

Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Formation I

Year A

The Way of Perfection



"So, Sisters, strive as much as you can, without offense to God, to be affable and understanding in such a way that everyone you talk to will love your conversation and desire your manner of living and acting, and not be frightened and intimidated by virtue."

(WP 41:7)

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***California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph, Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse,
Washington Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary***

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CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI
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Foreword

“And I brought you into the land of Carmel” (Jer. 2:7).

The present formation program is intended for all members of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites in the United States. It is the result of a careful collaboration between OCDS members from the provinces of California-Arizona, Oklahoma and Washington who make up this “Task Force,” a commission that was created for its development. The structure and topics of the program are the fruit of many hours of hard work, research, composition, consultation, collaboration, evaluation, discernment, writing and revision.

The different modules of the program accompany Secular Carmelites in all stages of formation and guide them progressively to a better knowledge and understanding of their vocation as lay people living out the Carmelite charism in the many environments in which they find themselves.

Formation is an essential part in the life of the secular members of the Discalced Carmelite Order. According to the *Ratio Institutionis* of the Secular Order, it is essential that formation programs include the areas of human, Christian and Carmelite formation (*Cfr.* 13-15). These areas prepare OCDS members to “live the charism and spirituality of Carmel in its following of Christ, and in service to its mission” (*OCDS Const.* 32).

The Discalced Carmelite Order promotes an integral formation that helps people to harmoniously integrate the different dimensions of their being. Human formation is the base of all formation. Saint Teresa of Avila says that no matter where we are in our spiritual life, self-knowledge is essential and should never be neglected (*Cfr. Life* 13,15). A good human formation helps people to know themselves and others better as they develop the capacity to be more aware of the dynamics that play an important role in their relationships with themselves, others, God, and their environment.

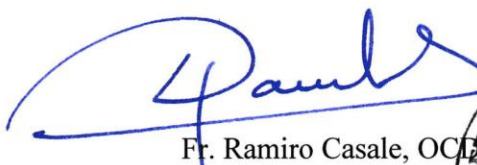
Christian formation is “the solid basis of Carmelite and spiritual formation” (*OCDS Const.* 33). The catechism and the official documents of the Catholic Church are a great resource to acquire the necessary knowledge about the faith and how to put it into practice. It is important that Secular Carmelites learn the teachings of the Catholic Church so that they may hold fast to the truths that inform and guide the spiritual life.


OCDS Formation I, Year A

Carmelite formation confirms the identity of those called to be Secular Carmelites in the Discalced Carmelite Order (*Cfr. Ratio Institutionis* 15). The history of the Order, its spirituality and tradition, and the life and teaching of its saints are a continual source of inspiration and knowledge, especially those of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross (*Cfr. OCDS Const.* 7-8).

May this formation program help all Secular Carmelites in the United States to prepare themselves to become witnesses of the experience of God in the world, to “live in allegiance with Jesus Christ” (*Rule of St. Albert* 2), and to grow in their friendship and communion with Him (*Cfr. Life* 8,5) as they deepen their knowledge and cherish the vocation they have received.

From Rome, January 1, 2023, Solemnity of Holy Mary, Mother of God.


Fr. Ramiro Casale, OCD
General Delegate of the Secular Order
of the Discalced Carmelites



SYLLABUS FOR FORMATION I, Year A

Preparation for making the First Promise

The purpose of this stage of formation is to steep the candidate in the Teresian tradition of prayer as the foundation and basic activity of his/her daily life. Studying the legislative documents within the context of the evangelical counsels and beatitudes imparts to the candidate a deeper understanding of the Discalced Carmelite charism and community life. With emphasis given towards preparation for the First Promise, the candidate should commit him/herself to meditating upon and assimilating the writings of the Carmelite saints, the teachings of the Church, and Holy Scripture. The discernment process continues as the candidate integrates the experience of God with the experience of life. (This stage of formation normally takes two years.)

Requirements

Each candidate will work toward gradually implementing the following requirements in his/her life, practicing them consistently by the end of the formation period:

- Attend and participate in monthly community meetings and formation sessions.
- Be diligent in the study and internalization of assigned lessons and topics.
- Practice meditative/silent prayer daily for at least half an hour (Ratio 90).
- Develop proficiency in praying the Liturgy of the Hours (Morning and Evening Prayer), individually and with the community. Recite Night Prayer when possible (Constitutions 24).
- Continue the habit of studying the OCDS Constitutions and Statutes.
- Continue to use Sacred Scripture regularly as an aid to meditation.
- Participate in daily Mass when possible.
- Engage in a daily examination of conscience.
- Participate in the community apostolate.
- Participate in community retreats and days of recollection.

Introduction to Formation I, Year A

Secular Carmelites are called to immerse themselves in the writings of our Carmelite saints, particularly those of our founders, Saints Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross (Ratio 76a). “Special importance is given to St. Teresa of Jesus who, in our tradition, we refer to as Our Holy Mother. The reason is because she is the one to whom the charism was given. St. John of the Cross was the original collaborator with Our Holy Mother in both the spiritual and juridical re-founding of Carmel in this new charismatic way. So he is called Our Holy Father. To know their histories, their personalities, and, most importantly, their doctrine confirms every Carmelite in his or her identity” (Ratio 77).

The saints of Carmel used vivid images to illustrate and explain their journeys to eventual union with God. St. John of the Cross uses the image of a mountain and its ascent as a metaphor for the spiritual life of intimate friendship with God. St. Teresa of Avila, also known as Teresa of Jesus, uses the wonderful image of a castle and its seven dwelling places to understand the progression in prayer and the mystery of the human person. The modern saint, Thérèse of Lisieux uses the image of an elevator to explain her passionate journey to reach God in Carmel: “I wish to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus... The elevator which must raise me to heaven is your arms, O Jesus!” (Story of a Soul, chapter X). While these different sensory images complement each other in understanding the movement of the Holy Spirit in prayer, one cannot fail to recognize the common theme of “ascent” weaving through their journey to Mount Carmel.

Our life in Carmel is intended to help us in our ascent of this holy Mountain. The function of a community’s structured formation program is to shape our response to God’s call to reach the summit. “There is an intellectual aspect to the formation of a Discalced Carmelite. There is a doctrinal basis to the spirituality and identity of one who is called to the Order. As the friars and nuns, the seculars too must have a good intellectual and doctrinal formation, since as members of the Order they represent and give witness to a mature and profound spirituality” (Ratio 79).

Further, we are formed into community for aid and support on our ascent; no one can climb this Mountain alone. “In the experience of community life, we find the movement and guidance of the Holy Spirit as the most effective way to grow in virtue. The call to ‘be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mt 5:48) helps us to live three key principles of Carmel: to give ourselves entirely to God; to strive for purity of conscience; and to foster an intimate union with God. Through community life, we learn love, gentleness, and respect for others, which enables us to bring more souls to Christ. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the formation that begins in our Secular Order community comes to fruition in the experience of our whole lives. It is our responsibility to set aside specific times for personal prayer and study each day, and to be of service to one another.” (Courtesy OCDS Website of the California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph)

The writings of St. Teresa of Avila are the expression of the charism of the Discalced Carmelites. The syllabus for this year of Formation I introduces St. Teresa’s The Way of Perfection. Each session focuses on one theme or sub-theme to explain the life of prayer experienced and taught by St. Teresa.

"The Way of Perfection" is an excellent introduction to the understanding of Teresian Carmelite spirituality and its main element of contemplative prayer. Through the sharing of her own experiences, Teresa explains the fundamental elements of prayer, while giving counsel on the weakness of the human condition and its struggles in prayer as one ascends the mountain of Carmel to seek Divine Union with the 'One Whom we know loves us'" (Courtesy OCDS Washington Province).

The goal of studying The Way of Perfection is to become familiar with Discalced Carmelite spirituality, identify the foundations of prayer, and explore the diversity of paths and practical insights presented by St Teresa of Avila.

Because Secular Carmelites are called to live by their Constitutions, it is crucial for all candidates to become familiar with the OCDS legislative documents. It is important during this period of formation to develop the habit of frequently reading and reflecting on the OCDS Constitutions and local statutes.

Formators are recommended to assign small portions of the legislation for monthly study, and then spend ten minutes at the beginning of each formation session discussing the assigned reading.

Finally, continue to recognize the importance of community meetings and the purpose of the vocation. Subsequent to all that was said and done in prayer, St Teresa succinctly reminds that the most important element of community life is the attitude and practice of the virtue of humility: "So, sisters, strive as much as you can, without offense to God, to be affable and understanding in such a way that everyone you talk to will love your conversation and desire your manner of living and acting, and not be frightened and intimidated by virtue" (WP 41:7).

This introduction is an opportunity to welcome you to the call of Carmel, to invite you to begin living the life of a Discalced Carmelite Secular and to open your heart to exclaim the words of St Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who wrote, "O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to Love You and make You Loved, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in Purgatory" (*Act of Oblation to Merciful Love*).

The Essential Themes for Formation I, Year A

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection, St Teresa of Avila. Purchase either the Study Edition by Kieran Kavanaugh or Volume 2 of the Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila, both are published by ICS Publications. **Other required reading is included in the appendices.**

Assigned Meditative Readings: Various bible verses, passages from Carmelite writings, and other materials are listed. One day a week, the candidate chooses one of these for his/her mental prayer. Where there are more than four choices listed, the candidate may choose those that seem most appealing. Meditative readings are for private use only; they are not intended to be discussed in the sessions.

Additional/Optional Reading:

A biography of St Teresa, such as:

Saint Teresa of Avila by Walsh, William Thomas, the Bruce Publishing Company, 1944

Saint Teresa of Avila by Auclair, Marcelle, St Bede's Publications, copyright 1988

The Book of Her Life, Chapters 1-10 and 23-40 in The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila. Vol 1. ICS Publications

St. Teresa of Avila: 100 Themes on Her Life and Work by Alvarez, Tomas. Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. ICS Publications, 2011.

To help better understand some of the terms used by St Teresa, the glossary from The Way of Perfection Study Edition is included as **Appendix A**. Candidates are encouraged to read the entire glossary at the beginning of the year, and then refer to it again as listed in the "Additional Reading" recommendations.

Other additional/optional reading materials are included in the appendices.

Required Reading for the Formator: The Way of Prayer: A Commentary on Saint Teresa's Way of Perfection, by Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, OCD, Ignatius Press, 2017.

The **prayer quotes** at the beginning of each session are for personal reflection.

Session One: Introduction: An overview of the life of St Teresa of Avila: Early Years, Life at the Monastery of the Incarnation

*“Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things pass away;
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things.
He who has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.”
— St Teresa of Avila*

Required Reading: The Book of her Life *Introduction* (Appendix B). *Biographical Timeline – St Teresa of Avila* (Appendix C).

Additional Reading for the Formator: Life, 9:1-3 and 26:5

Essential Points to Discuss:

Briefly go through the biographical timeline of St Teresa and highlight the important events and turning points in her life.

- An overview of Teresa’s personality and family life
- The impact of reading The Third Spiritual Alphabet by Francisco Osuna
- Entering the convent and various ongoing illnesses
- Her spiritual struggle and radical conversion (her prayer to the Suffering Christ)
- Her personal desire for holiness; founding of St Joseph monastery in Avila
- Meeting St John of the Cross
- Appointed prioress of the Incarnation; brings in St John of the Cross as confessor
- Index of forbidden books and Teresa’s response: “His Majesty had become the true book in which I saw the truths”
- Teresa’s death; honors given by the Church

Note to the Formator: Please mention to the candidates that the large ceremonial scapular is worn for Carmelite activities or when representing the Order or OCDS Community at a religious event. The small brown scapular (or the scapular medal) is worn for everyday use. The “OCDS” designation is not added to a member’s name until that person makes the First Promise at the end of Formation I. If there are related provincial or community policies in place, share these with the candidates at this time.

Assigned Meditative Reading:

Weekly topics: (once per week, choose one for each week)

Gospel of St John, chapter 15

- I am the vine, you are the branches.
- As the Father has loved me, so I love you – you are no longer servants but friends.
- You did not choose me; I have chosen you – bear fruit that will last.
- You do not belong to the world.

Session Two: Prayer for apostolic purpose – the reason for founding the monastery

*“I’ll go and tell the world, spreading the Word of your beauty
and sweetness and of your sovereignty.”*

— St John of the Cross

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection (WP) chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Additional Reading: The Way of Perfection – Introduction

Explanatory note: In chapters 1-3 Teresa is concerned about the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century: “How much this miserable sect was growing... The news distressed me greatly, and, as though I could do something...” (1:2). She calls them “false witnesses” (1:5). Teresa could have written a book about the evils of different sects in her time or encouraged King Phillip II to send an army of men to defend the Church. Instead, she proposes a different approach. Teresa intuitively understands that “human forces are not sufficient to stop the spread of this fire caused by these heretics...” (3:1). “Recognizing the need for a completely different approach than the use of human force and man-made arms, she urged the study of Scripture, preaching the Word, virtuous living, and prayer and fasting” (WP Study Edition *interpretive notes* pg. 61). “...this is most necessary. For I have said, it is the ecclesiastical, not the secular arm that will save us” (3:2).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The Carmelite apostolate is based on a fervent interior life – friendship with God.
- “...we [are] occupied in prayer for those who are the defenders of the Church and for the preachers and for learned men... (1:2) ... we shall be fighting for them even though we are very cloistered...” (3:5). “O my sisters in Christ, help me beg these things of the Lord. This is why He has gathered you together here. This is your vocation” (1:5).
- Let us not pray for worldly things; people should pray that God would enable them to trample such things beneath their feet... Are we to waste time asking for worldly things? (see 1:5).
- Poverty of spirit is a necessary part of apostolic life.
“We must desire to observe poverty in every way: in houses, clothing, words, and most of all in thought” (2:8). While Teresa wrote this for her nuns and not with Seculars in mind, Seculars practice poverty according to their state of life, observing moderation in everything in the spirit of holy detachment.

Assigned Meditative Reading (choose one per week):

- Matthew 9:35-10:1 – prayer for the Church
- Mark 10:25-29 – the needle’s eye

- Matthew 6:24-25 – no one can serve two masters
- Luke 12:13-21 – this night your life will be demanded of you

Meditation on the Song of Songs, by St Teresa of Avila, 7:3 (Appendix D)

- ... when the active works rise from this interior root, they become lovely and very fragrant flowers.
- The fragrance of these flowers spreads to the benefit of many.

Session Three: Foundation of Prayer and the Atmosphere Favorable to Meditation and Contemplation (Continued in session 4)

Fraternal Charity:

*The limitless loving devotion to God, and the gift God makes of Himself to you,
are the highest elevation of which the heart is capable;
it is the highest degree of prayer.
The souls that have reached this point are truly the heart of the Church.
—St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)*

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 4-9; 1Cor 13:4-7, St Paul's song of love.

Additional Reading: *Our First Duties as Carmelites*, by Fr. David Centner, OCD (Appendix E); 1Cor 13; WP Study Edition Glossary: *Love – For one another; God's love for us; Our love for God*, (WP pgs. 509-510; or Appendix A of this handbook)

Explanatory Note: Sessions three and four deal with the foundation of prayer and the atmosphere favorable to meditation/contemplation – fraternal charity, detachment, and true humility. "... for it is very important that we understand how much the practice of these three things helps us to possess inwardly and outwardly the peace our Lord recommended so highly to us" (4:4).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- God gives certain knowledge – "...this knowledge comes from seeing and feeling what is gained by the one love and lost by the other..." (6:3).
- True wisdom cannot esteem the love that lasts only here on earth (see 6:9).
- Love is not self-seeking. All that it desires or wants is to see the other soul rich with heavenly blessings (see 7:1).
- Suffer the faults of others; recommend them to God and practice the opposite virtue (see 7:7).
- Deeds against charity – factions, ambition, holding grudges – are very destructive to community life (see 7:10-11).

Assigned Meditative Reading:

Taken from Story of a Soul by St Therese of Lisieux, Study Edition. ICS Publications, 2005, Chapter X. Manuscript C, (Appendix F).

Introductory note: Chapter X deals with the spiritual support of Therese' Prioress (1-7, 11-15), the Little Way (8-9), Therese' expected death (10, 16-17, 30-32), her experience of the Dark Night of Faith (17-27), vocation to the missions (33-38), obedience (39-40), and the practice of charity and holy poverty (41-64). **Reading the whole chapter is optional.**

Points for meditation/reflection (choose one per week):

How did St Therese practice the virtue of charity in her Lisieux Carmel? There are three fundamental truths about charity that Therese addresses in chapter X. The following three points were taken from interpretive notes of Fr. Marc Foley, OCD.

- The first is that charity is not a feeling but a choice – an act of the will. “I told myself that charity must not consist in feelings but in works” (paragraph 51).
- The second is that it is very difficult to be charitable to people whom we don’t like, people toward whom we have a “natural antipathy,” to use Therese’s phrase (paragraphs 51-52).
- Third, it is precisely in loving those to whom we have a natural aversion that our love becomes divine because such love requires that we love with the charity of Jesus himself (paragraphs 45-46).

Scripture passages:

- 1 John 4:7-21 – Love one another.
- Luke 6:32-36 – “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” (Love your enemies...)
- Luke 1:39 – Mary visits Elizabeth “in haste”
- Luke 10:25-37 – the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Session Four: Foundation of Prayer (continued from session three)

Detachment and Humility:

“Prayer ought to be humble, fervent, resigned, persevering, and accompanied with great reverence. One should consider that he stands in the presence of a God and speaks with a Lord before whom the angels tremble from awe and fear.”
— St Mary Magdalen de Pazzi

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection, chapters 10-15.

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary: *Detachment*, pg. 503; *Humility*, pg. 507.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “...do not feel secure or let yourselves go to sleep! By feeling secure you would resemble someone who very tranquilly lies down after having locked his doors for fear of thieves while allowing the thieves to remain inside the house. And you already know that there is no worse thief than we ourselves!” (10:1).
- “A great aid to going against your will is to bear in mind continually how all is vanity and how quickly everything comes to an end” (10:2).
- “When we begin to become attached to something, we should strive to turn our thoughts from it and bring them back to God – and His Majesty helps” (10:2).
- “...true humility ... and the virtue of detachment it seems to me always go together. They are two inseparable sisters” (10:3).
- “...if there is any vain esteem of honor or wealth... you will never grow very much or come to enjoy the true fruit of prayer” (12:5).
- Let us imitate the humility of the Blessed Virgin (see 13:3).
- “Indeed, it calls for great humility to be silent at seeing oneself condemned without fault” (15:1).
- “We must all try to be preachers through our deeds...” (15:6).

Note: Teresa’s discussion of the foundation of prayer ends in chapter 15. Chapter 16 serves as a transitional chapter. Here Teresa is setting a stage to explain the growth in prayer in subsequent chapters. The following explanatory note is essential to understand Teresa’s shift in her thoughts in chapter 16.

Progression in Prayer

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapter 16 (not required for discussion in the formation session, but the formator might refer to it briefly if time permits.)

Explanatory note: Teresa employs the game of chess to explain the growth in prayer. What she said so far (foundation of prayer) is like setting up the game of chess. Now is the time to move

the pieces. “Now realize that anyone who doesn’t know how to set up the pieces for a game of chess won’t know how to play well. And without knowing how to check the king, one won’t know how to checkmate it either” (16:1). “Therefore, daughters, if you desire that I tell you about the way that leads to contemplation, you will have to bear with me... And if you don’t want to hear about them or put them into practice, stay with your mental prayer for your whole life...” (16:5). “I say that the King of Glory will not come to our soul – I mean to be united with it – if we do not make the effort to gain the great virtues” (16:6).

Teresa’s explanation up to this point has been merely a placing of the “chess pieces,” but now it is time to move them; that is, it is not enough to simply desire virtue, we must apply ourselves.

Assigned Meditative Reading (choose one per week):

- Luke 18:9-14 – the publican and the Pharisee
- Luke 18:15-17 – the little children
- Luke 18:18-29 – the rich young man
- Matthew 5:44-48 – be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect
- Philippians 2:1-11 – Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped

Session Five: Fundamental Attitudes and Convictions that are necessary for growth in Prayer

“Look not at the imperfections of others, keep silence, and have continual converse with God. These three things will uproot great imperfections from the soul and make it the mistress of great virtues.”

— St John of the Cross

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23.

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary – *Determination*, pg. 504

Explanatory note: In sessions three and four, the foundation of prayer (charity, detachment, and humility) was discussed within the context of creating an atmosphere that is favorable to the life of prayer. In this session, humility, perseverance and other virtues are discussed within the context of our attitude and convictions that are necessary for growth in prayer.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- One should always take the lowest place, for this is what the Lord told us to do (17:1).
- Contemplation is a gift from God. “What I am saying is that this is not a matter of your choosing but of the Lord’s” (17:7). Don’t concern yourself in receiving favors in prayer.
- Contemplation and suffering: “...contemplatives do not bear a lighter cross... I know both paths and I know clearly ... if He didn’t give that food with its delights, these persons wouldn’t be able to endure the trials” (18:1).
- Continue practicing the virtues of humility and perseverance. “...they must keep the flag of humility raised and suffer all the blows they receive without returning any... Contemplatives must be careful about what they are doing for if one lets go of the flag the battle will be lost” (18:5).
- Begin the practice of prayer with great determination. “They must have a great and very determined determination to persevere until reaching the end...” (21:2).

Assigned Meditative Reading (choose one per week):

- Luke 14:7-14 – the lowest place
- 1Cor 1:25-31 – weakness and strength
- 1Cor 2:6-16 – understanding
- Matthew 15:21-28 – humility and perseverance in prayer
- Matthew 20:20-28 – can you drink of the cup?
- Philippians. 2:5-11 – imitating Christ’s humility
- Luke 1:26-38 – “Let it be done to me as You say.”
- Philippians 3:12-16 – perseverance

Session Six: Vocal and Mental Prayer

*"Sometimes when I am in such a state of spiritual dryness
that not a single good thought occurs to me, I say very slowly the Our Father or
the Hail Mary and these prayers suffice to take me out of myself
and wonderfully refresh me."
— St Therese of the Child Jesus*

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 22, 24, 25

Additional Reading: Catechism of the Catholic Church 2697-2708: Expressions of Prayer
(Appendix G)

WP Study Edition Glossary: *Vocal Prayer* pg 515; *Meditation* pg. 510; *Mental Prayer* pg. 511

Essential Points to Discuss:

- When we pray vocally (e.g. Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed), it's not as necessary to think of the words we say as it is to adopt a suitable attitude of mind, realizing to whom we turn in these prayers (see 22.1).
- Vocal and mental prayer may open the heart to contemplation. "I tell you that it is very possible that while you are reciting the Our Father or some other vocal prayer, the Lord may raise you to perfect contemplation" (25:1).
- Vocal prayer, mental prayer and contemplation all must have the essential ingredient of prayer – **communion with God**. The difference lies in the fact that contemplation (supernatural prayer) cannot be acquired through human effort; it is a gift from God (see 25:2-3).

Assigned Meditative Reading (choose one per week):

- Matt 6:1-4 – avoiding vainglory
- Matt 6:5-6 – solitude
- Matt 6:7-8 – sincerity and trust
- 1 Cor 13:1 – "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal."
- I Kings 19:11-12 – and after the fire a still small voice
- Life of St Teresa 8:5 – "For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends."

Session Seven: Prayer of Recollection

“Active recollection, by which we put ourselves and keep ourselves in the presence of God, has always been regarded as the essential preparation for communion with God in the mystic life. Just as the Prophet did not hear the voice of God in the storm, but in the gentle breeze, so the heart of the spiritual man must not be shaken by the storm but must listen for God’s voice in the silence of its own interior.”
— Blessed Titus Brandsma (Lecture on the Hermits of Carmel)

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection, chapters 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.

Additional Reading: Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, The Practice of the Presence of God *Spiritual Maxims*, ch. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7. ICS Publications (Appendix H)
WP Study Edition Glossary: *Recollection (Prayer of)*, pg. 512

Explanatory note: At this point, St Teresa begins a lengthy explanation of the development of the life of prayer (Prayer of Recollection, Prayer of Quiet, and Contemplation) using the Our Father as a guide.

Essential Points to Discuss:

“Our Father, Who art in heaven” – Prayer of Recollection

- “I am not asking you now that you think about Him or that you draw out a lot of concepts or make long, subtle reflections with your intellect. I am not asking you to do anything more than look at Him (inwardly in faith)” (26:3).
- Acquire the habit of keeping Christ present (Humanity of Christ). This presence to Christ is, indeed, what Christians must always bring to prayer, no matter what state they may be in (It’s coming to know ourselves through Christ) (Summary of 29:5 and 26).
- One must at least make the little effort necessary to recollect the sense of sight to look in faith at the Lord within. “In the measure you desire Him, you will find Him” (26:3).
- “It is also a great help to take a good book written in the vernacular in order to recollect one’s thoughts and pray well...” (26:10). This does not mean to spend the whole time reading; when one’s mind wanders read a few lines to refocus one’s thoughts.
- “This prayer is called ‘recollection,’ because the soul collects its faculties together and enters within itself to be with its God” (28:4).
- Teresa’s method has to do with relationship more than technique. “We must speak with Him as with a father, or a brother, or a lord” (28:3). And this easy familiarity is seen by Teresa as the best means to “recollection.” To recognize one’s intimacy with God in Christ is to know that heaven is not a distant place; heaven has been brought to us because God has come to us (the mystery of the Incarnation).

Assigned weekly meditation:

Use the Our Father to recollect the mind and senses in God's presence. Focus on parts of the Our Father or read slowly through the whole prayer, as the Holy Spirit leads.

"Consider that you are losing a great treasure and that you do much more by saying one word of the Our Father from time to time than by rushing through the entire prayer many times."

(WP 31:13)

Session Eight: The Prayer of Quiet

“One way to call your mind easily back to God during your fixed prayer times and to hold it steadier is to not let it take much flight during the rest of the day.”

— Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 30 and 31 (These are especially important chapters)

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary: *Quiet (Prayer of)*, pg. 512

Explanatory note: St Teresa dedicated the next two chapters (30 and 31) to the prayer of quiet, a supernatural prayer, which one cannot acquire for oneself (see 31:2). “This is the only chapter (31) in the Way that deals with contemplation expressly and integrally. It plays an essential role in the entire thrust of the book” (Interpretive notes pg. 352 of the study edition).

Essential Points to Discuss:

“Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.”

- “...in the kingdom of heaven, among many other blessings, is that one will no longer take any account of earthly things, but have a calmness and glory within...” (30:5).
- “In this prayer it seems the Lord begins to show that He hears our petition. He begins now to give us His kingdom here below so that we may truly praise and hallow His name...” “This prayer is something supernatural.” What did St Teresa mean by “supernatural”? In her thought, it means the initiative comes from God, not from us (31:1, 2, 6).
- The Prayer of Quiet is the first contemplative prayer in which the person perceives that it is not he/she alone who is working. In this prayer, one foretastes something of what one shall have in Paradise (see 31:2-3).
- The more deeply one knows God with some experiential knowledge, the more one will be drawn to praise and love Him perfectly, for contemplative knowledge has a certain affinity to the knowledge of the Blessed.
- God wills that souls spend their whole life in praise, sustained best by some experiential knowledge of God. One does not employ images and ideas, but proceeds by means of love with a taste of God.
- The intellect receives knowledge from love, just as God revealed Christ to Simeon (Luke 2:25-35) (31:2).
- In this prayer, the will is the powerful ruling faculty. It will draw the intellect after itself without disturbance (31:10).
- This prayer continues amid daily occupations. While one attends to the external service of God in discharging customary business, one’s will can remain united to Him. “This is a great favor for those to whom the Lord grants it; the active and the contemplative lives

are joined. The faculties all serve the Lord together: the will is occupied in its work and contemplation without knowing how; the other two faculties serve in the work of Martha. Thus Martha and Mary walk together” (31:5). This should serve as a great encouragement to Carmelite Seculars.

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Luke 2:25-35 – Simeon – the intellect receives knowledge from love
- Luke 10:38-42 – Martha and Mary – contemplative prayer and active apostolate
- Mt 17:1-8 – Peter on Tabor – joy and awe in God’s presence
- Luke 19:19:2-9 – the publican – humility and self-knowledge

Session Nine: Unitive Life – Contemplation

*“O Lord, how different are Your paths from our clumsy imaginings!
And how from a soul that is already determined to love You and is abandoned
into Your hands, You do not want anything but that it obey, that it inquire well
into what is for Your greater service, and that it desire this! There’s no need for it
to be seeking out paths or choosing them, for its will is Yours. ...[You] go about
disposing the soul and the things with which it is dealing in such a way that,
without understanding how, we find in ourselves spiritual improvement,
so great that we are afterward left amazed.”*

— St Teresa of Avila

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection ch. 32.

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary: *Contemplation – Contemplatives*, pgs. 502-503; *Fount (of Living Water)*, pg. 506; *Union (Prayer of)*, pg. 515; *Water (Living)*, pg. 516.

Explanatory note: “Chapter 32 is one of the most important chapters in the Way of Perfection. Commenting on the Our Father, St Teresa speaks of various degrees of prayer; here she begins to discuss the perfect life in relation to the highest states of prayer. This chapter completes Teresa’s commentary on the first part of the Our Father and the exposition of degrees of prayer.” (taken from The Way of Prayer: A Commentary on St Teresa’s Way of Perfection)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “Don’t fear that it means He will give you riches, or delights, or honors, or all these earthly things. His love for you is not small...He wants to repay you well, for He gives you His kingdom (unitive life) while you are still alive” (32:6).
- “And He gives according to the courage He sees in each and the love each has for His Majesty” (32:7).
- “...everything I have advised you about in this book is directed toward the complete gift of ourselves to the Creator, the surrender of our wills to His...” (32:9).
- “Your will, Lord, be done in me in every way and manner that You, my Lord, want. If You want it to be done with trials, strengthen me and let them come; if with persecutions, illness, dishonors, and lack of life’s necessities, here I am; I will not turn away, my Father ... grant me the favor of Your Kingdom that I may do Your will ... and use me as You would Your own possession, in conformity with Your will” (32:10).

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Philippians 4:11-13 – detachment: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ... I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.”
- Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love – John of the Cross, Sayings of Light and Love, 26-28 (Appendix I)

- John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle, stanza 28 – “Now I occupy my soul and all my energy in His service; I no longer tend the herd, nor have I any other work now that my every act is love.”
- Song of Songs 2:10-17 – “Arise my darling ... I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.”

Session Ten: Eucharist – Sacramental and Spiritual Communion. The recollection which should be practiced after Communion

*“To forget oneself, to be delivered from all one’s own desires and pretensions,
to open one’s own heart to all the pressing needs of others,
this is possible only through daily intimacy with Our Lord in the tabernacle.”*
— St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 33, 34, 35.

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary: *Sacrament (Blessed)*, pg. 513.

Explanatory note: Teresa devoted three entire chapters (33, 34, 35) to this petition. For her, our daily bread is the Eucharist. The first of these three chapters treats of the gift of Jesus’ real presence. The two following chapters treat of sacramental communion and spiritual communion.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The Eucharist is a manifestation, not only of Jesus’ love, but also of the heavenly Father’s love (see 33:2, 5).
- “As for ourselves, let us ask the Eternal Father that we might merit to receive our heavenly bread in such a way that the Lord may reveal Himself to the eyes of our soul and make Himself thereby known since our bodily eyes cannot delight in beholding Him, because He is so hidden. Such knowledge is another kind of satisfying and delightful sustenance that maintains life” (34:5).
- “... after having received the Lord, since you have the Person Himself present, strive to close the eyes of the body and open those of the soul and look into your own heart” (34:12). This is the beginning of interior recollection.
- Those who are not his true friends will hurry on as soon as possible to other business affairs and occupations (see 34:13).
- It is called “spiritual communion” to distinguish it from sacramental communion, for the Eucharist is not physically received. It is a great act of desire by which one invites Jesus into one’s heart through recollection (see 35:1).

Assigned Meditative Reading: (choose one per week):

- Matthew 26:26-29 – the Last Supper
- Mark 14:22-31 – the Last Supper
- Luke 22:14-23 – the Last Supper
- The Gospel of St John chapter 6 – Bread of Life discourse
- 1 Cor 11:23-32 – the institution of the Eucharist and proper dispositions

- The Imitation of Christ part 4 (choose any chapter)
- “O Sisters, if we would only comprehend the fact that while the Eucharistic Species remain within us, Jesus is there and working in us inseparably with the Father and the Holy Spirit and therefore the whole Holy Trinity is there.” St Mary Magdalene de Pazzi

Session Eleven: God's merciful love – Effects of prayer

"Silence is precious; by keeping silence and knowing how to listen to God, the soul grows in wisdom and God teaches it what it cannot learn from men."

— Blessed Anne of St Bartholomew

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive..."

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 36, 37

Explanatory note: St Teresa recalled that the first petitions of the Our Father afforded her an opportunity to discuss all the degrees of prayer from meditation to the prayer of union, the fountain of living water: "Up to now the Lord has taught us the whole way of prayer and of high contemplation, from the beginning stages to mental prayer, to the prayer of quiet, and to that of union... From here on, the Lord begins to teach us about the effects of His favors..." (37:1).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The quality of forgiveness is a guarantee that one is living a life of prayer and is on the right road. St Teresa speaks of the pardoning of offenses as a great act of love (see 36:1-2).
- She gives this as the reason: one growing in union with God becomes more and more aware of both God's mercy and one's own littleness. This helps one acquire a merciful attitude toward others. "Help us understand, my God, that we do not know ourselves and that we come to You with empty hands; and pardon us through Your mercy" (36:6).
- The soul that God brings to perfect contemplation is not touched by any injury however grave. Such a soul will pardon an offense when the occasion arises. "...for when among the favors God grants in the prayer of perfect contemplation that I mentioned, [if] there doesn't arise in the soul a very resolute desire to pardon any injury however grave it may be ... do not trust much in that soul's prayer" (36:8).
- "Self-esteem is far removed from these persons. They like others to know about their sins and like to tell about them when they see themselves esteemed" (36:10).

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Mt 18:21-35 – the unmerciful servant
- 1 Cor 13:1-8 – "If I speak in the tongues of angels but do not have love..."
- Luke 6:32-36 – "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?"
- St Therese' Act of Oblation to Merciful Love (Appendix J)

Session Twelve: Continual search for divine union – Avoiding temptation and distraction

*“... if we unite the spirit of prayer to these external remedies
and the interior means we have prescribed, we shall infallibly succeed.
It is, indeed, evident that the practice of prayer
is a most efficacious remedy against the passions.”*

– Ven. Fr John of Jesus and Mary (Instruction of Novices, part one, ch. 6.9)

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 38, 39, 40, 41, 42; Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1810 -1813.

Explanatory note: Carmelite life is a continual search for divine union. But, while on this earth, the soul is surrounded by difficulties, temptations, and distractions. Fragile as the human person is, one truly needs protection from evil. Under this petition, Teresa wrote not only of temptation, but of trials in general. After outlining the meaning of this petition, Teresa explains some temptations into which one may fall if one is not alert. She was speaking here mainly to those who are striving to live a life of prayer.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- One does not ask to not have any temptations, but only not to be deceived by them (see 38:1).
- The devil can cause delights and consolations in our senses and emotions. He tries to deceive us into believing they come from God, when it is the devil himself who is producing them. God can bring good out of this, “For, in being fed on that delight, such persons will spend more hours in prayer” (38:3).
- As a safeguard, Teresa recommends humility. One should not think there is any right to special consolations in prayer. To believe otherwise opens one to being deceived. It is important to know that one should not desire spiritual consolations (see 38:4).
- One temptation stemming from consolation is the belief that the virtues are already possessed when in reality they are not (see 38:5, 8). It would be a mistake to lean on presumed virtues as if they were a solid foundation. Virtues are a gift of God. “Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God’s help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good” (CCC 1810). The Theological Virtues of faith, hope and charity “are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life” (CCC 1813).
- Another hidden temptation is false humility. This causes disquiet over the gravity of one’s sins and can even make one give up Holy Communion. Whereas true humility does not disturb or disquiet or agitate, however great it may be, it comes with peace, delight and calm (see 39:1-2).

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- Likewise, some are tempted to excessive penances, and then tempted to believe they are more penitential than others and are doing something extraordinary. “Strive to obey ... since the greatest perfection lies in obedience” (39:3).
- Another dangerous temptation is self-assurance in the thought that one will in no way return to past faults and worldly pleasures (exaggerated confidence). Never proceed with such self-assurance and be on guard against the occasions of sin (see 39:4). Self-assurance in beginners is very common and very dangerous. As souls gain self-knowledge they learn to rely more and more on God, and less and less on self. Even so, this temptation can creep into one’s mind at any level of spiritual maturity. “...however sublime the contemplation, let your prayer always begin and end with self-knowledge” (39:5).
- Love will quicken one’s steps; fear (a cautious attitude) will make one careful to avoid falling along the way (see 40:1).
- “So, Sisters, strive as much as you can, without offense to God, to be affable and understanding in such a way that everyone you talk to will love your conversation and desire your manner of living and acting, and not be frightened and intimidated by virtue” (41:7).
- “Certainly, it never entered my mind that this prayer (*the Our Father*) contained so many deep secrets; for now you have seen the entire spiritual way contained in it, from the beginning stages until God engulfs the soul abundantly from the fount of living water (*contemplation*), which He said was to be found at the end of the way. [And having come out of it – I mean of this prayer – I don’t know how to go any further]” (42:5).

*May the Lord be blessed and praised;
From Him comes every good
we speak of, think about, and do. Amen.*
— Teresa of Avila (WP 42:7)

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Matthew 18:1-4 – “Unless you become as a little child...”
- 1 Peter 5:5-9 – humility towards one another
- Psalms 111:10 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
- Romans 12 – harmony in community life

At the end of this study of The Way of Perfection, the candidate should have:

1. An appreciation of prayer consistent with the Carmelite understanding that prayer consists not in “method” but in deepening one’s relationship in love with God. “Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything” (St Teresa of Avila, Life 8.5).
2. An understanding of the ecclesial value of prayer – that prayer has a value in itself to the life of the Church and the world, as well as being essential to personal sanctification.

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(includes required and additional/optional reading)

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Provincial Statutes

The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila, Vol. 1 Book of Her Life ICS Publications, Washington D.C. 2000. Although an excerpt is included in the appendices, because St Teresa's autobiography is one of the essential works used for Carmelite formation, candidates are strongly urged to obtain their own copy of this volume.

The Way of Perfection, St Teresa of Avila Study Edition. Prepared by Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD, ICS Publications, Washington D.C. 2000.

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In the Appendices

"Biographical Timeline – St Teresa of Avila"

"Our First Duties as Carmelites" (article) by Fr. David Centner, OCD

Meditations on the Song of Songs, by St Teresa of Avila

Chapter X of *Story of a Soul*, by St Therese of Lisieux

Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love from *Sayings of Light and Love* – St John of the Cross

“Act of Oblation to Merciful Love”, by St Therese of Lisieux

St Teresa, *Book of Her Life* Introduction

Glossary from *The Way of Perfection Study Edition*, ICS Publications

Selected spiritual maxims from *The Practice of the Presence of God*

CCC 2697-2708, on vocal and mental prayer

Chapter 6 of *In Context*

Note to the formator:

1. Encourage the candidates to read a biography of St. Teresa throughout the year.
Recommendations are listed above under “Additional Reading” but others may be used.
2. It is recommended to take 10 minutes at the beginning of each session to read and discuss a section of the OCDS Constitutions or Provincial Statutes throughout the year.
Suggested readings are as follows:

Constitutions:

- a. Following Jesus in the Teresian Secular Carmel (Constitutions 10-12)
- b. Witness to the experience of God (17-24)
- c. Formation in the school of Carmel (32-36)

Provincial Statutes:

- d. Community life
- e. Carmelite Calendar – Feast days and fasting.

Additional reading from the Constitutions and Statutes may be selected by the local Council, according to the needs of the community or the candidates.

Appendices

Appendix A: Essential Themes, Way of Perfection Study Edition Glossary

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The purpose of this glossary is to provide readers with help toward grasping some of the terms used in this work. Untrained in philosophy and theology, Teresa did not try to define her terms. This can prove frustrating to readers who want clear definitions. She reveals her understanding of the realities behind her words through her descriptions. When brought together under their respective entries, these descriptions help to clarify the meaning of the terms. Further nuances and developments important to the understanding of Teresa's lexicon are present in her other writings. This glossary is limited to *The Way of Perfection*. No attempt was made to be exhaustive, neither in the import of the words, nor in the references provided as mere examples. Further information may be gathered by consulting the index.

ABANDONMENT (TO GOD'S WILL). A free surrender of one's will to God (32.4). Christ is the model of abandonment; in the garden he manifested his own desire and fear, but then abandoned them to God (30.2). Great gain results from total abandonment to God's will, especially in fear of death and sickness (11.4; 32.4).

BODY. The external part of the human composite (body and soul) (31.2-3). Its senses or powers are mainly those of sight and hearing (28.5-6; 31.2; 34.12), which cannot on their own perceive the Lord, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament (34.5), or when he speaks to the heart (24.5). The more comforts the body receives, the more needs it discovers (11.2); its senses can be a source of distraction (28.5); thus it can become an enemy in the spiritual battle of this life (11.5). The body should be put to work for one's daily sustenance (34.4). In sickness it should be cared for, and compassion should be shown toward the sick (11.1). The devil tempts people toward bodily penances that can ruin their health (19.9-10). In the prayer of quiet the body experiences rest and delight (31.2-3). In rapture, awareness through the exterior senses is lost (32.12).

CHURCH. In the church, Christ walks and communes with us (1.3). Christians who do what is destructive to the church afflict Christ (1.3); it is like crucifying Christ again (1.2). The church needs preachers and the learned to defend and protect her (1.2); and those who will pray for her (1.3). The church is our Holy Mother (21.10). By believing what she holds we walk along a good path (21.10; 30.4).

CONTEMPLATION. A prayer that cannot be acquired (and is thus "supernatural") in which the Lord puts the soul at peace by his presence (31.2). It is a gift from the Lord (25.2). In it love is experienced without one's understanding how (25.2). The soul understands that without the noise of words the divine Master is teaching it by causing the faculties to stop their activity (25.2). An effort to gain the great virtues is a necessary preparation, although God may sometimes give the gift to sinners to draw them away from their sins (16.6). God will give the gift to those who prepare themselves although they should remain humble and detached regarding his gifts (17.7). Contemplation is perfect (pure) when all the faculties come to rest

entirely in union with the Lord (28.7). Vocal prayer is no obstacle to contemplation or even to perfect contemplation (30.7). Receiving the gift of perfect contemplation is like drinking directly from the fount of living water (32.9). To drink from this fount, we must give our wills to the Lord in everything (32.9-10). The effects of this perfect contemplation are humility, great love of God, detachment from being esteemed, and fortitude in the virtue of forgiving (36.8,11-13). Another effect is the acceptance of trials, temptations, persecutions, and struggles (38.1). Both the love and fear of God become very manifest (41.1). God is not content solely with bringing a soul to union; he begins to delight in it and reveal his secrets to it (32.12).

CONTEMPLATIVES. Used to designate only those whom God has brought to perfect contemplation, in whom he delights and to whom he reveals his secrets (32.12). God gives contemplatives trials that would be unendurable without the favors he gives them (18.1-2). They are courageous and determined to suffer (18.2). They must suffer as Christ did (18.5). Others should not give up trying to prepare themselves to be contemplatives, but leave the rest to the Lord (18.3,6). The deceptions and illusions the devil brings on contemplatives are not few (40.4). Being a contemplative is not necessary for salvation (17.2). Only in the next world will we know the value of delights and raptures and visions and other favors from the Lord; having them is an uncertain matter (18.7-8). What is more certain is the contemplative's readiness to drink from the chalice (18.6; 38.1).

DETACHMENT. Relinquishing what stands in the way of giving oneself to the All without reserve (8.1; 32.9); in it one embraces the Creator rather than the creature, cares not for what comes to an end but for eternal things (8.1; 32.9; 3.4). Outward detachment is necessary until one gains from the Lord a freedom in regard to the attachment (8.4; 10.1). The freedom from attachment gives one dominion over all creation (10.3). An aid to detachment is the thought of how quickly everything comes to an end (10.2). Along with humility, it is a virtue loved by Christ, who was never seen without it (10.3). Through the two virtues, one escapes from Egypt and finds the true manna (10.4). These two virtues cannot be present without love for others (16.2). The objects of detachment include ourselves, our bodies, and our honor (10.5; 12.5).

DETERMINATION. A firmness of resolve associated with perseverance (21.2). The object of it is to continue until reaching the end (21.2). The determination includes a resolve to die rather than give up the journey (20.2). The Lord highly favors those who have real determination (14.1). We must give ourselves to the Lord with the kind of determination with which he gives himself to us (16.9). It is important to begin with determination; the person who does so struggles more courageously (23.1; 23.5). The devil is afraid of determined souls, but will cause fears and never-ending obstacles to those who are changeable, unstable, and not strongly determined to persevere (23.4). The more determination we have not to commit an offense against God for any creature, the less confidence we have in ourselves and the more in God (41.4).

FAITH. Believing what the Lord says, the words coming from the mouth of Truth itself, and the truths he tells us (23.6; 28.1; 19.2). The Lord calls us to drink from the fount of living water; by faith we know of his goodness; in this respect he will not let us die of thirst (23.5). When we know this through experience, faith is awakened (30.3; 34.6; 28.1). It is a pity when faith is so unawakened that one does not understand fully the certainty of punishment and

reward (30.3). Faith is strengthened by considering that in Communion the Lord enters our house as truly as he did the house of the Pharisee, even though we don't see him with our bodily eyes and even when we don't feel devotion (34.6-7). Teresa had no doubt that miracles could be worked while the Lord was within her and that, as her guest, he would give her what she asked of him (34.8). The Lord found more faith in women than in men (3.7). You will be walking along a good path if we believe firmly what Holy Mother church holds (21.10).

FATHER (ETERNAL). A divine Person in the one God revealed by Jesus out of love for us and given to us by him as our Father also (27.1-2). Like the father of the prodigal son, the Eternal Father loves, pardons, sustains, and consoles us in our trials (27.1). He makes us his heirs with Jesus (27.2). He dwells in heaven (27.1; 28.1) and also as mighty King within the palace of our soul, where he is present in his majesty, power, and glory (27.5; 28.1). He takes his delight in Jesus (33.2). He consents to allow Jesus to remain every day with us in the Blessed Sacrament (33.2).

FIRE. A symbol for the love of God enkindled in the soul by the living water of contemplation (19.2-3). This water of contemplation makes the fire of God's love increase in the soul (19.3). This fire has its source in God, not in anything on earth, and cannot be extinguished by the water of earthly things when the fire is powerful (19.4; 40.41). Earthly things can extinguish the fire when it is weak (19.4). There is another heavenly water given by God in prayer — the water of tears — that does not quench the heavenly fire of God's love but makes it grow (19.5). The fire of God's love cools and freezes all worldly attachments (19.5). It communicates itself to others, and wants to burn up the whole world (19.5). With contemplatives the fire shines brightly and so their love is clearly recognized (40.4).

In the prayer of recollection, the soul is well prepared for the enkindling of fire; blowing a little with the intellect can hasten the enkindling (28.8).

Fire is also a symbol for God; the soul will be warmed by approaching the fire; when one receives Communion, or makes a spiritual communion, and wants to get warm, it will stay warm for many hours afterward (35.1).

FOUNT (OF LIVING WATER). A symbol for Christ who gives living water, his own life. Drinking directly from the fount of living water is the equivalent of perfect contemplation (the prayer of union) (32.9). To drink of this fount, we must give ourselves entirely to the Lord so that in everything he may do his will in us (32.9). The road or way leading to this fount is prayer, especially the prayer of recollection (21.4; 28.5). The fount lies at the end of the way (42.4). The fount is an overflowing one; rivers stream from it, large and small, and little pools for children (beginners) (20.2). The Lord invited all to strive to come to this fount, and promised all that he would give them to drink if they do not falter on the way (19.15; 20.1).

GOD. The supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, the supreme Power, Goodness, and Wisdom, without beginning or end (22.6). As Creator of heaven and earth (6.3; 28.5), God sets forth a fathomless sea of marvels (22.6). The angels tremble before him (22.7). But God is not touchy, nor does he bother about trifles (23.3). God is everywhere, and where he is, there is heaven (28.2). In his grandeur he would fill a thousand worlds and many more, yet encloses himself in the soul; since God is love he adapts himself to our size and gradually enlarges our capacity so that we can receive what he wants to give (28.11-12). God never tires of giving

(32.12). In his love for us he is faithful (15.5). We may commune with him as with a father, brother, lord, or spouse; he will teach us what to say (28.3). In the one God is a plurality of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (27.7).

HOLY SPIRIT. He must be present between such a Son and such a Father (27.7). He enkindles the will and holds it bound with a very great love (27.7).

HOPE. Arises from a living faith concerning what God has kept in store for us in the kingdom of heaven (42.2). Those to whom God gives the kingdom here below have great hope of enjoying perpetually what is here given in sips (30.6). In the effects of the favors granted them by the Lord, they have the greatest hope that the Lord is pleased with them (37.4). The hope of being freed from the sufferings of purgatory by suffering on earth helps one to bear suffering willingly (40.10). God gives much to those who sincerely want to trust in him (29.3).

HUMILITY. It is not acquired by the intellect but by a clear perception that comprehends in a moment the truth about what a trifle we are and how very great God is (32.13; 39.15). The Lord lowered himself to give us an example of humility (12.6). One should always take the lowest place in conformity with the teaching and example of Christ (17.1). We only imitate his humility in some way, however much we may lower ourselves; on account of one's sins one always deserves less (13.3). Humility attracts the King from heaven as did that of the Blessed Virgin Mary (16.2). The more humility, the more one possesses God; there is no love without humility nor detachment without these two (16.2); the three bring inward and outward peace (4.4). Humility comprises a great readiness to be content with whatever the Lord may want to do with us and finding ourselves unworthy to be called his servants (17.6); is content with what is received (18.6); but doesn't refuse the King's favors (28.3). It is a measure of spiritual progress (12.6). A wonderful way to imitate the Lord's humility is to be silent at seeing oneself condemned without fault (15.1,2). There is more security in humility than in receiving spiritual delights (17.4). Humility does not disturb or disquiet or agitate; it comes with peace, delight, and calm (39.2).

JESUS CHRIST. The Son of God our Father, the Lord of the world, His Majesty, our Redeemer, Master, Friend, and Spouse (1.3; 27.1; 26.6). He is the Father's gift to us, has become one with us by sharing in our nature (34.2; 33.5). As risen, he wills to give to each of us his beauty, splendor, majesty, victory over evil, joy, and kingdom, but above all himself (26.4). He endured all the sufferings in his passion and death for love of us (26.5); he never fails anyone, he helps us in all trials, he may be found everywhere, he is always at our side (26.2); he dwells in the soul as in his palace, as our companion or friend, teaching us humbly and lovingly, always looking at us with love, submitting to us, providing for us (29.5,7; 26.1,3,4,10; 34.5). He has many methods of showing himself to the soul, through interior feelings and through other different ways (34.10). His words in the Gospels recollect the soul (21.3). He is present in the church (1.2,3,5). In the Blessed Sacrament he is just as truly present with us as when he walked in the world, and he may reveal himself to the eyes of the soul since our bodily eyes cannot delight in beholding him (34.2, 5, 6). No one is capable of seeing him in his glorified state; in the Blessed Sacrament he comes disguised (34.12) and gives us the manna and nourishment of his humanity (34.2). His will and the Father's were one (27.4; 33.2). The Father's will was done fully in him through trials, sorrows, injuries, persecutions, and death on a cross (32.6). He gives us

light to follow his will in everything (18.10). He is the commander-in-chief of love whom we imitate through love (6.9). He is the fount of living waters (contemplation) (19.7,15). He calls all to drink from this fount (19.14-15).

LOVE:

FOR ONE ANOTHER. Three kinds are mentioned: excessive (4.6); mixed (4.12); and spiritual (4.12). The latter two are virtuous involving a friendship based on likeness (4.15). In excessive love, one is dominated by an affection based on natural graces (4.7). Virtuous love is directed toward helping one another love God more (4.6). Spiritual love is a virtuous love that does not stir our feelings of affection; mixed love is a virtuous love accompanied by feelings of affection (4.12). She decides not to discuss mixed love (7.7). Few have the purely spiritual love; it is characteristic of the highest perfection (6.1). It arises not from thinking or believing but from a clear experiential knowledge of Creator and creature (6.3). It understands that God is its origin (6.8). It entrusts to God the care of those from whom love is received (6.5). It has no self-interest, will strive to relieve others of work, rejoices and praises God for any increase of virtue it sees in the other (7.9), sets aside its own advantage for the other's sake (7.8); all it wants is to see the other rich with heavenly blessings (7.1-2). It would rather suffer a trial itself than see the other suffer it, but if it sees that the other grows spiritually through its trial it rejoices (7.3). It cannot be insincere with those who are loved (7.4). It knows how to suffer the fault of another and not be surprised and strives to practice better the opposite virtue (7.7). It helps very much to further peace in a community (7.9). It knows how to take recreation with others when needed (7.7). It becomes impassioned in its care to see the other make progress toward God and not turn back (7.1). It imitates the love that Jesus has for us (7.4). It is impossible to hide this love (40.7). We must strive to be affable, agreeable, and pleasing to those with whom we deal (41.7).

GOD'S LOVE FOR US. Since God loves us, he adapts himself to our size (28.11). In the first words of the Our Father, the Lord shows us the magnificent love he bears us (26.10; 27; 27.4). He teaches us how the love of his Father can be obtained (32.11). The Blessed Sacrament is a wonderful means given by Jesus to show the extreme of his love for us (33.1). He, seemingly, tells the Father that he is now ours and not to take him from us until the end of the world (33.4). He showed his love for us openly through many sufferings and, finally, by the shedding of his blood unto death for us (26.5; 40.7). In the love we have for God, we are certain that he loves us (40.5).

OUR LOVE FOR GOD. Out of love for God the nuns give up freedom and undergo trials, fasts, silence, enclosure, and service in choir (12.1). True love of God is completely free of earthly things and is the lord of all the elements of the world (19.4).

When the soul is enkindled in love it doesn't know how it loves (25.2). In the kingdom of heaven, everyone loves God, and the soul thinks of nothing else than loving him; it cannot cease loving him because it knows him (30.5). Whoever loves him much will be able to suffer much for him (32.7). An image of the One loved brings wonderful comfort (34.11). Those who truly love God, desire, favor, praise, and love every good; they join, favor, and defend good people (40.3). Those who love God dedicate their lives to learning how they might please him

more (40.3). The genuine love of God cannot hide itself (40.3). With contemplatives, there is much love of God, or they wouldn't be contemplatives (40.4).

MEDITATION. Consists of reasoning with the intellect about the mysteries of the Lord's life and Passion, judgment, hell, our nothingness, and the many things we owe God (19.1). For those who can follow this method, it is a good path by means of which the Lord will draw them to the haven of light; when the intellect is thus bound one proceeds securely and peacefully (19.1). As with Teresa herself, many are unable to meditate without the use of a book (17.3). Others are unable to meditate, even with a book, and can only pray vocally (17.3). In contrast to contemplation, meditation may be undertaken without the virtues, as a basis for acquiring them (16.3).

MENTAL PRAYER. In mental prayer we speak to God, know and are aware that we are with him and speaking with him and understand who we are who dare speak with so great a Lord (25.3; 22.8). The time of prayer does not belong to me but is God's time (23.3). The Lord teaches many things to anyone who wants to be taught by him in prayer (6.3). It is a path, along which we journey, having a beginning, middle, and an end (19.2; 20.2-3). One must have a great determination to persevere (21.2). A great treasure is gained by traveling this road; consolation, in different ways, is never lacking along this path (20).

PERFECTION. The path to perfection is prayer (19.2; 20.2-3). Perfection has its roots in a clear experiential knowledge given by God of the nature of the Creator and of the creature, of the world that is eternal and that which is a dream (6.3). It requires the strength to be totally occupied in loving God (4.5). With this perfect love, one does not stop in the creature but praises the Creator for the creature (6.4). Persons who are perfect have trampled the good things and comforts offered by the world underfoot; they cannot tolerate having them apart from God (6.6); they are drawn by God to give up everything for him (12.5). Detachment is perfect when one embraces the Creator and cares not at all for the whole of creation; it includes all else required for perfection because the Lord then infuses the virtues (8.1). The perfect soul doesn't think of anything else but the Lord; nor, because it knows him, can it cease loving him (30.5). In what is for God's greater service, the perfect are so forgetful of self, they can't even believe that things usually felt as an affront are so in fact (36.10). Giving our wills to God and forgiving others are elements of perfection that everyone, in whatever state of life, can practice; there is a more and a less in the degree to which this is done, and so greater and less perfection; we must do what we can, the Lord receives everything (37.3). Those who have reached perfection do not ask the Lord to free them from trials or temptations or persecutions or struggles; this is a certain effect of the contemplation and favors given by the Lord (38.1).

QUIET (PRAYER OF). A form of prayer that we cannot procure through our own efforts (and thus "supernatural"); it is the beginning stage of contemplation (31.2,6; 30.7). In it the Lord puts the soul at peace by his presence (31.2). The soul understands, but not through the exterior senses, that it is now close to its God (31.2). It doesn't understand how it understands (31.2). The faculties are in stillness, and wouldn't want to be busy with anything but this loving, but two of them are free to come and go, or even to think of who it is they are loving, while the will is held captive (31.3). Sometimes it seems that the quiet is not present in the intellect; the will should pay no more attention to it than to a madman (31.8-10). One gentle word from time

to time will be enough work on the soul's part (31.8,10,13). Sometimes the will is held in that peace while the other faculties are free for acts in God's service; the active and contemplative lives are joined (31.4-5). In this prayer one is beginning to receive the kingdom (30.6; 31.3); in this rest one's strength for the journey is doubled (30.6; 31.2); in it the soul does not remember there is still more to desire (31.3).

RECOLLECTION (PRAYER OF). A method of prayer in which the soul collects its faculties and enters within to be with its God (28.4; 29.7). St. Augustine sought him in many places, but ultimately found him within himself (28.1). This recollection is not something supernatural, but something we can achieve ourselves with the help of God (29.4). All you need do is go into solitude and look at him within yourself; or be present to the one with whom you speak in prayer (28.2; 29.5); or it can be practiced briefly in the midst of occupations (29.5,7). We must get used to saying vocal prayer with this recollection (29.6), being aware that we are with him, of what we are asking him, of his willingness to give to us, and how eagerly he remains with us (29.6). Meditation may also be carried out in this recollection (20.4). There are greater and lesser degrees of this recollection; the divine Master will come more quickly to teach the soul in this recollection and give it the prayer of quiet than he would through any other method it might use (28.4,7).

SACRAMENT (BLESSED). It is the food or manna of the Lord's humanity given for our nourishment that we might not die of hunger and might find consolation in him; we have the Person himself present (3.8; 34.2,12). Through this means we may offer the Father's Son many times in sacrifice that God may provide a remedy for us in our need, that no advance will be made in the disrespect shown in places where the Blessed Sacrament is present, that neither the sacraments be taken away nor churches destroyed (35.3-4; 3.8; 33.3). This heavenly food is a medicine even for bodily ills (34.6). In this sacrament, the Lord remains with us here in the world (just as truly as when he walked in the world) to help, encourage, and sustain us in doing the Father's will (34.1); but his presence is disguised in the accidents (appearances) of bread and wine, and one needs a strong, living faith (34.3,6-7).

SOUL. The interior part of the human composite (body and soul). It is like a rich palace of gold and precious stones in which dwells a King gracious enough to become its Father (28.9). The palace can be made beautiful through the virtues: the greater the virtues, the more resplendent the jewels (28.9). The Lord can enlarge this palace (28.12). We should empty the soul so that he may store or remove things as with his own property (28.12). In recollection the soul receives a supply of provisions to strengthen it against the body (28.6). In the prayer of quiet, satisfaction is felt in the soul (31.3). The soul is subject to many difficulties resulting from dwelling in the prison of the body (32.13). The soul has three faculties (or powers): intellect, memory, and will; it is wonderful when they are in accord (31.8).

INTELLECT (MIND; INTELLIGENCE). The power of understanding and reasoning. Many speak well but understand poorly (14.2). Many are unable to reason with the intellect in prayer (19.1). Some minds can concentrate and work methodically; others are scattered (19.1-2; 30.7). The prayer of recollection helps the intellect to be recollected (28.4). In contemplation, in a way very different from the way it understands through the exterior senses, the soul understands that it is close to its God (31.2).

MEMORY. The power of representing to the intellect what will occupy it; in the prayer of quiet our memories would not want to be occupied with anything else than who it is they are near (31.3).

WILL. The power of loving. The Holy Spirit enkindles the will and binds it with a very great love (27.7). In the prayer of quiet the will is held captive in this loving (31.3,9). Everything in this book is directed toward the surrender of our wills to God (32.9). Sometimes, the will may go about in the peace of the prayer of quiet for a day or two while the other two faculties are free (31.4). “Excessive” love gradually takes away the strength of will to be totally occupied in loving God (4.5). Our wills should be slaves to no one, save the One who bought us with his blood (4.8). The Lord begins to commune with the soul in so intimate a friendship that he gives it back its own will and his own besides (32.12). When the will is in the prayer of quiet it should pay no more attention to the intellect than to a madman (31.8).

EYES OF THE SOUL. The power of attending to, being aware of, or present to. Your eyes on your Spouse! (2.1). All harm comes from not keeping our eyes fixed on the Lord (16.11). The soul understands that it is close to God but not because it sees him with the eyes either of the body or soul (31.2). Let us ask the Eternal Father that we might so receive our heavenly bread that the Lord may reveal himself to the eyes of our soul and make himself thereby known since our bodily eyes cannot delight in beholding him (34.5).

IMAGINATION. The power of making a visible representation within ourselves, as when we picture to ourselves scenes from the Lord’s Passion (34.8).

UNION (PRAYER OF). A “very supernatural” prayer in which the entire soul is engulfed in God; all the faculties are suspended (held bound) by God (31.10; 42.5). As one who never tires of giving, God begins to take delight in such a soul, reveal his secrets, and rejoice that it knows something of what he will give it; God even makes it lose the exterior senses in rapture so that nothing will occupy it (32.12). God takes joy in putting the soul in command and does what the soul asks since it does his will (32.12). The king of glory will not come to our soul if we do not make the effort to gain the great virtues (16.6). A refusal to forgive is a sure sign of the absence of this prayer of union; an effect of the prayer is a readiness to forgive offenders immediately and to remain on very good terms with them (36.12).

VOCAL PRAYER. Recitation of a prayer formula such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary (25.3); but we must refuse to be satisfied with merely pronouncing the words (24.2; 22.2). The mind and heart should be aware of what we are saying and to whom we are speaking (21.10; 24.5-6), centered on the one to whom the words are addressed (24.6). Vocal prayer, then, must not be separated from mental prayer (22.3). Many persons while praying vocally are raised by God to sublime contemplation (30.7; 25.1). In the liturgy, when in the Creed the words “and his kingdom will have no end,” were said, it was almost always a special delight for Teresa (22.1); when we begin to recite the Hours consider whom we are going to speak with and who we are (22.3).

WATER (LIVING). Living water is a symbol for contemplation. By this living water the Lord brings us to the end of the journey without our understanding how (19.7). At the end of the journey the soul is engulfed in God and drinks abundantly from the fount (42.5). Water has

Appendix A

three properties: it refreshes, cleanses, and satisfies (19.3.6.8). It does not let the heat from worldly things detain the soul (19.5). It leaves the soul bright and cleansed of all faults (19.6), but when the soul in meditation reasons with the intellect something from the road will stick to the soul (19.6). By means of this living water the Lord shows it in an instant more truths and gives clearer understanding of what everything is than we could have here below in many years (19.7). It takes away thirst, but there can never be too much; in giving much God increases the capacity of the soul to drink much (19.9).

Appendix B: Session 1, Life Introduction

The Book of Her Life (The collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol.1)

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THE BOOK OF HER LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Early Years

Spain, separated from the continent of Europe by the Pyrenees, has a high central tableland both dividing the country within itself and stretching from the northern mountains to the southern coast. Without a natural center and without easy routes, this land was in the Middle Ages a disparate region, a complex of different races, languages, and civilizations. But at the end of the fifteenth century and the opening of the sixteenth, all the natural disadvantages were somehow overcome. Spain, with ten percent of its soil bare rock and only ten percent of it rich, became in the sixteenth century the greatest power on earth; this previously remote peninsula was now ruler of the largest empire the world had yet seen, and all but master of Europe. During those exhilarating years of outward glory, Teresa of Avila lived and witnessed ironically to another, inward glory, to the sacred truth that becomes the rich possession of every genuine mystic, that a person's greatest good is within and "won by giving up everything" (ch. 20, 27).

Born during the reign of the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, Teresa saw, under Charles V, Castile's high moment of prosperity. Under Philip II, she saw her king's struggles against Protestant and Morisco rebels, against the Netherlanders in the north and the Turks in the Mediterranean – not to mention Philip's many activities in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the New World.

Teresa's grandfather, a Toledan merchant, a Jewish *converso* (Christianized Jew), victim of the use of religion for the sake of political unity, had to accuse himself before the Inquisition for judaizing and as a penance was compelled to wear in procession for seven Fridays the humiliating *san benito*. After his reconciliation, out of necessity, he moved with his family to Avila where he was able to continue in his profession as a cloth merchant. One of his sons, Teresa's father Alonso, was about fourteen when the family arrived in Avila. In 1505 Alonso married; but two years later his wife died, leaving him two children. Alonso, after four years, married again, this time Doña Beatriz de Ahumada, who on March 28, 1515, gave birth to a daughter and future saint who received her grandmother's name – Teresa de Ahumada. Doña Beatrix died at the age of thirty-three, leaving behind from her marriage ten children.

Biographers have given posterity a detailed description of Teresa de Ahumada. She was medium in height and tended to be more plump than thin. Her unusual face could not be described as either round or aquiline; the skin was white and the cheeks flesh-colored. Her forehead was broad, her eyebrows somewhat thick, their dark brown color having a reddish tinge. Her eyes were black, lively, and round, not very large but well placed and protruding a little. The nose was small; the mouth medium in size and delicately shaped, and her chin was

well proportioned. The white teeth sparkled and were equal in size. Three tiny moles, considered highly ornamental in those days, added further grace to her appearance; one below the center of the nose, the second over the left side of her mouth, the third beneath the mouth on the same side. Her hair was a shining black and gently curled.

In many ways an extrovert, she was cheerful and friendly, a happy conversationalist, whom people found pleasing to hear as well as look at. Besides her talent as a writer, she was also gifted in the use of the needle and household tasks.

Her undaunted spirit first began to show signs of itself when she was only seven and decided to set off with her brother Rodrigo to the land of the Moors to have her head cut off for Christ. With much the same ardor she enjoyed playing hermit life with other children – praying, giving alms, and doing penances. While she was growing up in this quiet atmosphere of piety, the revolt of the *Comuneros* took place, shaking all Castile. This was a movement of angry reaction to a long period in which royal government had eroded many of the traditional powers and prerogatives of the Castilian towns. During this period, too – in 1525 to be precise – the Imperialist army, largely through Spanish troops, won the greatest victory of the age at Pavia. Two years later Charles V's armies broke from control and put Rome to the most terrible sack it had ever endured.

It was about at the time of this latter incident that the piety of the now adolescent Teresa began to grow cold. She became over eager to read romantic tales of chivalry, began to cultivate her feminine charms, and to plan a possible marriage. The absorption of her fantasy with chivalrous themes along with her faculty for writing stirred her at this time to try, together with her brother, writing a book of the kind she liked to read. In the judgment of her early Jesuit biographer, Ribera, it contained “much that could be said for it.”

As time went on, after the death of her mother in November 1528, Teresa began to meet with opposition at home because of her affection for her cousins, sons of her aunt Doña Elvira de Cepeda, and her friendship with a frivolous, unidentified relative whose influence was not of the kind that strengthened Teresa's piety. Teresa was later to look back with much distaste upon this whole period in which she lost the fervor of her early years. On the watch for an excuse to free his daughter from the vain company and enticements she was experiencing, Don Alonso found one, in 1531, when his oldest daughter married. At the age of sixteen Teresa was entrusted to the care of the Augustinian nuns of Our Lady of Grace in Avila.

Since there was no public education system in Spain at the time, Don Alonso's daughter probably learned how to read and write at home. Nor could one compare what was offered to her in the way of education at Our Lady of Grace to any modern boarding school. The nuns did little more, we now conjecture, than prepare the young girls for their future life in marriage, teaching them the usual household tasks: cooking, sewing, embroidery, and other things of that sort. Undoubtedly the girls also received some basic religious instructions. The gentle, friendly nun, Doña María Briceño, who had charge of the girls and carefully watched over them, was a woman of deep prayer. As things turned out she began to mean more to Teresa than all former friends. Doña María loved to talk about prayer, and her high spiritual ideals made Don Alonso's daughter begin to think about a vocation to the religious life and feel more favorable to the

idea. But it seems the strain caused by the inner struggle over the pros and cons of the life of a nun harmed Teresa's health so that she had to leave the school.

When her health improved, she was brought to her sister's house in Castellanos de la Cañada, but with a stop along the way for a visit with her uncle Don Pedro de Cepeda, who lived as a hermit in Hortigosa. He introduced her to spiritual books, which helped her in the struggle she was experiencing over her vocation. The *Letters* of St Jerome, finally, became the occasion of her courage to make a definite decision. But then unable to bear the thought of separation, her father refused to give his consent to her becoming a nun. On November 2, 1535, at the age of twenty, she once again stole away from her father's house, this time not to go off to the land of the Moors but to give her life to God as a nun in the Carmelite monastery of the Incarnation. Yet the action was not the result of so cold or indifferent an attitude to her father's feelings as it may seem to have been. She later was to write: "When I left my father's house I felt the separation so keenly that the feeling will not be greater, I think, when I die. For it seemed that every bone in my body was being sundered" (ch. 4,1). Don Alonso, in fact, accepted it all with resignation, gave her a dowry that was more than substantial, and acquired for his daughter a private room of her own in the monastery.

Life at the Incarnation

Recent studies have shown that at the time of Teresa's entry the Incarnation numbered among eleven Carmelite monasteries for nuns in Spain. Its canonical status lay midway between that of the *sanctimoniales*, those with obligation to choir office and enclosure, and that of the *beaterios*, where the life resembled tertiary life. The nuns were required to recite the Divine Office but not to observe enclosure. They were engaged in no outside forms of service. Some two hundred persons, including servants and nun's relatives, were living together at the Incarnation in Teresa's days there.

Contrary to common belief, religious life at the Incarnation was austere. Days each week were set aside for fasting and abstinence; silence was carefully maintained so as to encourage the spirit of continual prayer. With many kinds of detailed, minute rubrics, the Divine Office was celebrated in solemnity and splendor. No time, however, was designated in the legislation for mental prayer – a deficiency not without its drawbacks in what must have been a crowded monastery. Novices received instructions about the Carmelite order, its eremitical origins, its devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to the prophets Elijah and Elisha. They were also trained in the practice of the intricate ceremonies used in chanting the Divine Office.

Oddly enough and irrespective of the Carmelite rule's exhortation to continual prayer, Teresa states that until reading Osuna's *Third Spiritual Alphabet*, given to her later by her uncle, she didn't know how to go about praying or being recollected. The spiritual books she mentions were by Franciscan not Carmelite authors, and she offers no clear indication of receiving instruction about mental prayer during her novitiate training.

Although Teresa's decision about her vocation had been costly, once she was inside the monastery she threw herself into the life with zest and found that it, in fact, delighted her. But shortly after her profession, which took place two years later, her health gave way once more. Authors can only speculate about the nature of this illness. Teresa herself attributes it to the

food and lifestyle at the Incarnation. After the doctors admitted they could find no cure for her sickness, her worried father decided to bring her to Becedas for treatment by a quack, famous there for many cures. The harsh, painful methods of cure, lasting three months, only aggravated Teresa's poor condition; in fact they almost killed her. She was brought back, a pitiful sight, to Avila, where she remained an invalid and paralytic for three years – until, as she devoutly testifies, through the intercession of her glorious father St. Joseph, she was able to walk again. But, probably as a consequence, she suffered the rest of her life from miserable health, a wide variety of illnesses. Antonio Aguiar, after his medical examination of Teresa when she was sixty-seven and nearing the end of her life, claimed that it was impossible to find the focal cause of her illnesses because her body had become a whole arsenal of ailments.

Able to get about again, Teresa next experienced a protracted period of great difficulty with prayer. She writes: "And very often, for some years, I was more anxious that the hour I had determined to spend in prayer be over than I was to remain there ... and so unbearable was the sadness I felt on entering the oratory, that I had to muster up all my courage" (ch. 8,7). According to Fr. Efrén, her most recent biographer, her difficulties amounted chiefly to a problem of technique. She didn't realize that the mind, or imagination, and feelings can wander, as St. John of the Cross points out, while the soul on a deeper level may remain quiet in a hardly perceptible contemplation. These difficulties with prayer went on for about eighteen years until she experienced before a very devotional image of the wounded Christ and again while reading from the *Confessions of St. Augustine* some unusually strong and efficacious feelings of compunction. On these two occasions of peak experience she learned to lose completely any trust she had in herself and place it all in His Majesty.

Compunction is a basic sentiment running through the entire *Life*. To the undiscerning or inexperienced, Teresa's outpourings of compunction might seem like exaggerated guilt feelings. But for Teresa, true sorrow does not disquiet, does not agitate. Her compunction consoled her; permeated with humility, it was a gift – quiet, gentle, and in the light (ch. 30,9). The Desert Fathers, in fact, constantly exhorted their disciples to pray for the gift of compunction, the gift of tears. These Fathers felt that when the soul was softened by this interior weeping, God would give the experience of his light; in the shadow of sorrow was to be found the spiritual joy of enlightenment. And so it was with Teresa. In addition, her feelings of compunction later became more intense through the mystical experience she had of God's transcendent majesty, and of the shabbiness of sin beside His boundless outpouring of love. Spiritual humiliations preceded her spiritual exaltations. "I don't recall His ever having granted me one of the very notable favors of which I shall speak if not at a time when I was brought to nothing at the sight of my wretchedness" (ch. 22,12).

Teresa began, then, at the time of this conversion, to experience passively and in a living way the presence of God in the center of her soul. To qualify experiences in prayer that she couldn't acquire through her own efforts but that were experienced passively Teresa often used the term "supernatural." With the onset of the supernatural another, new life began for her. "This is another, new book from here on" (ch. 23,1).

Unfamiliar, unusual experiences started to occur, and Teresa, not yet enlightened about the stages of prayer, felt the surge of a new fear. "His Majesty began to give me the prayer of quiet

very habitually – and often, of union – which lasted a long while. Since at that time other women had fallen into serious illusions and deceptions caused by the devil, I began to be afraid” (ch. 23,2). The fear so increased that, she says, it made her diligently seek spiritual persons for consultations, marking the beginning of her struggles to explain her supernatural experiences. This recourse to spiritual men, and learned ones as well, led ultimately to the writing of her *Life*.

Appendix C: Session 1, Biographical Timeline – St. Teresa of Avila

- 1515 – March 28 – Teresa de Ahumada born in Avila, Spain
 - April 4 – Baptism
- 1522 – Teresa and her brother Rodrigo set out for the land of the Moors to gain martyrdom.
- 1528 – Death of Beatriz de Ahumada, Teresa's mother.
- 1531 – Teresa becomes a boarder at Augustinian convent, Santa Maria de Gracia
- 1532 – Teresa falls ill – returns home to recover
- 1533 – Teresa visits her uncle and discovers her religious vocation.
- 1535 – November 2 – Teresa leaves home (against father's wishes) to become a novice at the convent of the Incarnation (Encarnación) in Avila
- 1536 – November 2 – Teresa receives the religious habit of Carmel
- 1537 – November 3 – Teresa makes her profession as a Carmelite nun at the convent of the Incarnation
- 1538 – Falls ill – leaves the convent
- 1538 – Autumn – Teresa reads Osuna's The Third Spiritual Alphabet given to her by her uncle.
- 1539 – Returns to her father's house in Avila – is in a coma for four days (preparations for burial are undertaken)
 - Awakes dramatically, and although in much pain and paralyzed she returns to the convent
- 1542 – Regains full use of her limbs and attributes her healing to St. Joseph
- 1543 – Death of Don Alonso, Teresa's father
- 1542-1554 – Time of spiritual struggle and growth for Teresa. She describes it as a time of "wasting"
- 1554 – During Lent Teresa experiences a 'radical' conversion before a statue of the suffering Christ
- 1556 – She receives the grace of spiritual betrothal
- 1560 – She receives the grace of transverberation (spiritual piercing of the heart)
 - Begins to write the story of her life – Life
 - Begins to discuss with friends and colleagues her vision for reforming the monastic life
- 1562 – Pope Pius IV grants Teresa permission to found St. Joseph (San José) in Avila
 - August 24 – The convent is dedicated
- 1562-1566 – Teresa writes the constitutions for St Joseph's in Avila and begins to write The Way of Perfection
 - Teresa writes her Meditations on the Song of Songs
- 1567 – August 15 – After receiving permission to found other convents, Teresa founds one in Medina del Campo
- 1568 – April – Founds convent in Malagon
 - August 15 – Founds convent in Valladolid
 - November 28 – John of the Cross (Juan de la Cruz) founds a reformed monastery for friars in Duruelo
- 1569 – May 14 – Teresa founds convent in Toledo

- June 28 – Founds convent in Pastrana
- July 13 – Founds reformed monastery for friars in Pastrana
- 1570 – November 1 – Founds convent in Salamanca
- 1571 – January 25 – Founds reformed monastery in Alba de Tormes with John of the Cross
 - July 13 Teresa renounces the Calced rule
 - Takes office (against her wishes) of prioress of the convent of the Incarnation in Avila and is put in charge of the Salamanca convent
 - Teresa invites John of the Cross to become chaplain at the Incarnation
- 1572 – Teresa receives the grace of spiritual marriage
- 1573 – Teresa begins writing Foundations
- 1574 – March – Along with John of the Cross, Teresa founds a reformed monastery in Segovia
- 1575 – February – Founds the convent in Beas
 - Meets Jeronimo Gracian who becomes her confidant and best friend
 - May – Gracian sends Teresa to found the monastery in Seville
 - December – Teresa is denounced to the Inquisition
- 1576-1579 – Persecution of Teresa's reform movement continues
 - Teresa continues writing Foundations
 - Teresa writes her magnificent The Interior Castle
- 1580 – Teresa falls ill to influenza – almost dies
 - Founds convents in Villanueva de la Jara and Palencia
 - June 22 – The papal brief *Pia consideratione* orders the erection of a distinct province for the Discalced Carmelites
- 1581 – March – First chapter meeting of the new order, Gracian is elected the first Provincial, new constitutions formed
 - Teresa founds convent in Soria
 - Teresa begins founding of convent in Burgos
 - John of the Cross makes the foundations in Granada
- 1582 – September 20 – Reaches Alba de Tormes
 - September 29 – Announces her imminent death
 - October 3 – Receives the Sacrament of Extreme Unction & last confession
 - October 4 – Teresa dies in the arms of Bl. Anne of St Bartholomew (Ana de San Bartholome)
- 1614 – April 24 – Teresa beatified by Pope Paul V
- 1622 – March 12 – Teresa canonized by Pope Gregory XV
- 1626 – April 24 – St. Teresa of Jesus becomes the second patron saint of Spain
- 1970 – September 27 – Declared a Doctor of the Church by Paul VI

Appendix D: Session 2, Meditation on the Song of Songs, 7:3, St Teresa of Avila

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In this suspension the soul would not want to come out of this sleep, nor would death be painful to it but great happiness, for this is what it desires. And how happy a death it would be, at the hands of this love! But sometimes His Majesty gives it light to see that living is good for it. However, the soul sees that its natural weakness will not be able to suffer that good for long if that delight lasts, and begs Him for another good so as to escape from that one that is so extraordinary, and thus it says: *sustain me with flowers*.

The fragrance of these flowers is different from the fragrance of flowers we smell here below. I understand by these words that the soul is asking to perform great works in the service of our Lord and of its neighbor. For this purpose it is happy to lose that delight and satisfaction. Although a person's life will become more active than contemplative, and one will seemingly lose if the petition is granted, Martha and Mary never fail to work almost always together when the soul is in this state. For in the active – and seemingly exterior – work the soul is working interiorly. And when the active works rise from this interior root, they become lovely and very fragrant flowers. For they proceed from this tree of God's love and are done for Him alone, without any self-interest. The fragrance from these flowers spreads to the benefit of many. It is a fragrance that lasts, not passing quickly, but having great effect.

Appendix E: Session 3, Our First Duties as Carmelites

Fr. David Centner, OCD

7/21/2006

What is the *pars potior* (the most important part) of the Carmelite vocation?

The answer usually given was prayer; by that meaning quiet or contemplative prayer.

Is this a sufficient answer?

The Rule itself makes it clear that our first duty is to serve Christ with pure hearts and upright consciences. In scriptural terms, that means that we believe in him and put his word into practice.

To serve Christ rightly, we must turn to the gospels and learn what it is that he commands us to do. In the pages of John's Gospel we learn that his commandment is: "Love one another as I have loved you." It would follow that the *pars potior* of our vocation is to love and cherish one another.

That statement surprises many Carmelites who think that their chief responsibility is prayer and sacrifice. Yet, as St Paul tells us, if we do not have charity, everything else; including our prayer and sacrifices is of no avail. He even tells us, "Bear one another's burdens and you will fulfill the Law of Christ."

When Mother Isabel of the Angels, the only one of the Spanish Mothers to remain in France when Carmel was established there, was asked by the Carmel of Amiens to write some words of encouragement, she wrote (in deliciously mixed French and Spanish) about charity, not about observance. Her words were something like this: "As we have so little opportunity to converse with one another, we must anticipate one another's needs. This is what our Mother Teresa wanted, for this is the principal part of our religious observance."

Secular Carmelites have even less opportunity to converse with each other than do friars or nuns who live in communities. Yet the obligation of cherishing one another is as important for seculars as for religious. When we see communities that fail to love one another unconditionally as Christ does, we can doubt if all their knowledge of our spirituality and their practice of prayer has any value at all.

But how do we learn to cherish one another, especially when we know that all of us (myself included) have moments when we are disagreeable and all of us have natural antipathies? I think these things are extremely important:

"Do not judge and you will not be judged...for the measure you measure will be measured back to you." Holy Mother Teresa put this into practice by refusing to say anything negative about anyone, especially in their absence. As a consequence, she drew many to herself.

Always consider others better than yourself. By this we do not mean false humility. We mean the recognition that God gives different talents to everyone. There is no one alive who is not naturally better than I am in some respect. And as for supernaturally better, only God knows.

Appendix E

But we do know this, the moment we exalt ourselves for some virtue, we lose it, for then charity has gone out of it.

As a consequence we listen readily to one another, and we reach out to help one another. We grow in patience and compassion, for we know that God has been very compassionate with us. In this way, we open the door to letting Christ bring to perfection His charity within us.

Conclusion: If we are to be true friends of Christ, as Holy Mother so ardently desires, because Jesus himself desires that, we must determine to be true friends of one another.

Appendix F: Session 3, meditative reading, Chapter 10 of Story of a Soul

By Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

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Chapter X: The Trial of Faith

Thérèse and Her Prioress
The Divine Elevator
The First Hemoptysis
The Table of Sinners
The Call to the Foreign Missions
What is Charity?

J.M.J.T.

1. You have told me, my dear Mother¹, of your desire that I finish *singing* with you the *Mercies of the Lord*.² I began this sweet song with your dear daughter, Agnes of Jesus, who was the mother entrusted by God with guiding me in the days of my childhood. It was with her that I had to sing of the graces granted to the Blessed Virgin's *little flower* when she was in the springtime of her life. And it is with you that I am to sing of the happiness of this little flower now that the timid glimmerings of the dawn have given way to the burning heat of noon. Yes, dear Mother, I shall try to express, in answer to your wishes,³ the sentiments of my soul, my gratitude to God and to you, who represent Him visibly to me, for was it not into your maternal hands that I delivered myself entirely to Him? Oh Mother, do you remember that day?⁴ Yes, I know your heart could not forget it. As for me, I must await heaven because I cannot find here on earth words capable of expressing what took place in my heart on that beautiful day.
2. There is another day, my beloved Mother, when my soul was united to you even more, if that were possible, and that was the day you were entrusted once again with the burden of Superior. On that day, dear Mother, you sowed in tears, but you will be filled with joy in heaven when you see yourself entrusted with precious sheaves.⁵ Oh Mother, pardon my childish simplicity. I feel you will allow me to speak to you without considering what is allowed a young religious to say to her Prioress. Perhaps, at times, I will not keep within the limits prescribed for subjects, but, dear Mother, I make bold to say it, this is your own fault. I am acting with you as a child because you do not act with me as a Prioress but a Mother.

¹ Mother Marie de Gonzague, elected Prioress March 21, 1896, succeeding Mother Agnes of Jesus.

² Psalm 88:2.

³ June 3, 1897, at the suggestion of Mother Agnes of Jesus, Mother Marie de Gonzague ordered Thérèse to continue writing her memories.

⁴ The day of her Profession, September 8, 1890.

⁵ Psalm 125:5-6

3. Ah! Dear Mother, I know very well that it is really God who is speaking to me through you. Many of the Sisters think that you spoiled me, that since my entrance into the holy ark, I have received from you nothing but caresses and compliments. Nevertheless it was not so. You will see, dear Mother, in the copybook containing my childhood memories, what I think of the *strong* and maternal education I received from you. From the bottom of my heart I want to thank you for not sparing me. Jesus knew very well that His little flower stood in need of the living waters of humiliation, for she was too weak to take root without this kind of help, and it was through you, dear Mother, that this blessing was given to me.
4. For a year and a half now, Jesus has willed to change the manner of making His little flower grow. He has no doubt found her sufficiently *watered*, for now it is the *sun* that aids her growth. Jesus wants to give her nothing but His smile and this He does through you, dear Mother. This gentle sun, far from causing the little flower to wilt, makes her progress in a marvelous manner. She preserves, in the bottom of her calyx, the precious drops of dew she had received, and these serve to remind her always how little and weak she is. All creatures can bow toward her, admire her, and shower their praises upon her. I don't know why this is, but none of this could add one single drop of false joy to the joy she experiences in her heart. Here she sees herself as she really is in God's eyes: a poor little thing, nothing at all.
5. I say I do not know why, but isn't it because she was preserved from the water of praise all the time her little calyx was not sufficiently filled with the dew of humiliation? Now there is no longer any danger; on the contrary, the little flower finds the dew with which she was filled so delightful that she would be careful not to exchange it for the insipid water of praise.
6. I don't want to speak, dear Mother, about the love and confidence you are giving me; but do not believe the heart of your child is insensible to these. It is only that I feel I have nothing to fear now. In fact, I can rejoice in them, referring to God whatever good there is in me since He has willed to place it there. If He pleases to make me appear better than I am, this is none of my affair since He is free to act as He likes.
7. Oh Mother, how different are the ways through which the Lord leads souls! In the life of the saints, we find many of them who didn't want to leave anything of themselves behind after their death, not the smallest souvenir, not the least bit of writing. On the contrary, there are others, like our holy Mother St Teresa, who have enriched the Church with their lofty revelations, having no fears of revealing the secrets of the King⁶ in order that they may make Him more loved and known by souls. Which of these two types of saints is more pleasing to God? It seems to me, Mother, they are equally pleasing to Him, since all of them followed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and since the Lord has said: "*Tell the just man ALL is well.*"⁷ Yes, all is well when one seeks only the will of Jesus, and it is because of this that I, a poor little flower, obey Jesus when trying to please my beloved Mother. You know, Mother, that I have always wanted to be a saint. Alas! I have always noticed that when I

⁶ Tobit 12:7.

⁷ Isaiah 3:10.

compared myself to the saints, there is between them and me the same difference that exists between a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds and the obscure grain of sand trampled underfoot by passers-by. Instead of becoming discouraged, I said to myself: God cannot inspire unrealizable desires. I can, then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to holiness. It is impossible for me to grow up, and so I must bear with myself such as I am with all my imperfections. But I want to seek a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way that is very straight, very short, and totally new.

8. We are living now in an age of inventions. And we no longer have to take the trouble of climbing stairs, for, in the homes of the rich, an elevator has replaced these very successfully. I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus, for I am too small to climb the rough stairway of perfection. I searched, then, in the Scriptures for some sign of this elevator, the object of my desires, and I read these words coming from the mouth of Eternal Wisdom: *"Whoever is a LITTLE ONE, let him come to me."*⁸ And so I succeeded. I felt I had found what I was looking for. But wanting to know, O my God, what You would do to *the very little one* who answered Your call, I continued my search and this is what I discovered: *"As one whom a mother caresses, so I will comfort you, you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you."*⁹ Ah! never did words more tender and more melodious come to give joy to my soul. The elevator which must raise me to heaven is Your arms, O Jesus! And for this I had no need to grow up, but rather I had to remain *little* and become this more and more.
9. O my God, You surpassed all my expectation. I want only to sing to Your mercies. "You have taught me from my youth, O God, and until now I will declare Your wonderful works. And until old age and gray hairs, O God, forsake me not."¹⁰ What will this old age be for me? It seems this could be right now, for two thousand years are not more in the Lord's eyes than twenty years, than even a single day.¹¹
10. Ah! don't think, dear Mother, that your child wants to leave you; don't think she feels it is a greater grace to die at the dawn of the day rather than at its close. What she esteems and what she desires only is *to please* Jesus. Now that He seems to be approaching her in order to draw her into the place of His glory, your child is filled with joy. For a long time she has understood that God needs no one (much less her) to do good on earth. Pardon me, Mother, if I make you sad because I really want only to give you joy. Do you believe that though your prayers are not really heard on earth, though Jesus separates the child from its mother for a *few days*, that these prayers will be answered in heaven?
11. Your desire, I know, is that I carry out at your side a very sweet and easy mission;¹² but shall I not be able to finish it from the height of heaven? You said to me, just as Jesus one day

⁸ Proverbs 9:4.

⁹ Isaiah 66:13,12.

¹⁰ Psalm 70:17-18.

¹¹ Psalm 89:4.

¹² Thérèse was helping Mother Marie with the training of the novices ever since the latter's election of March 21, 1896.

said to St. Peter: *"Feed my lambs."*¹³ I was astonished and told you that *I was too little*; I begged you *to feed your lambs yourself*, and to keep me and *have me feed* with them. And you, dear Mother, responded a *little* to my just request, retained the little lambs with the sheep,¹⁴ but you ordered me to go often and pasture them in the shade, pointing out the best and most nourishing herbs, showing them the bright flowers they must not touch except to trample them under their feet.

12. You didn't fear, dear Mother, that I would lead your little lambs astray. My lack of experience and my youthfulness did not frighten you in the least. Perhaps you remembered that often the Lord is pleased to grant wisdom to the little ones, and that one day, in a transport of joy, He blessed His *Father* for having hidden His secrets from the wise and prudent and for revealing them to the *little ones*.¹⁵
13. Mother, you know yourself that those souls are rare who don't measure divine power according to their own narrow minds; people want exceptions everywhere on earth, but God alone hasn't the right to make any exceptions! For a very long time, I have known that this way of measuring experience according to years is practiced among human beings. For instance, the holy King David has sung to the Lord: *"I am YOUNG and despised."*¹⁶ And in the same Psalm 118, he does not hesitate to add: *"I have had understanding above old men, because I sought your will. Your word is a lamp to my feet, I am prepared to carry out your commandments and I am TROUBLED ABOUT NOTHING."*¹⁷
14. You did not hesitate, dear Mother, to tell me one day that God was enlightening my soul and that He was giving me the experience of *years*. O Mother! I am *too little* to have any vanity now, I am *too little* to compose beautiful sentences in order to have you believe that I have a lot of humility. I prefer to agree very simply that the Almighty has done great things in the soul of His divine Mother's child, and the greatest thing is to have shown her her *littleness*, her impotence.
15. Dear Mother, you know well that God has deigned to make me pass through many types of trials. I have suffered very much since I was on earth, but, if in my childhood I suffered with sadness, it is no longer in this way that I suffer. It is with joy and peace. I am truly happy to suffer. O Mother, you must know all the secrets of my soul in order not to smile when you read these lines, for is there a soul less tried than my own if one judges by appearances? Ah! if the trial I am suffering for a year now¹⁸ appeared to the eyes of anyone, what astonishment would be felt!
16. Dear Mother, you know about this trial; I am going to speak to you about it, however, for I consider it as a great grace I received during your office as Prioress.

¹³ John 21:15.

¹⁴ Mother Marie de Gonzague combined the office of Prioress Novice Mistress. The "little lambs" were the novices; the "sheep," the professed religious.

¹⁵ Matthew 11:25.

¹⁶ Psalm 118:141.

¹⁷ Psalm 118:100, 105, 60.

¹⁸ Her temptation against faith, which lasted from Easter 1896.

17. God granted me last year, the consolation of observing the fast during Lent in all its rigor. Never had I felt so strong, and this strength remained with me until Easter. On Good Friday, however, Jesus wished to give me the hope of going to see Him soon in heaven. Oh! how sweet this memory really is! After remaining at the Tomb¹⁹ until midnight, I returned to our cell, but I had scarcely laid my head on the pillow when I felt something like a bubbling stream mounting to my lips. I didn't know what it was, but I thought that perhaps I was going to die and my soul was flooded with joy. However, as our lamp was extinguished, I told myself I would have to wait until the morning to be certain of my good fortune, for it seemed to me that it was blood I had coughed up. The morning was not long in coming; upon awakening, I thought immediately of the joyful thing that I had to learn, and so I went over to the window. I was able to see that I was not mistaken. Ah! my soul was filled with a great consolation; I was interiorly persuaded that Jesus, on the anniversary of His own death, wanted to have me hear his first call. *It was like a sweet and distant murmur that announced the Bridegroom's arrival.*²⁰
18. It was with great fervor that I assisted at Prime and the Chapter of Pardons.²¹ I was in a rush to see my turn come in order to be able, when asking pardon from you, to confide my hope and my happiness to you, dear Mother; however, I added that I was not suffering in the least (which was true) and I begged you, Mother, to give me nothing special. In fact, I had the consolation of spending Good Friday just as I desired. Never did Carmel's austerities appear so delightful to me; the hope of going to heaven soon transported me with joy. When the evening of that blessed day arrived, I had to go to my rest; but just as on the preceding night, good Jesus gave me the same sign that my entrance into eternal life was not far off.
19. At this time I was enjoying such a living faith, such a clear *faith*, that the thought of heaven made up all my happiness, and I was unable to believe there were really impious people who had no faith. I believed they were speaking against their own inner convictions when they denied the existence of heaven, that beautiful heaven where God Himself wanted to be their Eternal Reward. During those very joyful days of the Easter season, Jesus made me feel that there really were souls that have no faith, and who, through the abuse of grace, lost this precious treasure, the source of the only real and pure joys. He 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. This trial was to last not a few days or a few weeks, it was not to be extinguished until the hour set by God Himself and this hour has not yet come. I would like to be able to express what I felt, but alas! I believe this is impossible. One would have to travel through this dark tunnel to understand its darkness. I will try to explain it by a comparison.
20. I imagine I was born in a country that is covered in thick fog. I never had the experience of contemplating the joyful appearance of nature flooded and transformed by the brilliance of

¹⁹ The Altar of Reposition. The Carmelite Nuns remain all night in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

²⁰ *The Imitation of Christ* III, 47.

²¹ On Good Friday the Prioress customarily gave the community an exhortation to greater charity; then each begged pardon from her Sisters.

the sun. It is true that from childhood I heard people speak of these marvels, and I know the country I am living in is not really my true fatherland, and there is another I must long for without ceasing. This is not simply a story invented by someone living in the sad country where I am, but it is a reality, for the King of the Fatherland of the bright sun actually came and lived for thirty-three years in the land of darkness. Alas! the darkness did not understand this Divine King was the Light of the world.²²

21. Your child, however, O Lord, has understood Your divine light, and she begs pardon for her brothers. She is resigned to eat the bread of sorrow as long as You desire it; she does not wish to rise up from this table filled with bitterness at which poor sinners are eating until the day set by You. Can she not say in her name and in the name of her brothers, *"Have pity on us, O Lord, for we are poor sinners!"*²³ Oh! Lord, send us away justified. May all those who were not enlightened by the bright flame of faith one day see it shine. O Jesus! if it is needful that the table soiled by them be purified by a soul who loves You, then I desire to eat this bread of trial at this table until it pleases You to bring me into Your bright Kingdom. The only grace I ask of You is that I never offend You!
22. What I am writing, dear Mother, has no continuity; my little story which resembled a fairy tale is all of a sudden changed into a prayer, and I don't know what interest you could possibly have in reading all these confused and poorly expressed ideas. Well, dear Mother, I am not writing to produce a literary work, but only through obedience, and if I cause you any boredom, then at least you will see that your little child has given proof of her good will. I am going to continue my little comparison where I left off.
23. I was saying that certainty of going away one day far from the sad and dark country had been given me from the day of my childhood. I did not believe this only because I heard it from persons much more knowledgeable than I, but I felt in the bottom of my heart real longings for this most beautiful country. Just as the genius of Christopher Columbus gave him a presentiment of a new world when nobody had even thought of such a thing; so also I felt that another land would one day serve me as a permanent dwelling place. Then suddenly the fog that surrounds me becomes more dense; it penetrates my soul and envelops it in such a way that it is impossible to discover within it the sweet image of my Fatherland; everything has disappeared! When I want to rest my heart fatigued by the darkness that surrounds it by the memory of the luminous country after which I aspire, my torment redoubles; it seems to me that the darkness, borrowing the voice of sinners, says mockingly to me: "You are dreaming about the light, about a fatherland embalmed in the sweetest perfumes; you are dreaming about the *eternal* possession of the Creator of all these marvels; you believe that one day you will walk out of this fog that surrounds you! Advance, advance; rejoice in death which will give you not what you hope for but a night still more profound, the night of nothingness."

²² John 1:5, 9

²³ Luke 18:13

24. Dear Mother, the image I wanted to give you of the darkness that obscures my soul is as imperfect as a sketch is to the model; however, I don't want to write any longer about it; I fear I might blaspheme; I fear even that I have already said too much.
25. Ah! may Jesus pardon me if I have caused Him any pain, but He knows very well that while I do not have *the joy of faith*, I am trying to carry out its works at least. I believe I have made more acts of faith in this past year than all through my whole life. At each new occasion of combat, when my enemies provoke me, I conduct myself bravely. Knowing it is cowardly to enter into a duel, I turn my back on my adversaries without deigning to look them in the face; but I run toward my Jesus. I tell Him I am ready to shed my blood to the last drop to profess my faith in the existence of *heaven*. I tell Him, too, I am happy not to enjoy this beautiful heaven on this earth so that He will open it for all eternity to poor unbelievers. Also, in spite of this trial which has taken away *all my joy*, I can nevertheless cry out: "*You have given me DELIGHT, O Lord in ALL Your doings.*"²⁴ For is there a *joy* greater than that of suffering out of love for You? The more interior the suffering is and the less apparent to the eyes of creatures, the more it rejoices You, O my God! But if my suffering was really unknown to You, which is impossible, I would still be happy to have it, if through it I could prevent or make reparation for one single sin against *faith*.
26. My dear Mother, I may perhaps appear to you to be exaggerating my trial. In fact, if you are judging according to the sentiments I expressed in my little poems composed this year, I must appear to you as a soul filled with consolations and one for whom the veil of faith is almost torn aside; and yet it is no longer a veil for me, it is a wall which reaches right up to the heavens and covers the starry firmament. When I sing of the happiness of heaven and of the eternal possession of God, I feel no joy in this, for I sing simply what I WANT TO BELIEVE. It is true that at times a very small ray comes to illumine my darkness, and then the trial ceases for *an instant*, but afterwards the memory of this ray, instead of causing joy makes my darkness even more dense.
27. Never have I felt before this, dear Mother, how sweet and merciful the Lord really is, for he did not send me this trial until the moment I was capable of bearing it. A little earlier I believe it would have plunged me into a state of discouragement. Now it is taking away everything that could be a natural satisfaction in my desire for heaven. Dear Mother, it seems to me now that nothing could prevent me from flying away, for I no longer have any great desires except that of loving to the point of dying of love. June 9.²⁵
28. I am totally surprised, dear Mother, when I see what I wrote yesterday. What scribbling! My hand was trembling so much that I found it impossible to continue and I even regret having tried to write. I hope that today I will write more legibly, for I am no longer in bed but in a pretty little white armchair.
29. I feel that everything I said has no continuity to it, but I feel, too, the necessity of telling you my present feelings before speaking to you about the past. Perhaps later on I will have

²⁴ Psalm 91:5

²⁵ The date, June 9, is written in pencil at the bottom of the page of her manuscript. It commemorates the second anniversary of her Act of Oblation to Merciful Love, June 9, 1895.

completely forgotten about them. I wish first of all to tell you how much I am touched by all your maternal attention. Ah! believe it, Mother, the heart of your child is filled with gratitude, and never will she forget what she owes you.

30. Mother, what touches me above all else is the novena you are making at Our Lady of Victories,²⁶ I mean the Masses you are having offered up to obtain my cure. I feel all these spiritual treasures do great good to my soul; at the commencement of the novena I told you the Blessed Virgin would have to cure me or carry me off to heaven because I find it very sad for you and the community to have to take care of a sick young religious. But now I would want to be sick all my life if this pleases God, and I even consent to my life being very long; the only favor I desire is that it be broken through love.
31. Oh! no, I do not have any fears of a long life and I do not refuse the fight, for the Lord is the Rock to which I am raised. *"He teaches my hands to fight, and my fingers to make war. He is my protector, and I have hoped in him!"*²⁷ I never did ask God for the favor of dying young, but I have always hoped this would be His will for me. Frequently God is satisfied with the desire of working for His glory, and you know my desires have been great, dear Mother. You are aware, too, that Jesus has offered me more than one bitter chalice which He removed from my lips before I drank it, but not before making me taste its bitterness. The holy King David was right, dear Mother, when he sang: *"How sweet and pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity."*²⁸ It is true, I felt this very often, but on this earth this unity must take place in the midst of sacrifices. I didn't come to Carmel to live with my sisters but to answer Jesus' call. Ah! I really felt in advance that this living with one's own sisters had to be the cause of continual suffering when one wishes to grant nothing to one's natural inclinations. How can anyone say it is more perfect to separate oneself from one's blood relatives? Has anyone ever found fault with brothers who were fighting on the same field of battle? Are brothers blamed when they fight together for the martyr's palm? Undoubtedly, as some have rightly judged, they are a source of encouragement to one another, but still the martyrdom of each becomes the martyrdom of all. And it is the same in the religious life, which has been called a daily martyrdom by theologians. When the human heart gives itself to God, it loses nothing of its innate tenderness; in fact, this tenderness grows when it becomes more pure and more divine.
32. I love you, dear Mother, with this tenderness, and I love my sisters too. I am happy to fight *as a family* for the glory of heaven's King. However, I am prepared to fight on another battlefield if the Divine General expresses His desire that I do so. A command would not be necessary, only a look, a simple sign.
33. Since my entrance into the blessed ark, I have always thought that if Jesus did not bring me swiftly to heaven, my lot would be the same as that of Noah's little dove: the Lord would open the window of the ark one day, telling me to fly very far, very far, toward infidel shores, carrying with me the little olive branch. Dear Mother, this thought has matured my soul, making me soar higher than all created things. I understood that even in Carmel there

²⁶ The novena began June 5, 1897.

²⁷ Psalm 143:1-2.

²⁸ Psalm 132:1

could still be separations, and that only in heaven will the union be complete and eternal; so I wanted my soul to dwell in the heavens, and that it look upon the things of earth only from a distance. I accepted not only exile for myself among an unknown people, but also, and this was *far more bitter* for me, I accepted exile for my sisters. Never shall I forget August 2, 1896; that day was precisely the day of the missionaries' departure,²⁹ and there was serious consideration of the departure of Mother Agnes of Jesus. Ah! I would not have desired to make any move to prevent her leaving; I felt, however, a great sadness in my heart, for I found that her very sensitive and delicate soul was not made to live in the midst of souls who could not understand her; a thousand other thoughts crowded into my mind, and Jesus was silent; He was giving no commands to the storm. I said to Him: My God, I accept everything out of love for You: if you will it I really want to suffer even to the point of dying of grief. Jesus was content with this acceptance. However, a few months after this, they spoke of the departure of Sister Geneviève and Sister Marie of the Trinity. Then this was another kind of suffering, very intimate, very deep; I imagined all the trials, the disappointments they would suffer, and my heaven was covered with clouds; calm and peace remained only in the depths of my heart.

34. Dear Mother, your own prudence was able to discover God's will and in His name you forbade your novices to think of leaving the cradle of their religious childhood; but you understood their aspirations since you had asked in your own youthful days to go to Saigon. It is thus that the desires of Mothers find an echo in the soul of their children. O dear Mother, your apostolic desire finds a faithful echo in my own soul, as you know; but let me confide why I desired and still desire, if the Blessed Virgin cures me, to leave the delightful oasis where I have lived so happily under you motherly care, and to go into a foreign land.
35. Dear Mother, as you told me, a very special vocation is necessary to live in foreign Carmels. Many believe they are called to this, but it isn't so. You told me, too, that I had this vocation and only my poor health stood in the way. I know very well this obstacle would disappear if God were calling me to the missions, and so I live without any unrest. If I have to leave my dear Carmel some day it would not be without pain, for Jesus has not given me an indifferent heart. And precisely because my heart is capable of suffering I want it to give Jesus everything possible. *Here*, dear Mother, I live without any burdens from the cares of this miserable earth, and have only to accomplish the sweet and easy mission you have confided to me. *Here*, I receive your motherly attention and do not feel the pinch of poverty since I never lack anything. But *here*, above all, I am loved by you and all the Sisters, and this affection is very sweet to me. This is why I dream of a monastery where I shall be unknown, where I would suffer from poverty, the lack of affection, and finally, the exile of the heart.
36. Ah! it is not with any intention of rendering services to the Carmel which would receive me that I would leave everything dear to me, but I know my incapacity, and I know that in doing my very best I would not succeed in doing well, having, as I just said, no knowledge of the

²⁹ August 2, 1896, /Father Roulland, the Saint's spiritual brother, left from Marseilles for China, accompanied by two other missionaries.

things of earth. My one purpose, then, would be to accomplish the will of God, to sacrifice myself for Him in the way that would please Him.

37. I really feel that I would have no disappointment, for when one expects pure and unmixed suffering, the smallest joy becomes an unlooked-for surprise. And you know, Mother, that suffering itself becomes the greatest of joys when one seeks it as the most precious of treasures.
38. Oh, no! it is not with the intention of enjoying the fruit of my labors that I would want to leave; and if my purpose were that, I would not feel this sweet peace which floods me and would actually suffer at not being able to realize my vocation for the foreign missions. For a long time I have not belonged to myself since I delivered myself totally to Jesus, and He is therefore free to do with me as He pleases. He has given me the attraction for a complete exile and He has made me *understand all the sufferings* I would meet with, asking me if I would want to drink this chalice to the dregs; I wanted to seize this cup immediately when Jesus presented it, but He withdrew His hand and made me understand that resignation alone was pleasing to Him.
39. Mother, what anxieties the Vow of Obedience frees us from! How happy are simple religious! Their only compass being their Superiors' will, they are always sure of being on the right road; they have nothing to fear from being mistaken even when it seems their Superiors are wrong. But when they cease to look upon the infallible compass, when they stray from the way it indicates under the pretext of doing God's will, unclear at times even to His representatives, then they wander into arid paths where the water of grace is soon lacking.
40. Dear Mother, you are the compass Jesus has given me as a sure guide to the eternal shore. How sweet it is to fix my eyes upon you and thus accomplish the will of the Lord! Since the time He permitted me to suffer temptations against the *faith*, He has greatly increased the *spirit of faith* in my heart, which helps me to see in you not only a loving Mother but also Jesus living in your soul and communicating His will through you. I know very well, dear Mother, you are treating me as a feeble soul, a spoiled child, and as a consequence I have no trouble in carrying the burden of obedience. But because of what I feel in my heart, I would not change my attitude toward you, nor would my love decrease if it pleased you to treat me severely. I would once more see that it was the will of Jesus that you were acting in this way for the greater good of my soul.
41. This year, dear Mother, God has given me the grace to understand what charity is; I understood it before, it is true, but in an imperfect way. I had never fathomed the meaning of these words of Jesus: *"The second commandment is LIKE the first: you shall love your neighbor as yourself."*³⁰ I applied myself especially to loving God, and it is in loving Him that I understood my love was not to be expressed only in words, for: *"It is not those who say: 'Lord, Lord!' who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father in heaven."*³¹ Jesus has revealed this will several times or I should say on almost every page of

³⁰ Matthew 22:39.

³¹ Matthew 7:21.

His Gospel. But at the Last Supper, when he knew the hearts of His disciples were burning with a more ardent love for Him who had just given Himself to them in the unspeakable mystery of His Eucharist, this sweet Savior wished to give them a *new commandment*. He said to them with inexpressible tenderness: *"A new commandment I give you that you love one another: THAT AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, YOU ALSO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*³²

42. How did Jesus love His disciples and why did He love them? Ah! it was not their natural qualities that could have attracted Him, since there was between Him and them an infinite distance. He was knowledge, Eternal Wisdom, while they were poor ignorant fisherman filled with earthly thoughts. And still Jesus called them *His friends, His brothers*.³³ He desires to see them reign with Him in the kingdom of His Father, and to open that kingdom to them He wills to die on the cross, for He said: *"Greater love than this no man has than he lay down his life for his friends."*³⁴
43. Dear Mother, when meditating upon these words of Jesus, I understood how imperfect was my love for my Sisters. I saw I didn't love them as God loves them. Ah! I understand now that charity consists in bearing with the faults of others, in not being surprised at their weakness, in being edified by the smallest acts of virtue we see them practice. But I understood above all that charity must not remain hidden in the bottom of the heart. Jesus has said: *"No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel basket, but upon the lampstand to give light to ALL in the house."*³⁵ It seems to me that this lamp represents charity which must enlighten and rejoice not only those who are dearest to us but *"ALL who are in the house"* without distinction.
44. When the Lord commanded His people to love their neighbor as themselves,³⁶ He had not as yet come upon the earth. Knowing the extent to which each one loved himself, He was not able to ask of His creatures a greater love than this for one's neighbor. But when Jesus gave His Apostles a new commandment, HIS OWN COMMANDMENT,³⁷ as He calls it later on, it is no longer a question of loving one's neighbor as oneself but of loving as *He, Jesus, has loved him*, and will love him to the consummation of the ages.
45. Ah! Lord, I know you don't command the impossible. You know better than I do my weakness and imperfection; You know very well that never could I love my Sisters as You love them, unless *You, O my Jesus, loved them in me*. It is because You wanted to give me this grace that You made Your new commandment. Oh! how I love this new commandment since it gives me the assurance that Your Will is *to love in me* all those You command me to love!
46. Yes, I feel it, when I am charitable, it is Jesus alone who is acting in me, and the more I am united to Him, the more also do I love my Sisters. When I wish to increase this love in me,

³² John 13:34-35.

³³ John 15:15.

³⁴ John 15:13.

³⁵ Matthew 5:15.

³⁶ Leviticus 19:18.

³⁷ John 15:12.

and when especially the devil tries to place before the eyes of my soul the faults of such and such a Sister who is less attractive to me, I hasten to search out her virtues, her good intentions; I tell myself that even if I did see her fall once, she could easily have won a great number of victories which she is hiding through humility, and that even what appears to me as a fault can very easily be an act of virtue because of her intention. I have no trouble convincing myself of this truth because of a little experience I had which showed me we must never judge.

47. During recreation the portress rang twice; the large workman's gate had to be opened to bring in some trees for the crib. Recreation was not too gay because you were not there, dear Mother, and I thought that if they sent me to serve as third party³⁸ I would be happy; at exactly that moment Mother Subprioress told me to go and serve in this capacity, or else the Sister who was at my side. Immediately I began to untie our apron but slowly in order that my companion untie hers before me, for I thought of giving her the pleasure of serving as third party. The Sister who was replacing the Procuratrix was looking at us, and seeing me get up last, she said: "Ah! I thought as much, that you were not going to gain this pearl for your crown, you were going too slowly."
48. Certainly, the whole community believed I had acted through selfishness, and I cannot say how much good such a small thing did to my soul, making me indulgent toward the weaknesses of others. This incident prevents me from being vain when I am judged favorably because I say to myself: Since one can take my little acts of virtue for imperfections, one can also be mistaken in taking for virtue what is nothing but imperfection. Then I say with St. Paul: *"To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by any human tribunal, but neither do I judge myself. He who judges me is THE LORD."*³⁹
49. In order that this judgment be favorable or rather that I be not judged at all, I want to be charitable in my thoughts toward others at all times, for Jesus has said: *"Judge not, and you shall not be judged."*⁴⁰
50. Mother, when reading what I have just written, you could believe that the practice of charity is not difficult for me. It is true; for several months now I no longer have to struggle to practice this beautiful virtue. I don't mean by this that I no longer have any faults; ah! I am too imperfect for that. But I mean that I don't have any trouble in rising when I have fallen because in a certain combat I won a great victory; and the heavenly militia now comes to my aid since it cannot bear seeing me defeated after having seen me victorious in the glorious battle I am going to try to describe.
51. There is in the Community a Sister who has the faculty of displeasing me in everything, in her ways, her words, her character, everything seems *very disagreeable* to me. And still she is a holy religious who must be very pleasing to God. Not wishing to give in to the natural antipathy I was experiencing, I told myself that charity must not consist in feelings but in works; then I set myself to doing for this Sister what I would do for the person I loved the

³⁸ The religious who accompanied the Procuratrix when laborers had to work in the monastery.

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 4:3-4.

⁴⁰ Luke 6:37.

most. Each time I met her I prayed to God for her, offering Him all her virtues and merits. I felt this was pleasing to Jesus, for there is no artist who doesn't like to receive praise for his works, and Jesus, the Artist of souls, is happy when we don't stop at the exterior, but, penetrating into the inner sanctuary where He chooses to dwell, we admire its beauty. I wasn't content simply with praying very much for this Sister who gave me so many struggles, but I took care to render her all the services possible, and when I was tempted to answer her back in a disagreeable manner, I was content with giving her my most friendly smile, and with changing the subject of the conversation, for the Imitation says: *"It is better to leave each one in his own opinion than to enter into arguments."*⁴¹

52. Frequently when I was at recreation (I mean during the work periods) and had occasion to work with this Sister, I used to run away like a deserter whenever my struggles became too violent. As she was absolutely unaware of my feelings for her, never did she suspect the motives for my conduct and she remained convinced that her character was very pleasing to me. One day at recreation she asked in almost these words: "Would you tell me, Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus, what attracts you so much toward me; every time you look at me, I see you smile?" Ah what attracted me was Jesus hidden in the depths of her soul; Jesus who makes sweet what is most bitter.⁴² I answered that I was smiling because I was happy to see her (it is understood that I did not add that this was from a spiritual standpoint).
53. Dear Mother, I have already told you that my last means of not being defeated in combats is desertion; I was already using this means during my novitiate, and it always succeeded perfectly with me. I wish, Mother, to give you an example which I believe will make you smile. During one of your bronchial attacks, I came to your cell very quietly one morning to return the keys of the Communion grating since I was sacristan. I wasn't too displeased at having this opportunity to see you; I was very much pleased, but I didn't dare to show it. A Sister, animated with a holy zeal, and one who loved me very much, believed I was going to awaken you when she saw me entering your quarters; she wanted to take the keys from me. I was too stubborn to give them to her and cede *my rights*. As politely as I could, I told her that it was *my duty* to return the keys. I understand now that it would have been more perfect to cede to this Sister, young, it is true, but still older than I. I did not understand it at the time, and as I wanted absolutely to enter in spite of the fact that she was pushing the door to prevent me, very soon the thing we feared most happened: the racket we were making made you open your eyes. Then Mother, everything tumbled upon me. The poor Sister whom I had resisted began to deliver a whole discourse, the gist of which was: It's Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus who made the noise; my God, how disagreeable she is, etc. I, who felt just the contrary, had a great desire to defend myself. Happily, there came a bright idea into my mind, I told myself that if I began to justify myself I would not be able to retain my peace of soul. I felt, too, that I did not have enough virtue to permit myself to be accused without saying a word. My last plank of salvation was in flight. No sooner thought than done. I left without fuss, allowing the Sister to continue her discourse which resembled

⁴¹ *The Imitation of Christ* III, 44:1.

⁴² *The Imitation of Christ* III, 5:3.

the imprecations of Camillus against the city of Rome. My heart was beating so rapidly that it was impossible for me to go far, and I sat down on the stairs in order to savor the fruits of my victory. There was no bravery there, Mother; however, I believe it was much better for me not to expose myself to combat when there was certain defeat facing me.

54. Alas! when I think of the time of my novitiate I see how imperfect I was. I made so much fuss over such little things that it makes me laugh now. Ah! how good the Lord is in having matured my soul, and in having given it wings. All the nets of the hunters would not be able to frighten me, for: *"... the net is spread in vain before the eyes on them who have wings."*⁴³ Later on, no doubt, the time in which I am now will appear filled with imperfections, but now I am astonished at nothing. I am not disturbed at seeing myself *weakness* itself. On the contrary, it is in my weakness that I glory,⁴⁴ and I expect each day to discover new imperfections in myself. Remembering that *"charity covers a multitude of sins,"*⁴⁵ I draw from this rich mine that Jesus has opened before me.
55. The Lord, in the Gospel, explains in what *His new commandment* consists. He says in St. Matthew: *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love you neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies ... pray for those who persecute you."*⁴⁶ No doubt we don't have any enemies in Carmel, but there are feelings. One feels attracted to this Sister, whereas with regard to another, one would make a long detour in order to avoid meeting her. And so, without even knowing it, she becomes the subject of persecution. Well, Jesus is telling me that it is this Sister who must be loved, she must be prayed for even though her conduct would lead me to believe that she doesn't love me: *"If you love those who love you, what reward will you have? For even sinners love those who love them."*⁴⁷ St. Luke, VI. And it isn't enough to love; we must prove it. We are naturally happy to offer a gift to a friend; we love especially to give surprises; this is not charity, for sinners do this too. Here is what Jesus teaches me also: *"Give to EVERYONE who asks of you, and from HIM WHO TAKES AWAY your goods, ask no return."*⁴⁸ Giving to all those who ask is less sweet than offering oneself by the movement of one's own heart; again when they ask for something politely, it doesn't cost so much to give, but if, unfortunately, they don't use very delicate words, the soul is immediately up in arms if she is not well founded in charity. She finds a thousand reasons to refuse what is asked of her, and it is only after having convinced the asker of her tactlessness that she will finally give what is asked, and then only for a favor; or she will render a light service which could have been done in one-twentieth of the time that was spent in setting forth her imaginary rights.
56. Although it is difficult to give to one who asks, it is even more so *to allow one to take what belongs to you, without asking it back*. O Mother, I say it is difficult; I should have said that this *seems* difficult, for *the yoke of the Lord is sweet and light*.⁴⁹ When one accepts it, one

⁴³ Proverbs 1:17.

⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 12:5.

⁴⁵ Proverbs 10:12.

⁴⁶ Matthew 5:43-44.

⁴⁷ Luke 6:32.

⁴⁸ Luke 6:30.

⁴⁹ Matthew 11:30.

feels its sweetness immediately, and cries out with the Psalmist: *"I have run the way of your commandments when you enlarged my heart."*⁵⁰ It is only charity that can expand my heart. O Jesus, since this sweet flame consumes it, I run with joy in the way of *Your NEW commandment*. I want to run in it until that blessed day when, joining the virginal procession, I shall be able to follow You in the heavenly courts, singing Your *NEW canticle* which must be Love.

57. I was saying, Jesus does not want me to lay claim to what belongs to me; and this should seem easy and natural to me since *nothing is mine*. I have renounced the goods of this earth through the Vow of Poverty, and so I haven't the right to complain when one takes a thing that is not mine. On the contrary, I should rejoice when it happens that I feel the pinch of poverty. Formerly, it seemed to me that I was attached to nothing, but ever since I understood the words of Jesus, I see that on occasions I am very imperfect. For example, in my work of painting there is nothing that belongs to me, I know. But if, when I am preparing for some work, I find that the brushes and the paints are in disorder, if a rule or penknife has disappeared, patience is very close to abandoning me and I must take my courage in both hands in order to reclaim the missing object without bitterness. We really have to ask for indispensable things, but when we do it with humility, we are not failing in the commandment of Jesus; on the contrary, we are acting like the poor who extend their hand to receive what is necessary for them; if they are rebuked they are not surprised, as no one owes them anything.
58. Ah! what peace floods the soul when she rises above natural feelings. No, there is no joy comparable to that which the truly poor in spirit experience. If such a one asks for something with detachment, and if this thing is not only refused but one tries to take away what one already has, the poor in spirit follow Jesus' counsel: *"If anyone take away your coat, let go your cloak also."*⁵¹
59. To give up one's cloak is, it seems to me, renouncing one's ultimate rights; it is considering oneself as the servant and the slave of others. When one has left his cloak, it is much easier to walk, to run, and Jesus adds: *"And whoever forces you to go one mile, go two more with him."*⁵² Thus it is not enough to give *to everyone who asks*;⁵³ I must even anticipate their desires, appear to be very much obliged and honored to render service, and if anyone takes something which is for my use, I must not appear to be sorry about this but happy at being *relieved* of it. Dear Mother, I am very far from practicing what I understand, and still the desire alone I have of doing it gives me peace.
60. I feel that I have explained myself poorly, even more so than on the other days. I made a *kind of discourse* on charity which must have tired you when you were reading it. Pardon me, dear Mother, and remember at this very moment the infirmarians practice in my regard what I have just written; they don't hesitate to take two thousand paces when twenty

⁵⁰ Psalm 118:32.

⁵¹ Matthew 5:40.

⁵² Matthew 5:41.

⁵³ Luke 6:30.

would suffice.⁵⁴ So I have been able to contemplate charity in action! Undoubtedly my soul is embalmed with it; as far as my mind is concerned I admit it is paralyzed in the presence of such devotedness, and my pen has lost its lightness. In order for me to translate my thoughts, I have to be *like the solitary sparrow*,⁵⁵ and this is rarely my lot. When I begin to take up my pen, behold a Sister who passes by, a pitchfork on her shoulder. She believes she will distract me with a little idle chatter: hay, ducks, hens, visits of the doctor, everything is discussed; to tell the truth, this doesn't last a long time, but there is *more than one good charitable Sister*, and all of a sudden another hay worker throws flowers on my lap, perhaps believing these will inspire me with poetic thoughts. I am not looking for them at the moment and would prefer to see the flowers swaying on their stems. Finally, fatigued by opening and shutting this famous copybook, I open a book (which doesn't want to stay open) and say resolutely that I shall copy out some thoughts from the psalms and Gospels for the feast of Our Mother.⁵⁶ It's very true that I am not sparing in these quotes.

61. Dear Mother, I would amuse you, I believe, when telling you about all my adventures in the groves of Carmel; I don't know if I have been able to write ten lines without being disturbed; this should not make me laugh nor amuse me; however, for the love of God and my Sisters (so charitable toward me) I take care to appear happy and especially *to be so*. For example, here is a hay worker who is just leaving me after having said very compassionately: "Poor little Sister, it must tire you out having to write like that all day long." "Don't worry," I answer, "I appear to be writing very much, but really I am writing almost nothing." "Very good!" she says, "but just the same, I am very happy we are doing the haying since this always distracts you a little." In fact it is such a great distraction for me (without taking into account the infirmarians' visits) that I am not telling any lies when I say that I am writing practically nothing.
62. Fortunately, I don't easily get discouraged and to prove it, I am going to finish explaining what Jesus makes me understand concerning charity. I have spoken to you only about external charity; now I would like to confide to you what I understand about purely spiritual charity. I am very sure I won't be long in mixing the one with the other, but, since I am speaking to you, it will not be difficult for you to grasp my thought and to unravel your child's skein.
63. It is not always possible in Carmel to practice the words of the Gospel according to the letter. One is obliged at times to refuse a service because of one's duties; but when charity has buried its roots deeply within the soul, it shows itself externally. There is such a delightful way of refusing what cannot be given that the refusal gives as much pleasure as the gift itself. It is true that one hesitates less to claim a service from a Sister who is always disposed to oblige but Jesus has said; "*...and from him who would borrow of you, do not turn away.*"⁵⁷ Thus under the pretext that one would be forced to refuse, one must not stay away from the Sisters who are always in the habit of asking for help. Neither should one be

⁵⁴ She is writing in the garden in a wheelchair (note of Mother Agnes).

⁵⁵ Psalm 101:8.

⁵⁶ Mother Marie de Gonzague's feast was on June 21, feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

⁵⁷ Matthew 5:42.

obliging in order to *appear* so or in the hope that another time the Sister whom one obliges will return the service in her turn, for Our Lord says again: *“And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive in return, what merit have you? For even sinners lend to sinners that they may get back as much in return. But do good, and lend, NOT HOPING FOR ANYTHING IN RETURN, and your reward shall be great.”*⁵⁸

64. Oh yes! the reward is great, even on this earth; in this way it is only the first step that costs anything. To lend without *hoping for anything* appears difficult to nature; one would prefer to give, for a thing given no longer belongs to one. When one comes to you and says in a very convincing way: “Sister, I need your help for a few hours, but don’t worry, I have Mother’s permission and I *will return* the time you are giving me because I know how rushed you are.” Truly, when one knows very well that never will the time one *lends* ever be returned, one would prefer to say: “I give it to you.” This would satisfy self-love, for giving is a more generous act than lending, and then we make the Sister feel we don’t depend on her services. Ah! how contrary are the teachings of Jesus to the feelings of nature! Without the help of His grace it would be impossible not only to put them into practice but to even understand them.

⁵⁸ Luke 6:34-35.

Appendix G: Session 6, CCC 2697-2708: Expressions of Prayer

THE LIFE OF PRAYER

2697 Prayer is the life of the new heart. It ought to animate us at every moment. But we tend to forget him who is our life and our all. This is why the Fathers of the spiritual life in the Deuteronomic and prophetic traditions insist that prayer is a remembrance of God often awakened by the memory of the heart “We must remember God more often than we draw breath.”¹ But we cannot pray “at all times” if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it. These are the special times of Christian prayer, both in intensity and duration.

2698 The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer. Some are daily, such as morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours. Sundays, centered on the Eucharist, are kept holy primarily by prayer. the cycle of the liturgical year and its great feasts are also basic rhythms of the Christian’s life of prayer.

2699 The Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart’s resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer. However, Christian Tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: composure of heart. This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer.

EXPRESSIONS OF PRAYER

I. Vocal prayer

2700 Through his Word, God speaks to man. By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: “Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls.”²

2701 Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master’s silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father. He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, he raised his voice to express his personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony of Gethsemani.³

2702 The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit, and we experience the need to translate our feelings externally. We must pray with our whole being to give all power possible to our supplication.

2703 This need also corresponds to a divine requirement. God seeks worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, and consequently living prayer that rises from the depths of the soul. He also wants the external expression that associates the body with interior prayer, for it renders him that perfect homage which is his due.

¹ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat. theo.*, 27, 1, 4: PG 36, 16.

² St. John Chrysostom, *Ecloga de oratione* 2: PG 63, 585.

³ Cf. Mt 11:25-26; Mk 14:36.

2704 Because it is external and so thoroughly human, vocal prayer is the form of prayer most readily accessible to groups. Even interior prayer, however, cannot neglect vocal prayer. Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of him “to whom we speak;”⁴ Thus vocal prayer becomes an initial form of contemplative prayer.

II. Meditation

2705 Meditation is above all a quest. the mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. the required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history the page on which the “today” of God is written.

2706 To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

2707 There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower.⁵ But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus.

2708 Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.

⁴ St. Teresa of Jesus, the Way of Perfection 26, 9 in the Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, tr. K. Kavanaugh, OCD, and O. Rodriguez, OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980), II, 136.

⁵ Cf. Mk 4:4-7, 15-19.

Appendix H: Session 7, Excerpts from The Practice of the Presence of God

by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

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Spiritual Maxims 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7

CHAPTER 2

PRACTICES NECESSARY TO ATTAIN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

6. The holiest, most ordinary, and most necessary practice of the spiritual life is that of the presence of God. It is to take delight in and become accustomed to his divine company, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly with him all the time, at every moment, without rule or measure, especially in times of temptation, suffering, aridity, weariness, even infidelity and sin.

7. We must continually apply ourselves so that all our actions, without exception, become a kind of brief conversation with God, not in a contrived manner but coming from the purity and simplicity of our hearts.

8. We must perform all our actions carefully and deliberately, not impulsively or hurriedly, for such would characterize a distracted mind. We must work gently and lovingly with God, asking him to accept our work, and by this continual attention to God we will crush the head of the devil and force the weapons from his hands.

9. During our work and other activities, even during our reading and writing, no matter how spiritual—and, I emphasize, even during our religious exercises and vocal prayers—we must stop for a moment, as often as possible, to adore God in the depths of our hearts, to savor him, even though in passing and stealthily. Since you are aware that God is present to you during your actions, that he is in the depths and center of your heart, stop your activities and even your vocal prayers, at least from time to time, to adore him within, to praise him, to ask his help, to offer him your heart, and to thank him. Nothing is more pleasing to God than to turn away from all creatures many times throughout the day to withdraw and adore him present within. Moreover, this turning inward imperceptibly destroys the self-love found only among creatures. In the end, we can offer God no greater evidence of our fidelity than by frequently renouncing and scorning creatures in order to enjoy their Creator for a moment. I do not mean by this that you must withdraw forever from your duties, for that would be impossible; prudence, the mother of all virtues, must be your guide. I do say, nonetheless, that it is a typical error among the spiritually minded not to withdraw from what is external from time to time to adore God within themselves and enjoy his divine presence in peace for a few moments. This digression was long but I thought the matter called for some explanation. Let's get back to our exercises.

10. All these adorations must be made by faith, believing that God is truly in our hearts, that we must adore, love, and serve him in spirit and in truth, that he sees everything that happens and will happen in us and in all creatures; that he is independent of everything and the one on

whom all creatures depend, infinite in every kind of perfection. He is the one who, by virtue of his infinite excellence and sovereign domain, deserves all that we are as well as everything in heaven and on earth, of which he can dispose as he wishes in time and in eternity. All our thoughts, words and actions belong by right to him. Let's put this into practice.

11. We must carefully examine which virtues are the most essential, which are the most difficult to acquire, which sins we commit most often, and which are the most frequent and inevitable of our falls. We must have recourse to God with complete confidence at the moment of combat, remain firm in the presence of his divine majesty, adore him humbly, bring him our miseries and weaknesses, and lovingly ask him for the help of his grace. In this way we will find every virtue in him without our having any of our own.

CHAPTER 3

HOW WE MUST ADORE GOD IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

12. This question contains three points to which we must respond. I say that adoring God in spirit and in truth means adoring God as we are supposed to adore him. God is spirit and we must adore him in spirit and in truth, that is, with humble, authentic adoration of spirit in the depths and center of our souls. God alone can see this adoration, which we can repeat so often that in the end it will become second nature to us, as if God were one with our souls and our souls were one with God. Practice will make this evident.

13. Adoring God in truth means recognizing him for what he is and recognizing ourselves for what we are. Adoring God in truth means recognizing truly, really, and in spirit that God is what he is, infinitely perfect, infinitely adorable, infinitely removed from all evil, and so on for all the divine attributes. Who are we, and what reason could excuse us from using all our strength to offer this great God all respect and adoration?

14. Adoring God in truth means admitting that, although we are completely opposite, he wants to make us like himself, if we so desire. We must not be so imprudent as to withhold, even for a moment, the respect, love, service and continual adoration we owe him.

CHAPTER 5

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD

20. The [practice of the] presence of God is an application of our mind to God, or a remembrance of God present, that can be brought about either by the imagination or the understanding.

21. I know someone who, for forty years, has been practicing an intellectual presence of God to which he gives several other names. Sometimes he calls it a "simple act," a "clear and distinct knowledge of God," an "indistinct view" or a "general and loving awareness of God." Other times he names it "attention to God" "silent conversation with God," "trust in God," or "the soul's life and peace." This person told me that all these forms of God's presence are nothing but synonyms for the same thing, and that it is at present second nature to him. Here is how:

22. This person says that the habit is formed by the repetition of acts and by frequently bringing the mind back into God's presence. He says that as soon as he is free from his occupations, and often even when he is most taken up by them, the recesses of his mind [*esprit*] or the innermost depths of his soul are raised with no effort on his part and remain suspended and fixed in God, above all things, as in its center and resting place. Since he is generally aware that his mind, thus held in suspension, is accompanied by faith, he is satisfied. This is what he calls "actual presence of God," which includes all the other types of presence and much more besides, so that he now lives as if only he and God were in the world. He converses with God everywhere, asks him for what he needs, and rejoices continuously with him in countless ways.

23. It is important, however, to realize that this conversation with God takes place in the depths and center of the soul. It is there that the soul speaks to God heart to heart, and always in a deep and profound peace that the soul enjoys in God. Everything that takes place outside the soul means no more to it than a lit straw that goes out as soon as it is ignited, and almost never, or very rarely, disturbs its inner peace.

24. To get back to the presence of God, I say that this gentle, loving awareness of God imperceptibly ignites a divine fire in the soul, inflaming it so intensely with love of God that one is forced to perform various activities in an effort to contain it.

25. We would be surprised to know what the soul sometimes says to God, who is so pleased with these conversations that he grants it all its desires, providing it is willing to remain with him always, and in its center. To discourage the soul from returning to created things, God takes care to provide it with everything it desires, and to such an extent that it often finds within itself a very savory, delicious nourishment, though it never sought nor did anything to obtain it, and in no way contributed to it itself, except by its consent.

26. The presence of God is then the soul's life and nourishment, which can be acquired by the Lord's grace. Here are the means:

CHAPTER 6

MEANS TO ACQUIRE THE PRESENCE OF GOD

27. The first means is great purity of life.

28. The second is great fidelity to the practice of this presence and to the fostering of this awareness of God within, which must always be performed gently, humbly, and lovingly, without giving in to disturbance or anxiety.

29. We must take special care that this inner awareness, no matter how brief it may be, precedes our activities, that it accompanies them from time to time, and that we complete all of them in the same way. Since much time and effort are required to acquire this practice, we must not get discouraged when we fail, for the habit is only formed with effort, yet once it is formed we will find contentment in everything. It is only right that the heart, the first to beat with life and the part that controls the rest of the body, should be the first and the last to love and adore God, whether by beginning or by completing our spiritual and physical activities, and

generally, in all life's exercises. This is the reason we must take care to foster this awareness, which we must do naturally and normally, as I have said, thus making it easier.

30. It would be appropriate for beginners to formulate a few words interiorly, such as: "My God, I am completely yours," or "God of love, I love you with all my heart," or "Lord, fashion me according to your heart," or any other words love spontaneously produces. But they must take care that their minds do not wander or return to creatures. The mind must be kept fixed on God alone, so that seeing itself so moved and led by the will, it will be obliged to remain with God.

31. This [practice of the] presence of God, somewhat difficult in the beginning, secretly accomplishes marvelous effects in the soul, draws abundant graces from the Lord, and, when practiced faithfully, imperceptibly leads it to this simple awareness, to this loving view of God present everywhere, which is the holiest, the surest, the easiest, and the most efficacious form of prayer.

32. Please note that to arrive at this state, mortification of the senses is presupposed, since it is impossible for a soul that still finds some satisfaction in creatures to completely enjoy this divine presence; for to be with God, we must abandon creatures.

CHAPTER 7

BENEFITS OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

33. The first benefit that the soul receives from the [practice of the] presence of God is that its faith becomes more intense and efficacious in all life's situations, and especially in times of need, since it easily obtains graces in moments of temptation and in the inevitable dealings with creatures. For the soul, accustomed to the practice of faith by this exercise, sees and senses God present by a simple remembrance. It calls out to him easily and effectively, thus obtaining what it needs. It can be said that it possesses here something resembling the state of the blessed, for the more it advances, the more intense its faith grows, becoming so penetrating in the end that you could almost say: I no longer believe, for I see and experience.

34. The practice of the presence of God strengthens us in hope. Our hope increases in proportion to our knowledge. It grows and is strengthened to the extent that our faith penetrates the secrets of the divinity by this holy exercise, to the extent that it discovers in God a beauty infinitely surpassing not only that of the bodies we see on earth but even that of the most perfect souls and of the angels. The grandeur of the blessing that it desires to enjoy, and in some manner already tastes, satisfies and sustains it.

35. This practice inspires the will with a scorn for creatures, and inflames it with a sacred fire of love. Since the will is always with God who is a consuming fire, this fire reduces to ashes all that is opposed to it. The soul thus inflamed can live only in the presence of its God, a presence that produces in its heart a holy ardor, a sacred zeal and a strong desire to see this God loved, known, served, and adored by all creatures.

36. By turning inward and practicing the presence of God, the soul becomes so intimate with God that it spends practically all its life in continual acts of love, adoration, contrition, trust,

thanksgiving, oblation, petition, and all the most excellent virtues. Sometimes it even becomes one continuous act, because the soul constantly practices this exercise of his divine presence.

37. I know that few persons reach this advanced state. It is a grace God bestows only on a few chosen souls, since this simple awareness remains ultimately a gift from his kind hand. But let me say, for the consolation of those who desire to embrace this holy practice, that he ordinarily gives it to souls who are disposed to receive it. If he does not give it, we can at least acquire, with the help of ordinary grace, a manner and state of prayer that greatly resembles this simple awareness, by means of this practice of the presence of God.

Appendix I: Session 9, meditative reading, Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love

Sayings of Light and Love by St John of the Cross (26-28)

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26. Lord God, my Beloved, if you still remember my sins in such a way that you do not do what I beg of you, do your will concerning them, my God, which is what I most desire, and exercise your goodness and mercy, and you will be known through them. And if you are waiting for my good works so as to hear my prayer through their means, grant them to me, and work them for me, and the sufferings you desire to accept, and let it be done. But if you are not waiting for my works, what is it that makes you wait, my most clement Lord? Why do you delay? For if, after all, I am to receive the grace and mercy that I entreat of you in your Son, take my mite, since you desire it, and grant me this blessing, since you also desire that.

Who can free themselves from lowly manners and limitations if you do not lift them to yourself, my God, in purity of love? How will human beings begotten and nurtured in lowliness rise up to you, Lord, if you do not raise them with your hand that made them?

You will not take from me, my God, what you once gave me in your only Son, Jesus Christ, in whom you gave me all I desire. Hence I rejoice that if I wait for you, you will not delay.

With what procrastination do you wait, since from this very moment you can love God in your heart?

27. Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine; and God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me. What do you ask, then, and seek, my soul? Yours is all of this, and all is for you. Do not engage yourself in something less or pay heed to the crumbs that fall from your Father's table. Go forth and exult in your Glory! Hide yourself in it and rejoice, and you will obtain the supplications of your heart.

28. The very pure spirit does not bother about the regard of others or human respect, but communes inwardly with God, alone and in solitude as to all forms, and with delightful tranquility, for the knowledge of God is received in divine silence.

Appendix J: Session 11, meditative reading, St. Thérèse's "Act of Oblation to Merciful Love"

Source: *Story of A Soul*, Study Edition, by John Clarke, OCD, and Marc Foley, OCD.
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Act of Oblation to Merciful Love

J.M.J.T.

Offering of myself as a Victim of Holocaust to God's Merciful Love

O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to *Love* You and make You *Loved*, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish Your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory You have prepared for me in Your Kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be a saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg You, O my God! to be Yourself my *Sanctity*!

Since You loved me so much as to give me Your only Son as my Savior and my Spouse, the infinite treasures of His merits are mine. I offer them to You with gladness, begging You to look upon me only in the Face of Jesus and in His heart burning with *Love*.

I offer You, too, all the merits of the saints (in heaven and on earth), their acts of *Love*, and those of the holy angels. Finally, I offer You, *O Blessed Trinity!* the *Love* and merits of the *Blessed Virgin, my Dear Mother*. It is to her I abandon my offering, begging her to present it to You. Her Divine Son, my *Beloved Spouse*, told us in the days of His mortal life: "*Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name he will give it to you!*" I am certain, then, that You will grant my desires; I know, O my God! that *the more You want to give, the more You make us desire*. I feel in my heart immense desires and it is with confidence I ask You to come and take possession of my soul. Ah! I cannot receive Holy Communion as often as I desire, but, Lord, are You not *all-powerful*? Remain in me as in a tabernacle and never separate Yourself from Your little victim.

I want to console You for the ingratitude of the wicked, and I beg of you to take away my freedom to displease You. If through weakness I sometimes fall, may Your *Divine Glance* cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.

I thank You, O my God! for all the graces You have granted me, especially the grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering. It is with joy I shall contemplate You on the Last Day carrying the scepter of Your Cross. Since You deigned to give me a share in this very precious Cross, I hope in heaven to resemble You and to see shining in my glorified body the sacred stigmata of Your Passion.

After earth's Exile, I hope to go and enjoy You in the Fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for Your *Love alone* with the one purpose of pleasing You, consoling Your Sacred Heart, and saving souls who will love You eternally.

In the evening of this life, I shall appear before You with empty hands, for I do not ask You, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is stained in Your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in Your own *Justice* and to receive from Your *Love* the eternal possession of *Yourself*. I want no other *Throne*, no other *Crown* but *You*, my *Beloved*!

Time is nothing in Your eyes, and a single day is like a thousand years. You can, then, in one instant prepare me to appear before You.

In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, asking You to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of *infinite tenderness* shut up within You to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a *martyr* of Your *Love*, O my God!

May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear before You, finally cause me to die and may my soul take its flight without any delay into the eternal embrace of *Your Merciful Love*.

I want, O my *Beloved*, at each beat of my heart to renew this offering to You an infinite number of times, until the shadows having disappeared I may be able to tell You of my *Love* in an *Eternal Face to Face*!

Marie-Françoise-Thérèse of the Child Jesus
and the Holy Face, unworthy Carmelite religious.

This 9th day of June,
Feast of the Most Holy Trinity,
In the year of grace, 1895

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