the divine partner, of getting him to notice us. Here is someone who is love itself and the very fount of our own existence, enfolding us, inviting us to receive him, drawing us to his heart. All these human expressions are totally inadequate. Scripture and mystical writers have used the different modes of human love and friendship — parent/child, husband/wife, brother, friend — to tell us something of the reality of God's love and desire for us. Each is inadequate. All together they are inadequate. It is not easy to speak properly of a deep human relationship, how much more so when one of the partners is God. And even if one were able, through profound experience and intensive thought and effort, to give what seems as close a proximation to the truth as is possible, its understanding depends on the heart of the recipient. Truth must find an echo in the one who hears if it is to be recognized. Put it another way, a heart must be really listening, really wanting the truth, really wanting God. The difficulty is that we do not want him. We want our own version of him, one we can, so to speak, carry around in our pockets rather as some superstitious people carry around a charm. We can hold endless, loving conversations with this one, feel we have an intimate understanding with him, we can tell him our troubles, ask for his approbation and admiration, consult him about all our affairs and decisions and get the answer we want, and this god of ours has almost nothing to do with God.

Most of us find it almost impossible not to think of prayer as a special activity in life, as an art that

can be taught or learned rather as we can learn to play a musical instrument, and so some of us are quick to feel we are proficient and others that we are painfully handicapped, are missing out on some secret or have some lack in our nature which makes prayer difficult if not impossible for us. We feel there are certain laws governing prayer, and techniques to be mastered, and when we have got hold of these we can pray. Thus we tend to look around for the guru, for the one who has mastered the art and its techniques and eagerly look to be taught. When we take up a book or article on prayer, we shall probably detect, if we stop to think, that we are looking for the key, the magic formula that is going to put our prayer right, enable us 'to make a go' of this mysterious activity called prayer. We may feel that others seem to take it in their stride but somehow it does not work for me and anxiously I look hither and thither for someone who will hand me the secret. All this is proof enough that we are overlooking the fundamental facts: that prayer is not a technique but a relationship; that there is no handicap, no obstacle, no problem. The only problem is that we do not want God. We may want a 'spiritual life', we may want 'prayer', but we do not want God. All anyone can do for us, any guru can teach us, is to keep our eyes on Jesus, God's perfect, absolute friend.

If we look at the gospels we shall find that Jesus never speaks of us as being friends of God. He teaches us to call him Father. Friend implies equality of status, child or son a total dependence and absolute obedience. When Jesus gave us his own privilege of calling God, *Abba*, that word certainly carried with it everything we understand of the unbreakable, utterly reliable, tender, compassionate, infinitely involved fatherly/motherly love of God. Of this we must be sure to the marrow of our bones. But equally we must remember what the father-son

relationship was in the Jewish culture of Jesus's time. We can go so far as to say that the son was considered as having no life or even existence of his own. He owed absolutely everything to the father: we might say a son was his father's 'thing', and the son owed him total, unconditional obedience. When Jesus tells us that we must call God, *Abba*, and live as his children, he is demanding of us this decentralization, this 'ex-stasy', this standing out of self, in order to transfer our existence, our meaning, our importance, our weight, to the Father. It is a summons to the most radical self-denial.

On the other hand, Jesus gives us the title 'friend', his friend, in that we have opened ourselves to and received his revelation of the Father, that we trust him with our lives, obey him as Jesus did. To become the friend of Jesus means to identify with his living for his Father. This alone is prayer, this alone is intimacy with God. Its blissful fulfilment remains hidden from our sight and experience as it was for Jesus in his earthly life. All that concerns us here and now is what concerned Jesus: that God should have just whatever he wants. Jesus has become our Way, our Truth and our Life because he declined to have any way of his own, any truth or reality of his own, only the Father's. He declined to live from his own well-springs but only from the Father. This is what we have to do; this is how we must live.

Jesus is with us always not so as to pillow our weary heads on his breast and murmur words of solace in our ears continually, but to share with us his vision, his passionate dedication to the Father's will. He is with us to brace, reinforce, underpin us for our life's great task. True, he lifts from our shoulders the crushing yoke of an alien master, the god we have fashioned in our own likeness, by revealing the true face of the Father. He breaks off self-made shackles of bondage and sets us free. Thus his companionship

gives us rest and real happiness. Nevertheless there remains a yoke and a burden that has to be carried with courage and love.

Life-giving, joy-giving knowledge of Jesus and the Father he reveals does not drop into our lap from heaven. We have to work for it. 'Come to me', says Jesus, and we must go to him, and the prime way of going to him is by intent, loving absorption of scripture, particularly the New Testament. Put simply, we must strive to acquire an intellectual knowledge of him, of his attitudes, values, teaching. This intellectual knowledge is certainly not intimacy,, certainly not a 'knowing Jesus' but it is an indispensable ingredient for intimacy and real knowing. It is work we have to do, a practical expression of earnest desire to get to know our Lord. Moreover, it supplies, so to speak, the matter into which spirit can be infused, or in more homely words, we laboriously gather the faggots to build the bonfire which only God can set alight. But it has to be there for him to set alight. And we must realize that it is not a case of our having to labour all by ourselves until the bonfire is a good size and everything well-dried out and then we can hope for God to set fire to it. No, we are never working alone. When we search for him in the scriptures we have already found him. He is with us, at a level we do not perceive and cannot perceive, touching our inmost depth and working within, infusing light, inflaming the will. From time to time we may be aware of enlightenment and a stirring of desire but it is utterly folly to conclude that, if we do not feel those things 'it has not come off and 'I am getting nowhere'. That might be so were we engaged in secular study or even in sacred scripture in a secular way, but it is certainly not so when we are 'listening' to the word of God be it in our private reflection or in the communal 'listening' of the liturgy. We are engaged in a sacramental action. Something is happening as

it happens in the eucharist and other sacraments. But as with them, our part is essential. We must bring our elements. 'Seek and you will find', Jesus assures us solemnly. Our seeking in scripture must be like that of the bride in the Canticles, all heart, never a merely intellectual effort. Our heart must infuse our minds with trust, desire, resolution. Our heart must be in our eyes as we read and in our ears as we hear. Most certainly we shall find him.

This search for the beloved in the revealed word means that our times of silent prayer have content. We have strong motives for perseverance. We have a growing though obscure knowledge of the Father before whom we are trustfully exposed. We can recognize him as he comes to us in our daily lives, quickly discern his demands and with ever growing depth and clarity. We have his own vision by which to interpret the revelation of material creation and human history.

Jesus draws us to himself not for himself but so as to take us to the Father. The Father has asked him to be our friend. He has confided us to him as a cherished possession and Jesus considers us more precious than the whole world and his own life. Jesus was unimportant to himself. We are only his friends in truth if we allow him to share his Father with us. Friendship with him entails absolute loyalty on both sides. He, most readily, most devotedly, lays down his life for his friends. On the other hand, his friends never let him down. They are at his side in all his trials, never desert him whatever happens. They stand up before 'men' and acknowledge him, never allowing the opinions, fashions, ridicule or persecutions of 'men' to lead them to betray or deny their friend. And when we are his friends, how confidingly we can approach the Father.

Jesus teaches his friends a prayer that enshrines all he wants to teach them, all he asks of them. It is addressed to *Abba*. We are to say 'Our Father'. We know he is Father, not because we have proof, because, in the course of our lives we detect a fatherly care or because we often feel a warm loving presence; not because we see him granting our little wishes. No, we acknowledge him as Father for none of these reasons but simply because Jesus guarantees him. As with Jesus himself, everything can seem contrary to what we normally mean by father-love and care. By staking everything on Jesus's guarantee, and trying to live always in the faith that God is Father, we come to know that he is; that he is our ground, air, our encompassing, the source of what we are and do. If we reflect carefully we shall find that we catch ourselves out in attitudes, words, actions, doubts, fears, scruples, that belie our notional belief. In actual fact, if not in 'belief', we are assuming that he is difficult to approach, that he is not concerned with us and has to be won over onto our side.

A friend told me recently of a little girl who was afraid when she woke up alone at night and frequently disturbed her parents by going along to them. 'But you are not alone', the mother reassured her, 'Jesus is with you'. 'I know', her daughter replied, 'but I want someone with skin on'. This heartfelt, vivid declaration echoes our own yearning. We find it so hard to 'live by faith alone', as we say. We too want someone 'with skin on'. The danger is that we try to put skin on. Misleading things are often said and written about the development of prayer and probably the outpourings of the mystics have been misinterpreted. Certainly one picks up the idea that sooner or later we shall realize the presence and love of God almost as though it were on the same level and mode of perception as human love. This is to overlook that our *Abba* is 'in heaven'. These are



Sassoferrato, *The Virgin in Prayer*, 1640-50, oil on canvas, 73 x 57.7 cm. London, The National Gallery.

Jesus's words. *Abba* though he is, he is completely other, transcendent mystery. Between him and us there lies an unbridgeable gulf which we could never cross. He himself has thrown the bridge, his Jesus. Only because he has done this can we know him and the breath-taking truth that he calls us to intimacy. Our approach to him must always be with awe. 'O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our maker!' Our whole being must be bowed in worship all day long. And we must renounce the desire to have a God we can handle. We can be like people at a seaside resort who prefer the man-made swimming pool with its easy temperature, safety and amenities. After all, it is sea-water! And a little beyond is the open sea, untrammelled, untameable, over which we have no control whatever. But it is to this sea that we must commit ourselves and let ourselves be carried away.

It is terrifying, this immense sea that is God. What will he do with us? Where will he carry us? He is *Abba*, says Jesus. Fear not, trust him.

Faith is not a thing of the mind, it is not an intellectual certainty or a felt conviction of the heart, it is a sustained decision to take God with utter seriousness as the God of my life; it is to live out the hours in a practical, concrete affirmation that he is Father and he is 'in heaven'. It is a decision to shift the centre of our life from ourselves to him, to forego self-interest and make his interests, his will our sole concern. This is what it means to hallow his name as Father in heaven. Often it may seem as if we only act 'as if', so unaffected are our hearts, perhaps even mocking us: 'where is your God'. It is this acting 'as if' which is true faith. All that matters to faith is that God should have what he wants and we know that what he wants is always our own blessedness. His purposes are worked out, his win is mediated to us in the humblest form, as humble as our daily bread.

It is perhaps not too difficult to see God's providence in certain areas of our lives but it is likely that hour follows hour, full of little events, decisions and choices that are, in fact, divorced from him. If so we are denying him as *Abba*. We do not allow him to reign over us totally and we can excuse ourselves with the illusion that in our case the requisite conditions for total loving are not present. It would be different if such and such were different. Our situation is far too distracting and worrying. The truth is devastatingly simple and we are tempted to shirk the stark, overwhelming reality that God is giving himself to us in the stream of ordinary, mundane events of our ordinary, mundane life. This is where he is for us, here and not elsewhere. Here, precisely here, must we hallow his name. Nothing is wanting to us. 'Fresh and green are the pastures

where he gives me repose'. It is not for us to judge whether they are fresh and green and sustaining. If he puts us there, even though they seem to us barren and hard, a place of struggle rather than repose, they are the pastures we need and in which we shall grow. We pray 'Give us this day our daily bread'. When you pray, Jesus tells us, you have to believe your prayer is already heard. We cannot judge results. We are certain that everything that comes to us is our daily, nourishing bread. This is what it means to believe: to take that daily bread and eat it with love and gratitude no matter how bitter the taste. By nature we, as it were, stand on the viewpoint of self and judge other people, things, what is happening from that stand. Faith demands that we deliberately get off that stand and move to another, the viewpoint of Jesus, and then, how different everything looks. This needs constant effort, constant readjustment. Unless we undertake this battle against our subjectivity, how we feel, how things look to us and so forth, and choose to stand on Jesus and live our lives in his vision, we shall never get anywhere. And yet, how few do this day in day out until it is second nature, their own nature. These indeed, have put on the mind of Christ.

Jesus bids us say 'Our Father' and to hallow his name must mean taking very seriously that everyone is a child of this Father and my brother. As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, we must put on compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forgiving one another...we must show constant, unconditional love and goodness to all no matter how they treat us because this is what God is like and does. He is forgiveness—a love always on tip-toe to give. As soon as we are there to receive he gives himself. We must be like this, we must respond to others like this. Unless we do so, we cannot receive God's love, We have

turned away from him. Nowhere, except when he is quoting the Shema does Jesus speak of our loving the Father. He tells us we must believe in the Father, trust him, obey him, and love our neighbour. It can seem presumptuous to speak of loving God—as though we can! We love Jesus and he has spelt out for us what loving him means—keeping his commandments. This surrender to Jesus in keeping his words, immediately puts us in the Father's waiting embrace, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him' (Jn 14:23). A loving fellowship is established. Jesus loves the Father. The Father loves Jesus. Only in Jesus can we love the Father and receive his love. We love the brother we see and his brothers living with us in our mortal life, and in doing so, we are loving the unspeakable mystery, the Father.

O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these have known that thou has sent me. I have made known thy name to them and will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them (Jn 17, 25-26).

Sometimes we can feel as if life is just too hard, or just too uninteresting and drab. It can seem that the obstacles, within ourselves are mountainous and insuperable. Jesus's own unwavering faith must be ours. Everything is possible to him who believes, was his humble boast. When everything seemed to be going wrong for him, when the 'no' of human hearts had congealed into hard rock which threatened to grind him down, he was certain that his Father could and would move that hard mass and drown it for ever.

He died in hope, not in hopes realized. The picture of him asleep in the violent storm, when others were frantic, and angered by his seeming indifference,

reveals his inmost heart in its perfect trust. If we would be his friends we must live like that. A friend of Jesus dares all and never says such and such is too hard. If God asks something then it is possible of accomplishment. They evade nothing, be it trying situations, uncongenial people, difficult duties. They take each day as it comes with its pleasures and joys, its disagreeable things and pains, shoulder their cross and go with Jesus. The significance of the cross is not suffering but obedience - doing the Father's will regardless of whether it is easy or hard.

For the true friends of Jesus evil does not exist. Everything is turned to good. Death itself, the epitome of all that is evil and destructive of man, is transformed. In his wonderful riposte to the Sadducees who denied the resurrection, Jesus, himself still in faith and not in sight, gloriously affirms our everlasting future, simply because he

knows his Father and he knows this Father could never abandon his friends. The idea is unthinkable. You are quite, quite wrong, he emphatically declares, and closes the issue.

Friends of God? Can it be? Yes, but there is only one way: to become 'son'; to accept the friendship and companionship of Jesus so as to learn sonship from him, share in his sonship. In practice this means being utterly unimportant to ourselves, becoming selfless, empty, nothing but an echo—like Enoch disappearing. This is the paradox: the one who has consented to be nothing but an emptiness for the Father's love, becomes—and only now, in this context of nothingness, dare we breathe the word—somehow 'equal' to God, raised up to be his friend, his beloved, 'The Father and I are one', says Jesus. Lost in his *kenosis* it can perhaps be said of us.

Ruth Burrows, O.C.D.



St. Teresa... Some Prayers



"You say: Come to me all who labor and are burdened, for I will comfort you. What more do we want, Lord? What are we asking for? What do we seek? Why are those in the world so unhappy if not because of seeking rest? God help me! Oh, God help me! What is this Lord? Oh, what a pity! Oh, what great blindness, that we seek rest where it is impossible to find it! have mercy, Creator, on these Your creatures. Behold, we don't understand or know what we desire, nor do we obtain what we ask for. Lord, give us light; behold, the need is greater than with the man born blind, for he wanted to see the light and couldn't. now, Lord, there is no desire to see. Oh, how incurable an illness! Here, my God, is where Your power must be demonstrated; here, your mercy." *Soliloquy 8.2*



"Blessed are those who are written in the book of this life. But you, my soul, if you are written there, why are you sad and why do you disturb me? Hope in God, forever now I will confess to Him my sins and His mercies. And putting these all together, I shall make a song of praise with perpetual sighs to my Savior and my God. There may come a day when my glory will sing to Him, and when my conscience will not feel compunction, where all sighs and fears will have ceased; but in the meantime, in silence and hope will be my strength. I want to live and die in striving and hoping for eternal life more than for the possession of all creatures and all their goods; for these will come to an end. Don't abandon me, Lord, because I hope that in You my hope will not be confounded; may I always serve You; and do with me whatever You will." *Soliloquy 17.6*

"In whom, Lord, can your mercies shine as they do in me who have so darkened with my evil deeds the wonderful favors You began to grant me? Woe is me, my Creator, for if I desire to make an excuse, I find none! Nor is anyone to be blamed but myself. For if I would have paid back something of the love You began to show me, I should not have been able to employ it in anyone but You; and with that all would have been remedied. Since I did not merit this or have such good fortune, may Your mercy, Lord, help me now." *Life 4.4*

"O infinite goodness of my God, for it seems to me I see that such is the way You are and the way I am! O delight of angels, when I see this I desire to be completely consumed in loving you! How certainly You do suffer the one who suffers to be with You! Oh, what a good friend You make, my Lord! How You proceed by favoring and enduring. You wait for the others to adapt to Your nature, and in the meanwhile You put up with theirs! You take into account, my Lord, the times when they love You, and in one instant of repentance You forget their offenses.... Yes, for You do not kill - life of all lives! - any of those who trust in You and desire You for friend. But You sustain the life of the body with more health, and You give life to the soul." *Life 8.6*

"O my Lord, how You are the true friend; and how powerful! When You desire You can love, and You never stop loving those who love You! All things praise You, Lord of the world! Oh, who will cry out for You, to tell everyone how faithful You are to Your friends! All things fail; You, Lord of all, never fail! Little it is, that which You allow the one who loves You to suffer! Oh my Lord! How delicately and smoothly and delightfully You treat them! Would that no one ever pause to love anyone but You! It seems, Lord, You try with rigor the person who loves You so that in extreme trial she might understand the greatest extreme of Your love. Oh my God, who has the understanding, the learning, and the new words with which to extol Your works as my soul understands them? All fails me, my Lord, but if You do not abandon me, I will not fail You. Let all learned men rise up against me, let all created things persecute me, let the devils torment me; do not You fail me, Lord, for I already have experience of the gain that comes from the way You rescue the one who trusts in You alone." *Life 25.17*

"O admirable kindness of God, You allow me to gaze upon You with eyes that have so badly gazed as have those of my soul. May they, Lord become accustomed through this vision not to look at base things, so that nothing outside of You might satisfy them!" *Life 27.11*



"O goodness and great humanity of God! You don't look at the words but at the desires and the will with which they are spoken! How do You bear that one like myself should speak so boldly to Your Majesty! May You be blessed forever and ever." *Life 34.9*

WPDCSO
OCDS Carmel Clarion
2131 Lincoln Rd, NE
Washington, DC 20002-1101



**KEEP
CARMELITE
AND
PRAY
ALWAYS**