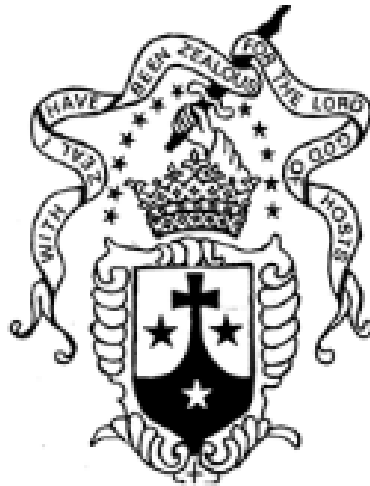


Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites
Formation II
Year B
The Interior Castle
(The Seven Dwelling Places)



*"Let us desire and be occupied in prayer
not for the sake of our enjoyment,
but so as to have this strength to serve.
Martha and Mary must join together
in order to show hospitality to the Lord..."*

Interior Castle, VII, 4:12

Approved for use in the United States.

Copyright © January 2023

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

Contents

Foreword	iii
Introduction to Formation II	3
The Specific Guidelines for Formation	4
About the Syllabus.....	5
Session One: Preface, general introduction, and prologue	6
Session Two: “Who we are” — made in the image of God	9
Session Three: Progression in Prayer	13
Session Four: Transition.....	15
Session Five: Conversion.....	17
Session Six: Transformation in Christ (continued in Session Seven)	20
Session Seven: Transformation in Christ (continued from Session Six)	23
Session Eight: Awakening to God (continued in Session Nine).....	26
Session Nine: Awakening to God (continued from Session Eight)	30
Session Ten: Union — Trinitarian Life (continued in Session Eleven)	33
Session Eleven: Effects of Prayer. (continued from Session Ten)	36
Session Twelve: Overall understanding of one’s spiritual journey within the context of Church, Order, community, family and work.	39
Special session with the Formation Director for candidates in their third year of Formation II: Called to holiness — The Definitive Promise in the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites.....	41
Bibliography	44
Appendix A: Session 9, Excerpt from Gaudium et Spes (22).....	45
Appendix B: Session 9, St. Teresa of Avila 100 Themes on Her Life and Work, 46. Christological Formation	47
Appendix C, Session 9, St. Teresa of Avila 100 Themes on Her Life and Work, 98. Jesus and His Sacred Humanity	50
Copyright Notice – 2024	53



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI
CORSO D'ITALIA, 38
00198 ROMA

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.

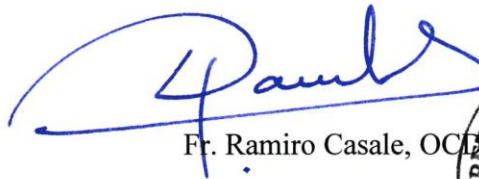
Christian formation is “the solid basis of Carmelite and spiritual formation” (*OCDS Const.* 33). The catechism and the official documents of the Catholic Church are a great resource to acquire the necessary knowledge about the faith and how to put it into practice. It is important that Secular Carmelites 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 II Year B

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



Introduction to Formation II

(Members who have made the First Promise)

Formation II is in preparation for the Definitive Promise and takes a minimum of three years, and in some instances, due to discernment by the candidate and the community's Council, may take longer. The purpose of this period of formation is to prepare the candidate to maturely make a lifetime commitment to living the Discalced Carmelite charism as expressed in the OCDS Constitutions. Deepening union with God in interior prayer should lead the candidate to grow in virtue, in the desire to serve others, and in faithfulness to the Evangelical Counsels and Beatitudes. Growth in community life continues to be an important aspect of formation. Because this period leads to the Definitive Promise, serious ongoing discernment of the vocation by the Council and the candidate is crucial during this time.

Candidate responsibilities:

- The candidate will strive to be consistent in the practices begun in earlier stages of formation and be faithful to the Promise made at the end of Formation I. (The noted references are not exhaustive; there are many others throughout the Constitutions, Provincial Statutes, and Ratio.)
- Attend and participate in monthly community meetings and formation sessions. (see Const. 24.b,c)
- Be conscientious in the study and internalization of assigned material and topics. (see Const. 24.d and 32-34)
- Continue to study and strive to live the OCDS Constitutions and Statutes. (see Const. Preface)
- Develop the habit of reading Church documents, especially those addressed to the laity. (see Const. 19 and Ratio 80)
- Read and reflect on Sacred Scripture regularly. (see Const. 19 and Ratio 15)
- Practice silent prayer (remain in God's presence with loving attention) daily for at least half an hour. (see Ratio 20-21, 90)
- Pray Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours. Pray Night Prayer if possible. (see Const. 6.d and 23-24)
- Participate in daily Mass as far as possible. (see Const. 6.d and 23-24)
- Continue the habit of daily examination of conscience (commonly included as part of Night Prayer).
- Fast on the vigils of the Carmelite feasts listed in the Provincial Statutes.
- Participate in the community apostolate. (see Const. 26)
- Share in the duties and responsibilities of the community as assigned by the local Council. (see Const. 15)
- Participate in community retreats and days of recollection. (see Const. 24.d)
- Most importantly, continue to strive for Christ-like charity toward all in the community, in the family, and in daily life. (1 Cor. 13)

The Specific Guidelines for Formation

It is important to keep clearly in mind the purpose of formation in Carmel and to strike a balance between “head” and “heart.”

- “Number 32 of the Constitutions states that the purpose of formation is ‘to prepare the person to live the [charism and] spirituality of Carmel.’ This sentence of the Constitutions gives a very important emphasis to the purpose of formation, indicating those elements that are not the priorities in the progress of Carmel of formation. The purpose of the formation program is not to produce experts in Carmelite spirituality, nor to obtain a university degree in spirituality or spiritual theology” (Ratio Institutionis 4).
- “The purpose is to ‘prepare the person.’ The stress on the person who is to be prepared helps the formation community understand that the process must be directed to the individual in a concrete way. The people who come to the Secular Order of Carmel are, with few exceptions, people who have many commitments, especially with families and with work. The program of formation must be flexible enough to adapt to the circumstances of each person who is to become a member” (Ratio 5).
- “...The primary role of the person responsible for formation ... is to **accompany** those in formation, to help them put into practice what they learn through the process of formation. The information they are given through reading and classes is meant to be a help to the person’s spiritual growth” (Ratio 7). [emphasis added]
- “...With a progression suitable to the various stages, the candidate should get a clearer idea of how important, indeed necessary, our charism is for [one’s] personal life...” (Ratio 23).
- “The spirituality of the Discalced Carmelites has a very sound intellectual foundation. There is a doctrine involved here. Any person who wants to be a Discalced Carmelite must be a person with interest in learning from the teachers of Carmel. There are three Doctors of the universal Church, Teresa, John of the Cross, and Therese” (Ratio 78).
- “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 ought to have a good intellectual and doctrinal formation since as members of the Order they represent and witness to a mature and profound spirituality” (Ratio 79).

“These directors [formators] should reflect that they themselves are not the chief agent, guide, and mover of souls in this matter, but the principal guide is the Holy Spirit, who is never neglectful of souls, and they themselves are instruments for directing these souls to perfection through faith and the law of God, according to the spirit given by God to each one. Thus, the whole concern of the directors [formators] should not be to accommodate souls to their own method and condition, but they should observe the road along which God is leading one...”

(The Living Flame of Love, Stanza 3:46)

About the Syllabus

Required Reading: St. Teresa of Avila, The Interior Castle Study Edition, ICS Publications, 2010; or second edition, 2020 (page numbers differ)

Additional Reading:

Ahlgren, Gillian T.W., Entering Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle. A Reader's Companion, Paulist Press, 2005.

Alvarez, Thomas, OCD, St. Teresa of Avila, 100 Themes on Her Life and Work, ICS Publications, 2011, pages 337-358 on the Interior Castle.

Glossary pages 456-465 (second edition, pgs. 427-437).

Note: "Additional reading" is intended for personal enrichment and is not required.

Explanatory note regarding "Essential points to discuss": The candidates and formator are expected to read and reflect on the materials and ponder the essential points prior to the monthly formation sessions. However, it would not be practical to try to discuss every point during the session. It is preferable to choose several points for in-depth discussion. It is good practice to discuss those points which make a personal impression on the participants.

Because formator participation is crucial to the candidates' formation, good preparation is indispensable. After the opening prayer and the discussion of the legislations, formators are encouraged to take about 10-15 minutes at the beginning of the session to talk about the session theme, the assigned reading, and a brief review of the points to be discussed before moving on to the discussion itself.

Studying the OCDS Legislations: Unless the community is studying these materials together, it is appropriate for each session to begin with ten minutes of discussion on some selection of the OCDS legislations or documents of the Order, as determined by the local Council.

Session One: Preface, general introduction, and prologue

Required Reading: The Interior Castle Study Edition, pgs. 1-29 (second edition, pgs. xv-xxxix)

Additional Reading: St. Teresa of Avila: 100 Themes on Her Life and Work, *The Basic Essentials of the Interior Castle*, pgs. 345-348

Explanatory note: The Interior Castle is the image most developed by St. Teresa. It forms the basis of all her teachings. She uses it to illustrate the entire spiritual process, serving as a means of explaining the structure of human persons (body, soul, and spirit), and their relationship with God, Who is both transcendent and immanent. It serves as well to comment on the biblical text of the indwelling of God in the soul. “The Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). “And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him” (Jn. 14:21). “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (Jn.14:23). (see Glossary pg. 456; second edition 2020, pg. 427)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “The Interior Castle is more than a book. It is a wonderful image of the mystery of the human person” (Preface, pg. 1).
- St. Teresa wrote The Interior Castle at the request of Fr. Gracián, OCD, an enthusiastic supporter of her reform, and Don Alonso Velasquez, her spiritual director.
- Turmoil within the Order: Teresa was living through one of the most adverse periods of her life when she was engaged in writing her sublime book on prayer:
 - a. Teresa was ordered to return to her monastery (St. Joseph’s in Avila) and to remain there “as a kind of prisoner.”
 - b. In October of 1577, she was re-elected prioress of the Monastery of the Incarnation (in Avila). The election was not supported by the authorities in charge, who gave orders to annul the valid election. The nuns persisting to vote for Teresa in the second election were excommunicated.
 - c. St. John of the Cross was secretly seized by the non-reformed [Calced] Carmelites and imprisoned in a small cell in the Carmelite monastery in Toledo.
Note: Religious communities of the time did have the authority to punish members who were persistently disobedient. While the friars were acting in good faith, John was acting in obedience to the Dominican visitators that the Pope had appointed for all religious orders in Spain. (For more details on the competing ecclesial authorities, see Journey to Carith chapter 6, or John of the Cross: Man and Mystic chapter 3, pgs 57-62.)
- Teresa began writing The Interior Castle on the Feast of the Holy Trinity, June 2, 1577, in the reformed Carmelite (Discalced) Monastery of St. Joseph, Toledo, Spain. In little over a month, she had written more than half the manuscript. Due to discord in the Order, her work was interrupted for almost five months. Teresa took up her pen again and

The Monthly Sessions

completed her work by November 29, 1577, the eve of the Feast of St. Andrew. Thus, the actual time spent on this spiritual masterpiece was a mere two months (see General Introduction, pg.7; second edition, pg. xxi).

- Teresa speaks of this castle on three levels: experiential, symbolic, and theological. At the *experiential* level, this castle belongs to the author herself. *Symbolically*, Teresa uses the castle to express what is, in reality, inexpressible. *Theologically*, Teresa explains the profound meaning of her experiences (see Prologue — Interpretive Notes, pg. 31, second edition, pg. 5).
- In writing The Interior Castle, Teresa proposed at the outset to compose a fundamentally theological treatise — neither devotional nor superficial. “May God deliver us from foolish devotions” (Life 13.16).
- Teresa uses the castle and its many rooms to describe the dwelling places. “At the center of the castle is God’s dwelling place. The gate of entry is prayer” (General Introduction, pg. 12, second edition, pg. xxvi).
- Teresa observes that the human soul is capable of God; that is to say, from the depth of its being, the soul is open to transcendence. The soul is not locked up in itself, but has a primordial call from God. The human person is a paradise and a garden for God. The seven dwelling places are not seven rooms but seven degrees of life or communion of the human with the Divine (100 Themes on Her Life and Work, pgs. 345-346).
- **Humanity of Christ:** The single most important teaching of Teresa is the “Humanity of Christ” as first described in chapter 22 of Life and years later she repeats in the Interior Castle, chapter 7 of the Sixth Dwelling Places. “After reading both texts one can only conclude that Teresa, in both texts, has a decisive message about the radical centrality of the humanity of Christ for the entire Christian life...When Teresa speaks of the humanity of Jesus, she is thinking of the Jesus of salvation history ... the historical Jesus...At the same time, the humanity of Christ is integrated into the mystery of His person in which both divine and human are joined, constituting the mysterious framework of His being and history” (Interpretive notes, pg. 324. second edition, pgs. 296-297).

“The Lord helps us, strengthens us, and never fails; He is a true friend. And I see clearly, and I saw afterward, that God desires that if we are going to please Him and receive His great favors, we must do so through the most sacred of humanity of Christ, in whom He takes His delight [see Mt 3:17]. Many, many times I have perceived this truth through experience... I have definitely seen that we must enter by this gate [see Jn. 10:9] if we desire His sovereign Majesty to show us great secrets. ... [You] should desire no other path even if you are at the summit of contemplation. On this road you walk safely. This Lord of ours is the one through whom all blessings come to us” (Life, 22:6-7).

- **Ascetical prayer:** This is the prayer found in the first three dwelling places. It relies on human effort along with God’s grace.

- **Mystical prayer:** This is the prayer found in the last four dwelling places. Teresa calls it “supernatural prayer” because it is a gift of God and cannot be acquired through one’s own efforts (see Glossary, pg. 462; second edition, 434). Teresa observes: “We always hear about what a good thing prayer is, and our constitutions oblige us to spend so many hours in prayer. Yet only what we ourselves can do in prayer is explained to us; little is explained about what the Lord does in the soul, I mean about the supernatural” (IC, DP I, 2:7).

Session Two: “Who we are” — made in the image of God

Required Reading: Interior Castle: Study Edition, *the First Dwelling Places*, ch. 1 and 2

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes.

“Jesus came among us to reveal to us this Trinitarian love and the vocation to participate in a communion of love with the Most Holy Trinity; this is something to which every human person created in God’s image and likeness is called. In the light of this mystery, the true identity and dignity of every human being, and specifically of every member of the Church, is revealed. Being spiritual in nature, the human person grows and matures by being in an authentic relationship with God and with others”
(OCDS Const. Art. 24a).

Explanatory note: “Teresa begins on a positive note, speaking of the beauty and dignity of the soul. Actually, ‘soul’ and ‘castle’ are the same in the symbolic language of the work. And in our language today, the soul refers to the human person. So Teresa begins by speaking of the beauty and dignity of the human person” (Interpretive notes, pg. 42; second edition, pg. 16). We are not merely a spark of God, but God actually *lives* in us and makes us beautiful by His light. Throughout the dwelling places, Teresa raises the question of *who we are*, and our marvelous capacity for God. In every step of the dwelling places, Teresa emphasizes the importance of self-knowledge.

“Do you think it matters little for a soul with a wandering mind to understand this truth and see that there is no need to go to heaven in order to speak with one’s Eternal Father or find delight in Him? Nor is there any need to shout. However softly we speak, He is near enough to hear us. Neither is there any need for wings to go to find Him. All one need do is go into solitude and look at Him within oneself, and not turn away from so good a Guest but with great humility speak to Him as to a father. Beseech Him as you would a father; tell Him about your trials; ask Him for a remedy against them, realizing that you are not worthy to be His daughter” (WP, ch. 28.2).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “It is that we consider our soul to be like a castle made entirely out of a diamond... [We] don’t find anything comparable to the magnificent beauty of a soul and its marvelous capacity. ...He created us in His own image and likeness” (IC, DP I, 1:1).
- “In explaining that we are made in the image and likeness of God, Teresa points out how we have the capacity for God that transcends the human person” (Interpretive notes, pg. 42; second edition, pg. 16). By raising the question of “who we are,” Teresa reminds her readers that God created mankind in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27).
- Unfortunately, most do not strive for self-knowledge. Rather, most travel through life disconnected from the deeper sense of awareness that can transcend superficial

existence. Some things are good and necessary for everyday life; however, it is too easy to become preoccupied with business affairs and pleasure seeking. The sense of personhood (“who we are”) is often bound up in physical appearance, social status or professional standing. As Teresa points out, “[we] limit ourselves to ... the outer wall of the castle; that is, with these bodies of ours.” Consequently, little effort is made to preserve its beauty (see IC, DP I, 1:2).

- How does one enter the castle from the outer courtyard? “Insofar as I can understand, the door of entry to this castle is prayer and reflection” (IC, DP I, 1:7). “The castle is inhabited by God. To enter it is to enter into relationship with God, who dwells in its inmost dwelling place... To pray is to enter into personal relationship with God” (Interpretive notes, pg. 44; second edition, pg. 17).
- Characteristics of persons who enter the first dwelling places: For even though they are very involved in the world, they have good desires to entrust themselves to God and reflect on who they are, although in a rather hurried fashion. They sometimes pray, but their minds are then filled with business matters. However, they have done quite a bit just by entering the lower rooms of the castle (see IC, DP I, 1:8).
- A central concept of Teresa’s spirituality is the realization that God is immanent — that is, He dwells within the innermost mansion of the human soul. For “the Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21).
- Teresa also reminds her readers that God (“the shining sun”) is always in the center of the soul. Nothing can take away the loveliness of His indwelling presence, even as one struggles with sin. “But if a black cloth [one’s sin and distractions] is placed over a crystal that is in the sun, obviously the sun’s brilliance will have no effect on the crystal even though the sun is shining on it” (IC, DP I, 2:3). Therefore, one’s journey into this castle is to re-discover this “shining sun” of God that is already within its center — to come to the realization that all are made in the image and likeness of God.
- “You must not think of these dwelling places in such a way that each one would follow in file after the other; but turn your eyes toward the center, which is the room or royal chamber where the King stays...” (IC, DP I, 2:8).

Note: Teresa’s primary focus is the center as opposed to stages of prayer. This concept is clearly stated in the very beginning: “... in the center and middle is the main dwelling place where the very secret exchanges between God and the soul take place” (IC, DP I, 1:3).

- Teresa stresses the importance of spending time in the room where self-knowledge is dealt with rather than flying off to other rooms. “It is very important for any soul that practices prayer, whether little or much, not to hold itself back and stay in one corner. Let it walk through these dwelling places. ... Don’t force it to stay a long time in one room alone. **Oh, but if it is in the room of self-knowledge!**” (IC, DP I, 2:8, emphasis added).

Note to formator: Emphasize that self-knowledge is not only about sin, but instead more about knowing one's own personality, one's motives, weaknesses, tendencies, etc. — all that goes into making the person who he is.

- Teresa's understanding of self-knowledge is rooted in pondering the grandeur and majesty of God. "Here it will discover its lowliness better than by thinking of itself..." (IC, DP I, 2:8). "In my opinion **we shall never completely know ourselves if we don't strive to know God**. By gazing at His grandeur, we get in touch with our own lowliness; by looking at His purity, we shall see our own filth; by pondering His humility, we shall see how far we are from being humble" (IC, DP I, 2:9). The advantage of such activity is that the intellect and will, now with God, become nobler and better prepared for every good (see IC, DP I, 2:10). True self-knowledge is rooted in the parallel knowledge of God.

Note: Humility is intrinsically connected with both knowledge of self and knowledge of God.

- Teresa further observes that in these first dwelling places, persons are still "absorbed in the world and engulfed in their pleasures and vanities, with their honors and pretenses ..." (IC, DP I, 2:12). If people are to enter the second dwelling places, it is important that they strive to give up unnecessary pre-occupation with worldly affairs. They should do this in conformity with their state in life (see IC, DP I, 2:14).
- Teresa reminds the reader that the wiles of the devil can cause harm to one's prayer life (see IC, DP I, 2:16-17). Of special interest for Seculars is misplaced "zeal" for noticing others' imperfections while being blind to one's own faults. Also, in Teresa's time people were tempted to do excessive penances; in today's climate, people are more likely to excuse themselves from any penance at all or to do penance with mixed motives.
- "...the local communities of the Secular Order... [are] a place to live and promote personal and communal fellowship with God in Christ and... with other brothers and sisters in accordance with the Teresian charism. ... Teresa is aware of the importance of mutual support on the road of prayer and the importance of friendship with others in the common search for God. She also considers as fundamental to such friendship, culture, the human virtues, gentleness, empathy, prudence, discretion, simplicity, kindness, joy, and availability, as we seek to 'walk in truth before God and people'" (OCDS Const. Art. 24 a and b).
- "...true perfection consists in love of God and neighbor; the more perfectly we keep these two commandments the more perfect we will be" (IC, DP I, 2:17).

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:37-40).

“Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. This person is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons...” (CCC 357).

Session Three: Progression in Prayer

Required Reading: *The Interior Castle: Study Edition, the Second Dwelling Places*, ch. 1

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes

Explanatory note: “Teresa’s castle is a real symbol. It represents human interiority, human struggle, and the call to transcendence. ... To remain in the castle, especially in these beginnings, Teresa is convinced that it requires struggle. The attractions and pull of the world ... are extremely powerful. She refers to the struggle as a ‘great war’” (Interpretive Notes, pg. 77; second edition, pg. 49).

Will: The power to make choices, good or bad. The whole aim of the persons who are beginning prayer should be that they work with determination and with every possible effort to **bring their will into conformity with God’s will**. What cannot be done all at once can be done little by little. The soul should bend its will if it wishes that prayer be beneficial to it (Glossary, pg. 465; second edition, 437, emphasis added).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “This stage pertains to those who have already begun to practice prayer and have understood how important it is not to stay in the first dwelling places” (IC, DP II, 1:2).
- Souls in these dwelling places, unlike the souls in the first dwelling places, recognize the dangers, and are attentive to the voice of the Lord. “So these persons are able to hear the Lord when He calls... [in the midst] of business affairs, pleasures, and worldly buying and selling, [yet they are] still falling into sin and rising again” (IC, DP II, 1:2).
- They recognize God’s voice “through words spoken by other good people, or through sermons, or through what is read in good books...through illness and trials, or through a truth that He teaches during the brief moments we spend in prayer” (IC, DP II, 1:3).
- On the other hand, there are more distractions caused by devils in this dwelling place and **perseverance is most necessary here**. “It is in this stage that the devils represent these snakes (worldly things) and the temporal pleasures of the present as though almost eternal” (IC, DP II, 1:3, emphasis added).
- “Faith, however, teaches [the soul] about where it will find fulfillment.” Teresa says memory reminds persons of their mortality and inclines the will to love; it especially keeps in mind how this true Lover never leaves us — accompanying and giving us life. The intellect points out all the ways in which life within the castle is superior to life outside. “The intellect tells the soul of its certainty that outside this castle neither security nor peace will be found” (see IC, DP II, 1:4).
- Teresa warns against thinking about consolations at this beginning stage. To do so, she says, would be like building a foundation on sand. “If the foundation is on sand, the whole building will fall to the ground.” Her advice is to embrace the cross, following the

Lord's example. Teresa promises that if we are determined to undergo exterior trials, God will favor us interiorly (see IC, DP II, 1:7).

- One must avoid prayer that tries to tell God what one thinks is best. "There's no need for us to be advising Him about what He should give us, for He can rightly tell us that we don't know what we're asking for." Instead, one should walk with great determination, and try in every way to bring one's will into conformity with God's will (see IC, DP II, 1:8).
- Teresa now offers some reassurance. Failures should not discourage nor keep one from advancing. Trials and even failures can teach self-knowledge. The soul will never have peace outside of the castle. "Well, believe me, if we don't obtain and have peace in our own house, we'll not find it outside. ...I ask those who have not begun to enter within themselves to do so..." (IC, DP II, 1:9). Teresa's focus is on prayer, meditation, and recollection.
- Because those in the second dwelling places can have so many disturbances, Teresa believes it is very important to consult experienced Catholic persons for spiritual direction. She further adds that even if they cannot find an experienced person to teach them, the Lord will guide everything to their benefit if they persevere (see IC, DP II, 1:10).
- Interior prayer, self-knowledge, and reflection on what is owed to God are essential to progression in prayer. "Well now, it is foolish to think that we will enter heaven without entering into ourselves, coming to know ourselves, reflecting on our misery and what we owe God, and begging Him often for mercy" (IC, DP II, 1:11).

"Members of the Secular Order are called to live the demands of following Christ in union with Him, by accepting His teachings and devoting themselves to Him. ... to carry the cross of accepting God's will revealed in the mission that He has confided to each person"
(OCDS Const. Art. 10).

Session Four: Transition

Required Reading: The Interior Castle: Study Edition, *the Third Dwelling Places*, ch. 1 and 2

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes

Explanatory note: One of the interesting aspects of the relationship between knowledge of self and knowledge of God comes up in Teresa's understanding of the soul in the third dwelling places. The third dwelling is the one in which the soul must move beyond listening and understanding to **loving and doing**. "It is the movement of ethical principles into concrete, loving action; so that devotion to God and others, is not simply theory but a way of putting love and values into practice... This stage represents either a point of entry into deeper, transformative relationship with God or the end of the road for those who equate religion (primarily) with its codes, creeds and rituals" (Entering Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle).

*"For perfection, as well as its reward, does not consist in spiritual delights
but in greater love and in deeds done with greater justice and truth"*
(IC, DP III, 2:10).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- Entry into the third dwelling places, according to Teresa, is somewhat of a moral victory for the soul. "...through perseverance and the mercy of God, they have won these battles and have entered the rooms of the third stage... Certainly we are right in calling such a person blessed... The Lord never fails to give a person this security of conscience, which is no small blessing. I said 'security' and I was wrong, for there is no security in this life, so always understand that I mean, 'if he doesn't abandon the path he began on'" (IC, DP III, 1:1).
- Teresa admires persons in the third dwelling places for "guarding themselves against venial sins; they are fond of doing penance and setting aside periods for recollection; they spend their time well, practicing works of charity toward their neighbors; and they are very balanced in their use of speech and dress and in the governing of their household" (IC, DP III, 1:5). However, she cautiously reminds about the necessity of progression in prayer: "...since there is need of still more in order that the soul possess the Lord completely, it is not enough to say we want it [life of prayer] just as this was not enough for the young man whom the Lord told what he must do in order to be perfect" (IC, DP III, 1:6).

Note: This state in the third dwelling places, though seemingly good and exemplary, is not the summit of spiritual life. One should have the courage to go beyond the security and delight found in external practices and pious exercises.

- Teresa recalls the young man whom the Lord told what one must do in order to be perfect (Matt. 19:16-22). She observes that many are like him, and ordinarily "the great dryness in prayer" comes from this shift in consciousness (see IC, DP III, 1:6). Like the young man in the Gospel, one can go away sad or accept the invitation and move forward (see IC, DP III, 1.7).

- Like the rich young man, the soul is invited to move beyond a methodical relationship with God and enter more deeply into a new, loving relationship with God. “For He must give the reward in conformity with the love we have for Him. And this love... must not be fabricated in our imaginations but proved by deeds. And don’t think He needs our works; He needs the determination of our will” (IC, DP III, 1:7).
- “The Lord will give you understanding of them [favors and gifts] so that out of dryness you may draw humility — and not disquiet... Be convinced that where humility is truly present God will give peace and conformity — even though He may never give consolations — by which one will walk with greater contentment than will others with their consolations” (IC, DP III, 1:9). Accordingly, the soul grows more deeply in self-knowledge.

Note: “We conclude that self-knowledge flows first from this dry night, and that from this knowledge as from its source proceeds the other knowledge of God. Hence, St. Augustine said to God: *‘Let me know myself, Lord, I will know You’*” (The Dark Night 1.12:5).

- Teresa goes on to describe some of the imperfections displayed by these well-ordered and upright souls:
 - “His Majesty will try them in some minor matters, and they will go about so disturbed and afflicted...For everything in their minds leads them to think they are **suffering for God, and so they don’t come to realize that their disturbance is an imperfection**” (IC, DP III, 2:1-2, emphasis added).
 - They worry about their health, wealth, and prestige. They may experience financial gain, but it’s never been enough, and they seek more and more wealth without satisfaction. Teresa observes that such a person “lacks this freedom of spirit” (see IC, DP III, 2:4).
 - “They would like everyone to live a life as well ordered as they do; and please God they will not think their grief is for the faults of others and in their minds turn it into something meritorious” (IC, DP III 2:5).
- “Let us look at our own faults and leave aside those of others, for it is very characteristic of persons with such well-ordered lives to be shocked by everything. Perhaps we could truly learn from the one who shocks us what is most important, even though we may surpass him in external composure and our way of dealing with others. ... So, it is better to carry out what our rule says, to strive to live always in silence and hope” (IC, DP III, 2:13).

*“We are fonder of consolations than we are of the cross. Test us, Lord — for you know the truth — so that we may **know ourselves**”* (IC, DP III, 1:9).

Session Five: Conversion

Required Reading: The Interior Castle: Study Edition, *the Fourth Dwelling Places*, ch. 1, 2 and 3

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes

Explanatory note: Teresa begins this stage of the journey with a scriptural reference, Psalm 119:32: “I have run the way of Your commandments, *when You have enlarged my heart.*” By means of expansion (awareness/consciousness) the soul is getting closer to the center of God. Teresa also explains the expansion of the soul’s affective capacity; that is, the ability to move beyond personal self-interest and to extend oneself, through compassion and charity, toward others. Such experiences result in a **new kind of self-knowledge**: through the grace of God, one can live in its deepest, created potential, and could experience the previously unknown depth in its own interior personhood (see Entering Teresa’s Interior Castle).

Note: Compared to the Way of Perfection, the description of prayer using different terminologies (vocal, prayer of recollection, prayer of quiet, etc.) is kept to the minimum in these dwelling places. Teresa’s primary focus is the soul’s experience in finding the center where God dwells. She entrusts herself to the Holy Spirit as she begins to write about the remaining dwelling places.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “Since these dwelling places are closer to where the King is, their beauty is great.” To come to this stage is truly a blessing and a gift. “For the Lord gives when He desires, as He desires, and to whom He desires. Since these blessings belong to Him, He does no injustice to anyone” (IC, DP IV, 1:2).
- Teresa makes a distinction between “**consolations**” that are acquired by one’s own efforts at prayer and virtuous works, and “**spiritual delights**” that are purely a gift from God. It is interesting to note that she points out that similar feelings of “consolation” can come from happy worldly events because they begin in human nature. On the other hand, “The spiritual delights begin in God, but the human nature feels and enjoy them...” (IC, DP IV, 1:4).
- Teresa quotes a line from Psalm 119 “when You enlarged my heart” to give a better sense of spiritual delights. **Spiritual delights** expand the heart (IC, DP IV, 1:5) because they are infused by God (supernatural). **Consolations** do not expand the heart, because they have their roots in human nature (natural) (see IC, DP IV, 1:5).

Note to the formator: Be careful not to disparage human effort during prayer. One prays as one is able, while always being ready to let God take the lead. Every stage of prayer is of value and a person will move back and forth continuously. IV, 1:6 gives good advice on flexibility.

- “...in order to profit by this path and ascend to the dwelling places we desire, the important thing is not to think much but to love much... Perhaps we don’t know what

love is. I wouldn't be very surprised, because it doesn't consist in great delight but in desiring with strong determination to please God in everything..." (IC, DP IV, 1:7).

- Teresa uses the image of two water troughs to explain the difference between consolations and spiritual delight (two sources of prayer — acquired and supernatural). One trough is filled with the help of aqueducts from far away (acquired) and the other is filled from an abundant spring whose source is located at the trough itself (supernatural). She says the consolations are like the water coming from the aqueducts; they require human effort in the form of meditation, recollection, etc. Spiritual delights are like the abundant spring. They flow from God (in the center) and are accompanied by peace and quiet in the interior part of the soul (see IC, DP IV, 2:3-4).
- Thus, in the fourth dwelling places, the soul discovers for the first time its own "center" and participates in its expansion of heart. "I was now thinking, while writing this, that the verse mentioned above, [when You enlarged my heart], — says the heart was expanded. I don't think the experience is something, as I say, that rises from the heart, but from another part still more interior, as from something deep. I think this must be the center of the soul... For certainly I see secrets within ourselves that have often caused me to marvel. And how many more there must be!" (IC, DP IV, 2:5). In finding the center, Teresa bursts out in prayer:

Oh, my Lord and my God, how great are Your grandeurs! We go about here below like foolish shepherds, for while it seems that we are getting some knowledge of You it must amount to no more than nothing; for even in our own selves there are great secrets that we don't understand. I say "no more than nothing" because I'm comparing it to the many, many secrets that are in You, not because grandeurs we see in You are not extraordinary; and that includes those we can attain knowledge of through Your works" (IC, DP IV, 2:5).

- "The very experience of it makes us realize that it is not of the same metal as we ourselves but fashioned from the purest gold of the divine wisdom. Here, in my opinion, the faculties are not united but absorbed and looking as though in wonder at what they see" (IC, DP IV, 2:6).

Note: Teresa reminds the reader again of the concept of "who we are" and the soul's marvelous capacity for God.

- Teresa adds that the true value of prayer is in the effects and deeds that follow: "It seems clear to me that the will must in some way be united with God's will. But it is in the **effects and deeds** following afterward that one discerns the true value of prayer..." (IC, DP IV, 2:8). [emphasis added]
- Teresa continues to give practical advice on how to walk in spiritual delight: **First**, practice humility; **second**, one must love God without self-interest; **third**, the authentic preparation for these favors is to prepare oneself for unexpected calamity — ready to accept anything that life brings — and imitate the Lord, rather than to desire or expect spiritual delight. One's own efforts or striving after these delights would be useless anyway, since the favors are a pure gift. Teresa believes the Lord will give spiritual

The Monthly Sessions

delight and many other favors to those who humble themselves and are detached (see IC, DP IV, 2:8-10). “I really believe that whoever humbles himself and is detached (I mean in fact because the detachment and humility must not be just in our thoughts — for they often deceive us — but complete) will receive ... this water [contemplation] from the Lord and many other favors that we don’t know how to desire. May He be forever praised and blessed, amen” (IC, DP IV, 2:10).

- Although the soul can do nothing to initiate the spiritual delights, it can in fact cultivate a place where such prayerful moments with God can happen. Thus, instead of seeking God in external things, the soul begins to seek God within. Like a good shepherd with a whistle so gentle, God calls the soul to make this inward journey, and the soul recognizes the Beloved’s voice and follows (see IC, DP IV, 3:2). “... It is a great help to seek [God] within, where He is found more easily and in a way more beneficial to us than when sought in creatures...” (IC, DP IV, 3:3).
- This inward searching takes the form of a “gentle drawing inward ... (like) a turtle drawing into its shell ... so that the soul instead of striving to engage in discourse, strives to remain attentive and aware of what the Lord is working in it” (IC, DP IV, 3:3-4).
- Teresa beautifully explains the concept of expansion of the soul with an image of a fount that does not overflow but expands. The more God pours into the soul, the greater its capacity becomes, keeping everything within itself. The soul is not as tied down as it was before in things pertaining to the service of God, but has much more freedom. While the fear of offending God increases, servile fear and worldly fears are gone, and the soul is given great courage (see IC, DP IV, 3:9).

Summary: To grow in this way (interior prayer and self-knowledge) requires an ongoing dedication to change one’s habits and behaviors. Human growth in the deepest sense is the continuous exploration of human potentiality, especially the capacity to love. Compassion — the impulse to love and serve others as well as self — is possible only through the full integration of wisdom of the heart and dilation of its capacity to feel deeply. Teresa emphasizes that it would be incorrect to think of the “spiritual delights” as merely a set of experiences with no lasting effect in the soul. Having known through experience the healing power of God’s grace, the soul can now move towards joy and true delight in God and others (see Entering Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle).

“The Carmelite Secular will make sure to have special times set apart for prayer, as times of greater awareness of the Lord’s presence and an interior space for a personal and intimate meeting with Him. This will lead to prayer as an attitude of life, that will ‘always and everywhere recognize God..., seek His will in every event, see Christ in all people whether they be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things both in themselves [self-knowledge] and in their relation to humankind’s final goal. Thus, they will achieve a union of contemplation and action in history, integrating faith and life, prayer and action, contemplation and Christian commitment”
(OCDS Const. Art. 20).

Session Six: Transformation in Christ (continued in Session Seven)

Required Reading: The Interior Castle: Study Edition, *the Fifth Dwelling Places*, ch. 1 and 2

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes

Explanatory note: The expansion of the soul experienced in the fourth dwelling places allows the soul in the fifth dwelling places to explore its own internal depth. Perhaps for the first time, the soul experiences what it is to dwell deeply within itself (in God). Here the space created in it through the process of expansion (progression in prayer) now becomes the location for the powerful form of transformation, which Teresa represents through the metaphor of a caterpillar changing into a beautiful white butterfly (see Entering Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- Teresa reminds her readers that all who wear the holy habit of Carmel are called to prayer and contemplation. "This call explains our origin; we are the descendants of men who felt this call, of those holy fathers of Mount Carmel who, in such great solitude ... sought this treasure, this precious pearl of contemplation that we are speaking about" (IC, DP V, 1:2). Teresa encourages the soul to dig until it finds this hidden treasure. "The truth is that the treasure lies within our very selves" (IC, DP V, 1:2).
- Teresa emphasizes the uniqueness of the union that takes place in the fifth dwelling places between God and the soul. The soul is left with "wonderful blessings because God works within it without anyone disturbing Him [God], not even ourselves" (IC, DP V, 1:5). Thus, "this union is above all earthly joys, above all delights, above all consolations and still more than that" (IC, DP V, 1:6). Previous unions were felt as if from the surface of the skin, whereas union in the fifth dwelling places is felt in the marrow of the bones (see IC, DP V, 1:6).
- Although the union is brief, it is intense enough to communicate to the soul immediately that it is indeed true union with God, embedding in the soul the wisdom of God. "God so places Himself in the interior of that soul that when it returns to itself it can in no way doubt that it was in God and God was in it" (IC, DP V, 1:9).
- How does one know for sure that one has reached the prayer of union? For Teresa, the certainty left in the soul is the clear indication of this union. "I don't say that it then saw the truth but that afterward it sees the truth clearly, not because of a vision but because of a *certitude* remaining in the soul that only God can place there" (IC, DP V, 1:10, emphasis added). Teresa goes on to explain that "whoever does not receive this certitude does not experience union of the whole soul with God, but union of some faculty, or that he experiences one of the many other kinds of favors God grants souls" (IC, DP V, 1:11).
- Explaining the subjective experience of this union, here and in the next two chapters, Teresa goes on to describe the dynamics of transformation in Christ by using two

The Monthly Sessions

metaphors, namely, the wine cellar in the Song of Songs and the transformation of the caterpillar into a butterfly.

- “I understand this union to be the wine cellar where the Lord wishes to place us when He desires and as He desires. But however great the effort we make to do so, we cannot enter. His Majesty must place us there and enter Himself into the center of the soul. And that He may show His marvels more clearly, He doesn’t want our will to have any part to play, for it has been entirely surrendered to Him” (IC, DP V, 1:12). God wants to enter the center of the soul without going through any door (the faculties), as He entered the place where His disciples were when He said, “peace to you” (Jn. 20:19).
- Teresa describes the life cycle of a silkworm and makes a comparison to the transformation of souls in this prayer of union. “The worms nourish themselves on the mulberry leaves, until having grown to full size, they settle on some twigs. There with their little mouths, they themselves go about spinning the silk and making some very thick little cocoons in which they enclose themselves. The silkworm, which is fat and ugly, then dies, and a little white butterfly, which is very pretty, comes forth from the cocoon” (IC, DP V, 2:2).
- In dwelling places 1-4, Teresa dealt with the growth of this silkworm. In the fifth dwelling places, the worm begins to spin the silk and build the house where it will die. This house is Christ, and the soul’s life is hidden in Him (see IC, DP V, 2:4).
- Teresa encourages the soul to be quick (as are these silkworms) to build up this house of Christ by getting rid of self-love, self-will, and inordinate attachments to things of the world. “...the Lord Himself will become the reward of this work. ... His Majesty wants to join our little labors with the great ones He suffered so that all the work may become one” (IC, DP V, 2:5-6). The soul is now sharing in the essence of God through participation.
- The butterfly represents a new and more centered identity of the soul. The soul learns to live with the possibilities and challenges its new identity generates. First and foremost is a completely new understanding of oneself. Teresa describes this **self-knowledge** by writing that, as a result of this union, the soul’s very being has been so transformed that it “doesn’t recognize itself” (IC, DP V, 2:7). Thus, the soul in the fifth dwelling places begins to see the world from its new vantage point as a “butterfly.”
- The soul’s new identity gives birth to a new potential and new insights. It has experienced deep peace and rest in this union. “[The soul] doesn’t know where to alight and rest. Since it has experienced such wonderful rest, all that it sees on earth displeases it... Almost each time it gains new treasures. It no longer has any esteem for the works it did while a worm... it now has wings... Everything wearies it, for it has learned through experience that creatures cannot give it true rest” (IC, DP V, 2:8).
- Teresa reminds that there must always be a cross while living on earth (see IC, DP V, 2:9). She explains that the soul who has experienced the prayer of union suffers because it is now transformed and **willing to participate in God’s actions** in its life. She compares the soul to wax impressed with a seal. Like the wax, the soul remains still and gives

consent to God. "Oh, goodness of God...All you want is our will and that there be no impediment in the way" (IC, DP V, 2:12). "Oh, great delight, to suffer in doing the will of God! (IC, DP V, 2:14).

"Carmelite Seculars accept from the viewpoint of faith, hope and love, the work and suffering of each day, family worries, the uncertainty and limitations of human life, sickness, lack of understanding and all that makes up the fabric of our earthly existence. They will strive to make all this material for their dialogue with God, in order to grow in an attitude of praise and gratitude to the Lord. In order to live truly, simply, freely, humbly and completely confident in the Lord..."

(OCDS Constitutions, Art. 22).

Session Seven: Transformation in Christ (continued from Session Six)

Required Reading: The Interior Castle: Study Edition, *the Fifth Dwelling Places*, ch. 3 and 4

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes

Explanatory note: After writing most intimately about the prayer of union, Teresa goes on to describe the importance of fraternal charity. The prayer of union is of little help unless one makes an effort to go “forward in the service of the Lord and self-knowledge” (IC, DP V, 3:1). The prayer of union is not something that one should be preoccupied about receiving. One must strive with all one’s being to keep the will fixed only on what God wills.

“St. Teresa appreciates the assistance of another in the spiritual life: love grows where there is respectful dialogue; the purpose of which is to know oneself better so as to be pleasing to God. Community meetings take place in a congenial atmosphere of dialogue and sharing. Prayer, formation, and a joyful atmosphere are essential for deepening friendly relationships and ensuring for everyone mutual support in the daily living out of the Teresian Carmelite lay vocation in the family, at work, and in other social situations”
(OCDS Const. Art. 24, c).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “...I hold that it is God’s desire that a favor so great not be given in vain; if a person doesn’t herself benefit, the favor will benefit others. ... it always brings profit to other souls during the time that it continues to live virtuously; and they catch fire from its fire” (IC, DP V, 3:1).
- Always keep the will fixed only on what is God’s will. “Oh, how desirable is this union with God’s will! Happy the soul that has reached it. Such a soul will live tranquilly in this life, and in the next as well” (IC, DP V, 3:3).
- Teresa laments that self-love, self-esteem, lack of charity, and other things keep the soul from advancing to what is required for complete union with the will of God (see IC, DP V, 3:6). The Lord asks only two things: love of His Majesty and love of neighbor. “These are what we must work for. By observing them with perfection, we do His will and so will be united with Him” (IC, DP V, 3:7).
- “The most certain sign, in my opinion, as to whether or not we are observing these two laws is whether we observe well the love of neighbor. ... And be certain that the more advanced you see you are in love for your neighbor, the more advanced you will be in the love of God” (IC, DP V, 3:8). “I believe that, since our nature is bad, we will not reach perfection in the love of neighbor if that love doesn’t rise from love of God as its root” (IC, DP V, 3:9).

- Teresa observes that union does not lie in spiritual delight and devotions, but rather “works are what the Lord wants!” (IC, DP V, 3:11). She goes on to give concrete examples of true union with His will. “He desires that if you see a Sister who is sick to whom you can bring some relief, you have compassion for her and not worry about losing this devotion; and if she is suffering pain, you also feel it, and that, if necessary, you fast so that she might eat — not so much for her sake as because you know it is your Lord’s desire. This is true union with His will...” (IC, DP V, 3:11).
- Teresa further observes, “when you see yourselves lacking in this love [love of neighbor], even though you have devotion and gratifying experiences that make you think you have reached this stage, and you experience some little suspension in the prayer of quiet (for to some it then appears that everything has been accomplished), believe me you have not reached union” (IC, DP V, 3:12). Teresa reminds again that one must be empathetic to the hurts and afflictions of the people in one’s life. The needs and burdens of others should be part of one’s daily prayer, and the heart must open out in compassion to sinners, strangers, and the miserable.

“Our love for our fellow humans is the measure of our love for God. But it is different from a natural love of our neighbor. Natural love goes out to this one or that one, who may be close to us through the bond of blood or through a kinship of character or common interests. The rest are ‘strangers’ who do not concern us, who, it may be, eventually come to be repulsive, so that one keeps them as far away as possible from contact with us. For the Christian, there are no such ‘strangers’... Rather, he is the ‘neighbor,’ this one who stand before us and who is in greatest need of our help; it doesn’t matter whether he is related to us or not; whether we ‘like’ him or not; whether he is ‘morally worthy’ of help or not. The love of Christ knows no bounds, it never stops, it does not shrink back from ugliness and dirt. He came for the sake of sinners and not for the sake of the just. If the love of Christ lives in us then we will, like Him, go out after the lost sheep”

(St. Edith Stein, *The Mystery of Christmas*. The entire quote is in the Interpretive Notes, pg. 201; second edition, pg. 174.)

- Teresa is setting a stage for the next dwelling places by recalling the life of the butterfly that she introduced previously. “It seems to me you have a desire to see what this little moth is doing and where it rests since, as was explained, it rests neither in spiritual delights nor in earthly consolations. Its flight is higher...” (IC, DP V, 4:1). “Although it is always bearing fruit by doing good for itself and for other souls, it never stops to rest, because it fails to find its true repose” (IC, DP V, 4:2). Teresa’s understanding is that the prayer of union does not yet reach the stage of spiritual betrothal (see IC, DP V, 4:4).
- Before proceeding to the next dwelling places, Teresa shares a few cautionary notes with the reader. She warns that even those who greatly desire to serve God are not immune to temptations (see IC, DP V, 4:4-6). Hence, one must walk with special

The Monthly Sessions

attention as to how one is progressing, especially in love of one another, in the desire to be humble, and in the performance of ordinary tasks (see IC, DP V, 4:9).

- Teresa concludes “that we strive always to advance. And if we don’t advance, let us walk with great fear. Without doubt the devil wants to cause some lapse... Love is never idle, and a failure to grow would be a very bad sign. A soul that has tried to be the betrothed of God Himself, that is now intimate with His Majesty, and has reached the boundaries that were mentioned, must not go to sleep” (IC, DP V, 4:10).

Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world.

(1 Peter 5:8-9)

Session Eight: Awakening to God (continued in Session Nine)

Required Reading: The Interior Castle: Study Edition, *the Sixth Dwelling Places*, chapters 1-5

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes

Explanatory note: The sixth dwelling places breaks with the pattern Teresa followed in the other dwelling places. Over a third of the book's chapters are in the sixth dwelling places. This is not surprising, given that these chapters refer to a large portion of Teresa's life, lasting about fifteen years. The first subject Teresa discusses in these dwelling places is what St. John of the Cross calls the "dark night." Though Teresa does not use the same term, the purifying reality of the mystical night (darkness, trials, the cross) is the first characteristic she addresses in the sixth dwelling places (see Interpretive notes pgs. 229-232; second edition, pgs. 215-218). Teresa observes that the trials and afflictions experienced at this stage strengthen the soul so that it will have the courage to be joined to the Lord (see IC, DP VI, 4:1).

Note: The unitive experiences of the soul in the sixth dwelling places also take the form of visions, locutions, raptures, ecstasies, tears, flight of the spirit and jubilation. Teresa describes them in significant detail. Because they are treated only briefly in these two sessions, candidates may find it useful to read the descriptions with attention for their own enrichment. For further understanding of these communications, please refer to the Glossary: *Locution*, pg. 460 (second edition, pg. 431) and *Supernatural* and *Visions*, pgs. 464-465 (second edition, pgs. 435-437).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- "Oh, God help me, what interior and exterior trials the soul suffers before entering the seventh dwelling place!" (IC, DP VI, 1:1). Teresa observes that perhaps not all souls will be led along this path (see IC, DP VI, 1:2).
- Teresa describes the roller-coaster ride of a soul in the sixth dwelling places where it experiences the lows of many trials and the highs of mystical communications. The trials that she describes are of many kinds, including misunderstandings, ridicule, and being the object of gossip. Even being praised is a trial (see IC, DP VI, 1:3-4).
- Teresa, however, notes that the soul is not troubled by these trials. "And when the soul reaches the stage at which it pays little attention to praise, it pays much less to disapproval; on the contrary, it rejoices in this and finds it a very sweet music. This is an amazing truth. Blame does not intimidate the soul but strengthens it" (IC, DP VI, 1:5).

Note: These are the characteristics of the transformed soul in the sixth dwelling places. They are not disturbed by external conditions. As St. Paul proclaims, "I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things, I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and being in need. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:12-13).

The Monthly Sessions

- Teresa also speaks about spiritual afflictions and sufferings that one cannot describe. The best aid to endurance is to “engage in external works of charity and to hope in the mercy of God” (IC, DP VI, 1:13).
- By recalling the little moth, Teresa reassures the reader that these afflictions and sufferings do not affect the moth (soul) in any way at all. “Seemingly we have left the little moth far behind; but we have not, for these are the trials that make it fly still higher” (IC, DP VI, 2:1).
- She further observes, the circumstances of life, no matter how painful, become a deeper “wound of love” for God (see IC, DP VI: 2:2). “This action of love is so powerful that the soul dissolves with desire, and yet it doesn’t know what to ask for since clearly it thinks that its God is with it” (IC, DP VI, 2:4).
- Besides the “wound,” Teresa also speaks about the “fire.” “...a spark leapt forth and so struck the soul that the flaming fire was felt by it” (IC, DP VI, 2:4).
- “These sixth dwelling places represent a region in which immense desires are experienced. Not arising from anything outside the soul, but coming from deep within it, the desires are as though produced by an arrow that wounds the soul. The wound, however, is both painful and delightful...Her many faceted desires are being strongly pulled now in one direction, toward Jesus Christ” (Interpretive Notes, pg. 240; second edition, 215). “The desires are not passing but remain...” (IC, DP VI, 6:5).
- Mixed in with these trials, sufferings and desires are the ecstatic experiences of the soul — locutions, visions, and raptures. Teresa says that locutions can be from God, from the devil, or from one’s own imagination. She warns that the safest path is to pay little attention to them (see IC, DP VI, 3:2). “All the good comes from how one benefits by these words; and pay no more attention to those that are not in close conformity with Scripture...; it’s necessary to treat them as if they were temptations in matters of faith, and thus resist them always” (IC, DP VI, 3:4). (Refer to St. John of the Cross in the Ascent for further information: Ascent, Book 2, ch. 11.)

Note: “Teresa ... brings to the reader two thematic lines of thought. In the first, she gives testimony that the Lord has spoken to her..., and her first mission is to testify to this. In the second, she must explain how this comes about. How can we be sure that the words come from God?” (Interpretive notes, pg. 260; second edition, pg. 235).

- There are three signs that indicate locutions may be from God. Discernment and spiritual direction are essential; no one should trust their own judgment:
 - a. First is the power and authority the words carry with them. “... for locutions from God effect what they say... A soul finds itself in the midst of all the tribulation and disturbance..., in darkness of the intellect and in dryness; with one word alone of these locutions from the Lord (‘don’t be distressed’), it is left calm and free from all distress...” (IC, DP VI, 3:5).
 - b. “The second sign is the great quiet left in the soul, the devout and peaceful recollection, the readiness to engage in the praises of God” (IC, DP VI, 3:6).

- c. “The third sign is that these words remain in the memory for a very long time, and some are never forgotten... The certitude is so strong that even in things that in one’s own opinion sometimes seem impossible... there is an assurance in the soul itself that cannot be overcome.” (IC, DP VI, 3:7).
- “If the locutions come from the imagination, there are none of these signs; neither certitude, nor peace, nor interior delight” (see IC, DP VI, 3:10).
 - “One thing very certain is that, when the spirit is from God the soul esteems itself less... it has more awareness of its sins and is more forgetful of its own gain, and its will and memory are employed more in seeking only the honor of God...” (IC, DP VI, 3:17).
 - Teresa describes another kind of rapture that she calls a “flight of the spirit.” She says that while persons are very much in their senses, they can experience a sudden, swift movement of the soul: “With a powerful impulse, a huge wave rises up so forcefully that it lifts high this little bark that is our soul” (IC, DP VI, 5:1-3). Consequently, the soul is left with great blessings: knowledge of the grandeur of God, self-knowledge and humility, and little esteem of earthly things. Teresa concludes by calling these blessings jewels that the Spouse begins to give to the betrothed (see, IC, DP VI, 5:10-11).
 - “...for Teresa, these [experiences] are not events that can be explained through one’s ordinary psychological experience — that is, reduced to the plane of one’s natural conscious or unconscious makeup; they come from another, superior plane and **are recognized by their effects**: ‘the favor brings wonderful benefits to the soul, the more customary of which are the determination to suffer for God, the desire to have many trials, and the determination to withdraw from earthly satisfactions and conversations and other similar things’ (IC 6, ch. 2, no.6)” (Interpretive notes, pg. 242; second edition, pg. 217). [emphasis added]

“O my powerful God, how sublime are Your secrets, and how different spiritual things are from all that is visible and understandable here below. There is nothing that serves to explain this favor...” (IC, DP VI, 2:3).

Summary: In a way, Teresa’s experience of ecstasy as explained in the fourth and fifth dwelling places was an experience of going deeper within herself, where she went beyond herself and entered into the orbit of the Divine. Now in the sixth dwelling places, another kind of ecstasy takes place. The soul is taken out of itself and elevated to the Divine. This “flight of the spirit,” as Teresa names it, is substantially the same as ecstasy, but it is experienced differently (see Interpretive notes, pgs. 290-291; second edition, pgs. 264-265). This experience of prayer has the effect, ultimately, of allowing the love of God to enter the world — and touch humanity.

*“Considering the origins of Carmel and the Teresian charism, the fundamental elements of the vocation of Secular Carmelites are:
a) to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ, supported by the imitation and patronage of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, whose way of life is, for Carmel, a model of*

The Monthly Sessions

being conformed to Christ;

*b) to **seek a mysterious union with God**; by way of contemplation and apostolic activity, indissolubly joined together, for service to the Church;*

c) to infuse prayer and life with apostolic zeal in a climate of human and Christian Community;

d) to give importance to the commitment to evangelization; in the ministry of spirituality as the collaboration of the Secular Order, faithful to the Teresian Carmelite identity."

(OCDS Constitutions, Art. 9, emphasis added).

Session Nine: Awakening to God (continued from Session Eight)

Required Reading: The Interior Castle: Study Edition, *the Sixth Dwelling Places*, ch. 6-11

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes; *Gaudium et Spes*, 22 (Appendix A); St. Teresa of Avila – 100 Themes, nos. 46 (Appendix B) and 98 (Appendix C)

Explanatory note: The progressive shift in the soul's reality is to understand how the soul experiences a radical transformation of its known personhood and a gradual union with God, which the soul will celebrate in the seventh dwelling places. This change is accomplished gradually by means of revelations and ecstasy, what we could call intellectual, emotional and physical experiences of the subjective reality of God. All of these experiences are ways in which a final purification of the soul's desire for union is effected in the soul (see Entering Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle, pg. 89).

Humanity of Christ: In chapter 7 of *The Sixth Dwelling Places*, Teresa discusses the vital importance of frequent meditation on the sacred humanity of Christ. "When speaking of the intellectual and imaginative visions of Christ, Teresa pauses to make some firm assertions about the human and divine Christ present throughout one's spiritual pilgrimage. He is the one through whom all blessings come. No state is so sublime that a person must always be occupied with divinity and thus obliged to empty the mind of all reference to the human Christ. **'Life is long, and there are in it many trials, and we need to look at Christ our model, how He suffered them, and also at His apostles and saints, so as to bear these trials with perfection. Jesus is too good of a companion for us to turn away from Him'** [IC, DP VI, 7:13]. ...The inability of contemplative souls to engage in discursive thought about the mysteries of the Passion and life of Christ in their prayer is very common, she holds. **But contemplating these mysteries, 'dwelling on them with a simple gaze,' in Teresa's words, 'will not impede the most sublime prayer'** [IC, DP VI, 7:6,7,11,12]" (General Introduction, pg. 20, second edition, pg. xxxiv). [emphasis added]

*"In Jesus Christ, the whole of God's truth has been made manifest. 'Full of grace and truth,' He came as the 'light of the world,' He is the Truth. 'Whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness.' The disciple of Jesus continues in His word so as to know 'the Truth [that] will make you free' and that sanctifies. To follow Jesus is to live in 'the Spirit of Truth,' Whom the Father sends in His name and Who leads 'into all the truth.' To His disciples Jesus teaches the unconditional love of truth: 'Let what you say be simply "Yes or No"'" (CCC 2466)
(Interpretive notes, pg. 369; second edition, pg. 240).*

- After explaining her extraordinary experiences in detail, Teresa reminds the readers of the immediate and important task at hand. "Let's not think that everything is accomplished through much weeping but set our hands to the task of hard work and virtue... I consider it better for us to place ourselves in the presence of the Lord and look at His mercy and grandeur and at our own lowliness, and let Him give us what He wants, whether water or dryness. He knows best what is suitable for us. With such an attitude we shall go about refreshed, and the devil will not have so much chance to play tricks on us" (IC, DP VI, 6:9).

The Monthly Sessions

- Teresa goes on to explain yet another kind of ecstasy. “In the midst of the experiences that are both painful and delightful together, our Lord sometimes gives the soul feelings of **jubilation** and a strange prayer... It is, in my opinion, a deep union of the faculties...” (IC, DP VI, 6:10, emphasis added).
- The joy of this form of prayer is “so excessive that the soul wouldn’t want to enjoy it alone but wants to tell everyone about it...” Thus, the soul radiates this love outward and draws people to it as if in a communal celebration. “It seems it has found itself and that, like the father of the prodigal son, it would want to prepare a festival and invite all” (IC, DP VI, 6:10). This jubilation of prayer has the ultimate effect of allowing the love of God to enter the world.
- These lofty prayers and experiences did not deter Teresa from continuously seeking out the most sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Contrary to the prevailing practice of her time (to flee from corporeal things when passed beyond the beginning stages), Teresa affirms: “the Lord Himself says that He is the way..., the light and no one can go to the Father but through Him, and ‘anyone who sees Me sees My Father’” (see IC, DP VI, 7:6).
- Teresa explains the difference between meditation (discursive reflection) and another way of keeping in mind the humanity of Christ. She says that at a certain point many persons will no longer be able to engage in detailed thoughts about Christ’s life. However, they can still dwell on these mysteries of Christ’s life. These thoughts are living sparks that will enkindle more love for our Lord (see IC, DP VI, 7:10-13).
- Teresa describes the effects of such a habit of contemplation: the soul actually moves into the presence of the incarnate God. “... the further a soul advances the more it is accompanied by the good Jesus” (IC, DP VI, 8:1). “...it [the soul] will feel Jesus Christ, our Lord, beside it. Yet, it [the soul] does not see Him, either with the eyes of the body or with those of the soul. This is called an intellectual vision...” (IC, DP VI, 8:2). “...this favor [intellectual vision] bears with it a particular knowledge of God” (IC, DP VI, 8:4).
- “...the vision is represented through knowledge given to the soul that is clearer than sunlight. I don’t mean that you see the sun or brightness, but that a light, without your seeing light, illumines the intellect so that the soul may enjoy such a great good. The vision bears with it wonderful blessings” (Life 27.3) (Interpretive Notes: pg. 344; second edition, pg. 316).
- However, Teresa points out that persons who have these experiences are not necessarily holier than persons who do not. The important things are practicing virtues and serving God: “One should consider the virtues and who it is who serves our Lord with greater mortification, humility, and purity of conscience; this is the one who will be the holiest” (IC, DP VI, 8:10).
- As Teresa approaches the last dwelling places, she experiences the omnipresence of God. “How all things are seen in God and how God has them all in Himself” (IC, DP VI, 10:2). This theological reality remains imprinted in the soul and is recognized as an

expression of ultimate Truth; indeed, it is accompanied by the knowledge that “God alone is Truth, unable to lie” (IC, DP VI, 10:5).

- As Teresa moves into the last pages of the sixth dwelling places, she realizes the importance of “Truth.” The Truth will set you free. Recalling the episode in the gospels where Pilate questions Jesus: “What is Truth?” “God is everlasting Truth” (IC, DP VI, 10:5). “Once I was pondering why our Lord was so fond of this virtue of humility, and this thought came to me — in my opinion not as a result of reflection but suddenly: It is because God is supreme Truth; and to be humble is to walk in truth, for it is a very deep truth that of ourselves we have nothing good but only misery and nothingness. Whoever does not understand this walks in falsehood. The more anyone understands it the more he pleases the supreme Truth because he is walking in truth. Please God, ... we will be granted the favor never to leave this **path of self-knowledge**, amen” (IC, DP VI, 10:7, emphasis added).

Side note: The experiences of the sixth dwelling places form a stage in the soul’s **growth in self-knowledge**. “In its unitive encounters, the soul is taught more about itself; previously unknown aspects of its life or its nature are revealed to it by a source deeper than itself. While the soul profits tremendously from such insights, it also realizes a deeper human truth: we cannot fully know ourselves on our own; it takes relationality [relationship with God, Jesus] to move us into the fullest forms of self-knowledge...” (Entering Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle, pg. 87).

- At the end of the sixth dwelling places, Teresa returns to the butterfly image (of the soul) recalling its dilemma: how much it wishes to use its wings to soar toward God and how, even though it may have been receiving these favors for many years, it still sees itself very distant and far from enjoying God (see IC, DP VI, 11:1). The soul realizes that only the “Creator can console and satisfy it” (IC, DP VI, 11:10).

Session Ten: Union — Trinitarian Life (continued in Session Eleven)

Required Reading: *The Interior Castle: Study Edition, the Seventh Dwelling Places*, ch. 1 and 2

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes; Gaudium et Spes 22 (Appendix A)

Explanatory note: In the seventh dwelling places, Teresa returns to the metaphor of the butterfly, and she describes how after the waves of trial, sufferings and raptures (which the soul experienced in the sixth dwelling places), it has now found repose in Christ. “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain’ [Phil 1:21]. The soul as well, I think, can say these words now because this state is the place where the little butterfly ... dies, and with the greatest joy because its life is now Christ” (IC, DP VII, 2:5). “The butterfly, we recall, was the new self, freed from the restraints of the cocoon... Now in the seventh dwelling places, the initial metamorphosis of the silkworm into the butterfly undergoes another radical change. Teresa refers to this with two key words: death (it dies with supreme happiness) and life (Christ lives in it) ... that its life is now Christ” (Interpretive notes, pg. 426; second edition, pg. 397).

Word Incarnate: “The ultimate goal, then, of Teresa’s journey, the spiritual marriage, is a union with Christ, now no longer living as the divine Logos but as the Word incarnate, risen and connoted by the attributes of His earthly adventure, especially those of His resurrection. With the passing of time, the soul understands more clearly that its life is Christ” (General Introduction, pg. 23, second edition, pg. xxxvii).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- Teresa observes: “When our Lord is pleased to have pity on this soul that He has already taken spiritually as His betrothed, because of what it suffers and has suffered through its desires, He brings it, before the spiritual marriage is consummated, into His dwelling place, which is this seventh [dwelling places]. For just as in heaven, so in the soul His Majesty must have a room where He dwells alone. Let us call it another heaven” (IC, DP VII, 1:3).
- For, in the seventh dwelling places, all raptures cease. The wisdom of God now flows wordlessly into the soul; union is no longer fleeting; the soul now lives in the ongoing presence of God. Here, instead of experiencing God partially, the soul is brought fully into the Trinitarian nature of God.
- “In this seventh dwelling place the union comes about in a different way: our good God now desires to remove the scales from the soul’s eyes and let it see and understand, although in a strange way, something of the favor He grants it. When the soul is brought into that dwelling place, the Most Blessed Trinity, all three Persons, through an intellectual vision, is revealed to it through a certain representation of the truth ... and through an admirable knowledge the soul understands as a most profound truth that all three Persons are one substance and one power and one knowledge and one God alone” (IC, DP VII, 1:6).
- “You may think that as a result the soul will be outside itself and so absorbed that it will be unable to be occupied with anything else. On the contrary, the soul is much more

occupied than before with everything pertaining to the service of God; and once its duties are over it remains with that enjoyable company" (IC, DP VII, 1:8).

- "Clearly, the soul will be truly helped in every way to advance in perfection... Such was the experience of this person, for in everything she found herself improved, and it seemed to her, despite the trials she underwent and the business affairs she had to attend to, that the essential part of her soul never moved from that room" (IC, DP VII, 1:10).
- Teresa goes on to explain: "Between the spiritual betrothal and the spiritual marriage the difference is as great as that which exists between two who are betrothed [they can be separated] and two who can no longer be separated" (IC, DP VII, 2:2). "...just as those who are married cannot be separated..." (IC, DP VII, 2:3).
- "The **spiritual betrothal** is different, for the two often separate. And the union is also different because, even though it is the joining of two things into one, in the end the two can be separated and each remains by itself ... Let us say that the union is like the joining of two wax candles to such an extent that the flame and the wax are all one. But afterward one candle can easily be separated from the other and there are two candles" (IC, DP VII, 2:4, emphasis added).
- "In the **spiritual marriage**, the union is like what we have when rain falls from the sky into a river or fount; all is water, for the rain that fell from heaven cannot be divided or separated from the water of the river. Or it is like what we have when a little stream enters the sea; there is no means of separating the two. Or, like the bright light entering a room through two different windows; although the streams of light are separate when entering the room, they become one" (IC, DP VII, 2:4, emphasis added).
- Two Pauline expressions summarize the thoughts of Teresa: "... he that is joined or united to the Lord becomes one spirit' with Him, and is referring to this sovereign marriage, presupposing that His Majesty has brought the soul to it through union" (IC, DP VII, 2:5). Teresa quotes Paul again: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (IC, DP VII, 2:5). It is here that Teresa announces the death of the butterfly which she introduced in the fifth dwelling places. "The soul as well, I think, can say these words now because this state is the place where the little butterfly we mentioned dies, and with the greatest joy because its life is now Christ" (IC, DP VII, 2:5).
- Thus, in the seventh dwelling places is the realization of St. Paul's famous passage: "For now we see as in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12).
- "For [Teresa], Christian holiness does not consist in an ethical fact of personal perfection; rather, it has as its characteristic the trait of an intimate living together of two persons: Christ and the human person... '... this secret union takes place in the very interior center of the soul which must be where God Himself is, and in my opinion there is no need of any door [senses and faculties] for Him to enter' (IC7 ch. 2 no. 3)" (Interpretive notes, pg. 414; second edition, pg. 385).

The Monthly Sessions

- “In her *Life*, when Teresa begins to experience visions of Christ, she speaks of Him as being beside her. ‘It seemed to me that Jesus Christ was always present at my side’ (L 27:2). Now, in this final stage, the experiences of Christ are not of Him at her side but within her, in the deepest center of her being” (Interpretive notes, pg. 415; second edition, pgs. 385-386). “The soul always remains with its God in that center” (IC, DP VII, 2:4).
- Teresa further observes that the soul is always at peace in that center even though there are trials and suffering all around it. “The King is in His palace and there are many wars in His kingdom and many painful things going on ... even though they cause [the soul] some pain, the suffering is not such as to disturb it and take away its peace” (IC, DP VII, 2:11).

Note: In the innermost chamber there dwells the King — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Initially the soul cannot perceive this center, still less enter it. In the tradition of Carmel, prayer is seen as an inward journey toward the center. The transforming love of the King radiates from the center, drawing the soul towards itself.

“It should be known that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is hidden by His essence and His presence in the innermost being of the soul... Oh, then, soul, most beautiful among all creatures, so anxious to know the dwelling place of your Beloved so you may go in search of Him and be united with Him, now we are telling you that you yourself are His dwelling and His secret inner room and hiding place. There is reason for you to be elated and joyful in seeing that all your good and hope is so close as to be within you, or better, that you cannot be without Him. ... ‘The Kingdom of God is within you.’ ‘You are the temple of God’”

(Lk. 17:21 and 2 Cor. 6:16)

(St. John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle Stanza 1: 6-7).

Session Eleven: Effects of Prayer. (continued from Session Ten)

Required Reading: The Interior Castle: Study Edition, *the Seventh Dwelling Places*, ch. 3 and 4

Additional Reading: Interpretive notes

Explanatory note: The seventh dwelling places, as Teresa notes, are really God's dwelling place of sanctity. "Sanctity is a Trinitarian fact which takes place within the soul of the Christian and transforms it. ... Sanctity is something that overflows the strict limits of the subject; it is grace for others, for the human community, for the sake of assuming the condition of 'servant of Yahweh.' This means that Christian sanctity has an ecclesiastical dimension and by that fact entails the charism of service of one's brothers and sisters" (Interpretive notes, pg. 394; second edition, 266).

"The vocation to the Secular Order is truly ecclesial. Prayer and apostolate, when they are true, are inseparable. The observation of St. Teresa that the purpose of prayer is 'the birth of good works' reminds the Secular Order that graces received ought to have an effect on those who receive them. Individually or as a community and, above all, as members of the Church, apostolic activity is the fruit of prayer" (OCDS Constitutions, Art. 26).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- "Now, then, we are saying that this little butterfly has already died, with supreme happiness for having found repose and because Christ lives in it. Let us see what life it lives, or how this life differs from the life it was living" (IC, DP VII, 3:1).
- "The first effect is a forgetfulness of self ...it employs all it has in procuring the honor of God...and to be for the service of our Lord" (IC, DP VII, 3:2-3). Perhaps by finding true rest in Christ, the soul is now able to prioritize not its own interest but its love and service for others without thought of any reward.
- "The second effect is the soul has a great desire to suffer, but not the kind of desire that disturbs it as previously. For the desire left in these souls that the will of God be done in them ... If He desires the soul suffer, well and good; if not, it doesn't kill itself as it used to" (IC, DP VII, 3:4).
- "These souls also have a deep interior joy when they are persecuted, with much more peace ... and without any hostile feelings towards those who do, or desire to do, them evil. On the contrary, such a soul gains a particular love for its persecutors ... and eagerly recommends them to God" (IC, DP VII, 3:5).
- They have a great desire to serve Him, that God be praised through them, and that they may benefit some soul if they can (see IC, DP VII, 3:6).
- "It has no more fear of death than it would of a gentle rapture" (IC, DP VII, 3:7).
- They no longer desire spiritual consolation or spiritual delights, "since the Lord Himself is present with these souls and it is His Majesty who now lives" (IC, DP VII, 3:8).

The Monthly Sessions

- “There is a great detachment from everything and a desire to be always either alone or occupied in something that benefits some soul” (IC, DP VII, 3:8).
- “There are no interior trials or feelings of dryness, but the soul lives with a remembrance and tender love of our Lord” (IC, DP VII, 3:8).
- “Here, in this dwelling place, these impulses [of love] are experienced most gently, but they do not proceed from the mind or the memory, nor do they come from anything that would make one think the soul did something on its own. [Rather] ... this interior movement proceeds from the center of the soul and awakens the faculties” (IC, DP VII, 3:8).
- There is no fear of the devil’s deceits (see IC, DP VII, 3:10).
- The Lord teaches the soul gently “with such quiet and so noiselessly... that the work resembles the building of Solomon’s temple where no sound was heard (1K.6:7). So in this temple of God, in this, His dwelling place, He alone and the soul rejoice together in the deepest silence” (IC, DP VII, 3:11).
- There are no more raptures, visions, transports, or flights of the spirit. “I am amazed as well to see that when the soul arrives here all raptures are taken away” (IC, DP VII, 3:12).
- “...in this dwelling place, either the soul has found its repose, or has seen so much that nothing frightens it...” (IC, DP VII, 3:12).
- Teresa uses words and examples from scripture to try to sum up and convey the great blessings and delights of these dwelling places. “These effects...are given by God when He brings the soul to Himself with this kiss sought by the bride...” (allusion to Sg.1:2). “Here an abundance of water is given to this deer that was wounded... The dove Noah sent out to see if the storm was over finds the olive branch as a sign of firm ground discovered amid the floods and tempests of this world” (IC, DP VII, 3:13). This firm ground is the center of God that the soul has found within.
- Teresa cautiously reminds the reader that even this deep peace cannot be considered permanent in this life. We must take care not to lose it through our own fault by withdrawing from God. Souls in this dwelling place have an increased awareness of their sins and failings and fear their own weakness; but in everything they trust in God’s mercy (see IC, DP VII, 3:13-14).
- Teresa observes that even in this dwelling place, the cross is not lacking, but it doesn’t make souls lose peace (see IC, DP VII, 3:15).
- Teresa goes on to give important counsels pertaining to the spiritual life in general:
 - She believes that God’s greatest favor is to give us a life that would be an imitation of Christ’s life. “All its concern is taken up with how to please Him more and how or where it will show God the love it bears Him. This is the reason for prayer... the purpose of this spiritual marriage; the birth always of good works, good works” (IC, DP VII, 4:6).

- “It benefits me little to be alone making acts of devotion to our Lord, proposing and promising to do wonders in His services, if I then go away and when the occasion offers itself do everything the opposite... Let the soul bend its will if it wishes that prayer be beneficial to it...” (IC, DP VII, 4:7).
- “Keep in mind that I could not exaggerate the importance of this. Fix your eyes on the Crucified and everything will become small for you” (IC, DP VII, 4:8).
- Teresa goes on to remind the readers again of the importance of humility: “this whole building, as I have said, has humility as its foundation; ...lay stones so firmly that the castle will not fall” (IC, DP VII, 4:8). The foundation of the spiritual life must consist of more than prayer and contemplation. One must strive for and practice virtues; otherwise, one will not see any growth in prayer (see IC, DP VII, 4:9).
- “This is what I want us to strive for ... let us desire and be occupied in prayer not for the sake of our enjoyment but so as to have this strength to serve... Believe me, Martha and Mary must join together in order to show hospitality to the Lord...” (IC, DP VII, 4:12).
- “Apart from the fact that by prayer you will be helping greatly, you need not be desiring to benefit the whole world but must concentrate on those who are in your company, and thus your deed will be greater since you are more obliged toward them. ... This fire of love in you enkindles their souls, and with every other virtue you will be always awakening them” (IC, DP VII, 4:14).
- “In sum ... we shouldn’t build castles in the air. The Lord doesn’t look so much at the greatness of our works as at the love with which they are done. ... let us offer the Lord interiorly and exteriorly the sacrifice we can. ... Thus, even though our works are small, they will have the value our love for Him would have merited had they been great” (IC, DP VII, 4:15).

Prayer of St. Teresa:

May it please His Majesty, my Sisters and daughters,
that we all reach that place where we may ever praise Him.
Through the merit of His Son who lives and reigns forever and ever; may He give me
the grace to carry out something of what I tell you, amen.
For I tell you that my confusion is great, and thus I ask you through the same Lord
that in your prayers you do not forget this poor wretch
(Interior Castle, DP VII, 4:16).

Prayer:

*Father, by your Spirit you raised up Our Holy Mother, St. Teresa of Jesus,
to show your Church the way to perfection.
May her inspired teachings awaken in us a longing for true holiness.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

Session Twelve: Overall understanding of one's spiritual journey within the context of Church, Order, community, family and work.

OCDS Constitutions 32: *The central object of the process of formation in the Secular Order is to prepare the person to live the charism and spirituality of Carmel in its following of Christ, and in service to its mission.*

In preparation for this session, each participant (the candidates and the formator) is to select a passage from the Interior Castle that spoke to their heart and inspired a positive change. Each is to reflect on: "How has this year of formation affected me — who I am and where I am at in my journey? How has it changed my attitudes and the way I interact with others? What has changed in my prayer and in my relationship with God?" Each person is to prepare a short talk on the passage they chose and share why it was important to them. This is to be done more as a conversation among friends than a formal presentation.

After the personal sharing, and as time allows, the formator guides a discussion of the following concepts and their impact upon the participants' lives. **It is not necessary to discuss every concept or to take them in the order given.**

Note to the formator: The goal for this year has been for the candidates to internalize and try to live these concepts. While mature Carmelites should be able to converse about them, more learning happens through personal example than through spoken word. There is not to be any sort of "oral test" or "final exam."

"Take-away" concepts from this year's exploration of the Interior Castle:

1. The call to contemplation: God's invitation to share His Divine Life with every person is persistent and undeniable.
2. We are the temple of God: God dwells in every person and keeps them in existence (substantial union).
3. Who we are: the human person has a marvelous capacity for God (transformation and union of likeness/participation).
4. The Christ-centeredness found in Teresa means that for her, faith and the Christian life are not founded on abstractions or philosophies but on the special existence of a person in history who is called Jesus Christ. He is the center of life; without Him, the Christian life loses its meaning.
5. Self-knowledge is crucial in every stage of prayer: "Knowing ourselves is something so important that I wouldn't want any relaxation ever in this regard, however high you may have climbed into the heavens." (IC, DP I, 2:9).
6. True self-knowledge is rooted in the parallel knowledge of God. Humility is the virtue that links knowledge of self with knowledge of God.
7. The spiritual journey, although sustained by grace, demands great determination and every possible effort to bring one's will into conformity with God's will. This conformity requires detachment, humility, and perseverance in prayer and virtue.

8. Love does not consist in great delight but in desiring with strong determination to please God in everything.
9. When spending time with God in prayer, the important thing is not to think much but to love much. Discursive prayer is not an end in itself, but a means of lifting the mind, heart, and soul to God, opening oneself to the gift of contemplation, should God choose to give it.
10. Prayer has an ecclesial value: “This is the reason for prayer, my daughters, the purpose of this spiritual marriage: the birth always of good works, good works” (IC, DP VII, 4:6).

Note to the Council: The following needs to be completed well before the discernments begin; it may be divided into two or more sessions, if needed. It is important to have special sessions with the Formation Director for candidates in their third year of Formation II.

Special session with the Formation Director for candidates in their third year of Formation II: Called to holiness — The Definitive Promise in the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites.

Required Reading: OCDS Constitutions, Art. 11-16; Ratio, 59-93; Ritual for the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, sections applicable to the ceremony to be used.

Additional Reading: The Promise and Vows in the Secular Order, Fr Alzinir Debastiani, OCD (Formation I, Yr B, Appendix O)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “The Secular Carmelite wants to see God, wants to know God, and recognizes that prayer and meditation now become more important. The Promise is a commitment to a new way of life in which the ‘allegiance to Jesus Christ’ marks the person and the way this person lives” (Ratio Art. 88).
- “For the members of the Secular Order it is an honor to be part of the Carmelite family. ... The Secular Carmelite seeks intimate union with Christ in the world through the lived experience of the Promise made according to the Constitutions of the Secular Order” (Ratio Art. 86).
- “Following Jesus as members of the Secular Order is expressed by the promise to strive for evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and through the beatitudes” (OCDS Const. Art. 11).
- “The promise of chastity reinforces the commitment to love God above all else and to love others with the love God has for them. ...This promise does not prevent a change in state of life” (Const. Art. 13).
- “By the promise of poverty the Secular Carmelite expresses the desire to live in accordance with the Gospel and its values. In evangelical poverty there is a wealth of generosity, self-denial, and interior liberty...” (Const. Art. 14).
- “The promise of obedience is a pledge to live open to the will of God... For this reason the Secular Carmelite freely cooperates with those who have responsibility for guiding the community and the Order in discerning and accepting God’s ways: the community’s council, the Provincial and the General” (Const. Art. 15).
- “The beatitudes are a plan of action for life and a way to enter into relationship with the world, neighbors and co-workers, families and friends. By promising to live the beatitudes in daily life, Secular Carmelites seek to give evangelical witness as members of the Church and the Order, and by this witness invite the world to follow Christ: ‘the Way the Truth and the Life’ (Jn.14:6)” (Const. Art. 16).

- “What is the element that distinguishes those called to be Secular Carmelites? It is not the spirituality, nor the study, nor the devotion to Mary. Simply put, the Secular Carmelite is moved to commit himself or herself to the Order: to commit himself to the service of the Church through collaboration and cooperation with the goal of the Order. This commitment in the form of the **Promise** is an ecclesial event and an event of the Order in addition to being an event in the life of the person who makes the Promise” (Ratio Art. 83).
- Secular Carmelites are called to share in the common vocation to holiness (see, Preface to the OCDS Constitutions). “We come to a full sense of the dignity of the lay faithful if we consider *the prime and fundamental vocation...* is the vocation to holiness, that is perfection of charity. Holiness is the greatest testimony to the dignity conferred on a disciple of Christ. It is possible to say that this call to holiness is precisely the basic charge entrusted to all the sons and daughters of the Church. This charge is not a simple moral exhortation, but an undeniable requirement arising from the mystery of the Church” (*Christifideles Laici — Call to Holiness*, no. 16). Hence, “... this promise is a pledge to pursue personal holiness...” (OCDS Const. Art. 11).
- “The vocation of the lay faithful to holiness implies that life according to the Spirit expresses itself in a particular way in their *involvement in temporal affairs* and their *participation in earthly activities*. Once again, the Apostle admonishes us: ‘Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him’ (Col. 3:17)” (*Christifideles Laici — The Life of Holiness in the World*, no. 17). “... The Secular Order receives new vocations with joy, but also with a feeling of responsibility, so that in them also the charism may be daily understood more deeply, bear fruit and expand...” (Ratio 20).
- “... *within the lay state diverse ‘vocations’ are given*, that is, there are different paths in the spiritual life and the apostolate which are taken by individual members of the lay faithful. In the field of a ‘commonly shared’ lay vocation, ‘special’ lay vocations flourish. In this area we can also recall the spiritual experience of the flourishing of diverse forms of secular institutes that have developed recently in the Church. These offer the lay faithful, and even priests, the possibility of professing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience through vows or promises, while fully maintaining one’s lay or clerical state” (*Christifideles Laici — The Various Vocations in the Lay State*, no. 56).
- “...Our Lord ... will reward anyone who does more than he [or she] is obliged to do. See that the bounds of common sense are not exceeded, however, for common sense is the guide of the virtues” (Rule of St. Albert, Art. 24).

The Definitive Promise:

I, (name), inspired by the Holy Spirit, in response to God’s call, sincerely promise to the Superiors of the Order of the Teresian Carmel and to you my brothers and sisters, to tend toward evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, obedience, and of the Beatitudes, according to the Constitutions of the Secular Order of

Special Session with FD

Discalced Carmelites, **for the rest of my life.** I confidently entrust this, my Promise, to the Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel.

+++++

As the candidates prepare for the Definitive Promise, it is helpful to recall the words of Fr. Saverio Cannistra, OCD

Letter to the OCDS, March 20, 2020:

... I urge you to know your [legislative] documents more and more, especially the Constitutions, both in initial and ongoing formation. Always remember that a charism in the Church is a gift of the Holy Spirit; it is a living and dynamic reality which must be constantly cultivated and made to bear fruit, otherwise it rots. It is there, in the documents of the OCDS, that you find the essential elements of the charism of the Teresian Carmel adapted to your lay life. Faced with the many commitments and rapid changes in our post-modern world, many times we risk losing our roots and we forget who we are. Returning from time to time to the Constitutions and the writings of our Saints will confirm you in a solid doctrine that allows you to walk with firmness and enthusiasm on the streets of the world.

I ask the Lord to enlighten you so that you may continue to be faithful to the essential elements of your vocation as Secular Carmelites. May the light and strength which come from prayer as friendship with the Lord and fraternal relationship with your brothers and sisters enable you to respond to the challenges and needs of your personal, family and community realities.

May the contemplation of the Risen Christ fill you with peace and joy. May Mary, Queen of Heaven, give you the joy of her Living Son forever.

Fraternally, Fr. Saverio Cannistra, OCD
Superior General, 2009–2021



St. Teresa's Statue – at the entrance of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome

– S. TERESIA SPIRIT(ualis) MATER / ET FUNDATRIX NOVAE REFORMAT(ionis) ORDINIS /
DISCALC(eatorum) B(eatae) M(ariae) DE MONTE CARMELO

(St. Teresa – Mother of Spirituality and Founder of New Reform Order/Discalced — Blessed Mary of Mount Carmel)

Bibliography

St. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle Study Edition*, ICS Publications, 2010 or second edition, 2020 (page numbers differ).

Ahlgren, Gillian T.W., *Entering Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle. A Reader's Companion*, Paulist Press, 2005.

Alvarez, Thomas, OCD, *St. Teresa of Avila, 100 Themes on Her Life and Work*. ICS Publications, 2011.

OCDS Constitutions, June 16, 2003.

The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, ICS Publications, 1991.

The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol. One, ICS Publications, 1976

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*
<https://www.vatican.va/archive>

Appendix A: Session 9, Excerpt from Gaudium et Spes (22)

PASTORAL CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD

Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, December 7, 1965

(Courtesy: <https://www.vatican.va/archive>)

22. The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come,⁽²⁰⁾ namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown.

He Who is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15),⁽²¹⁾ is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled,⁽²²⁾ by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice⁽²³⁾ and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.⁽²⁴⁾

As an innocent lamb He merited for us life by the free shedding of His own blood. In Him God reconciled us⁽²⁵⁾ to Himself and among ourselves; from bondage to the devil and sin He delivered us, so that each one of us can say with the Apostle: The Son of God “loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). By suffering for us He not only provided us with an example for our imitation,⁽²⁶⁾ He blazed a trail, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on a new meaning.

The Christian man, conformed to the likeness of that Son Who is the firstborn of many brothers,⁽²⁷⁾ received “the first-fruits of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:23) by which he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love.⁽²⁸⁾ Through this Spirit, who is “the pledge of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:14), the whole man is renewed from within, even to the achievement of “the redemption of the body” (Rom. 8:23): “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from death dwells in you, then He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also bring to life your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11).⁽²⁹⁾ Pressing upon the Christian to be sure, are the need and the duty to battle against evil through manifold tribulations and even to suffer death. But, linked with the paschal mystery and patterned on the dying Christ, he will hasten forward to resurrection in the strength which comes from hope.⁽³⁰⁾

All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way.⁽³¹⁾ For, since Christ died for all men,⁽³²⁾ and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.

Such is the mystery of man, and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian revelation. Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by His death; He

has lavished life upon us⁽³³⁾ so that, as sons in the Son, we can cry out in the Spirit; Abba, Father⁽³⁴⁾

Footnotes:

20. Cf. Rom. 5: 14. Cf. Tertullian, *De carnis resurrectione* 6: "The shape that the slime of the earth was given was intended with a view to Christ, the future man." P. 2, 282; CSEL 47, p. 33, 1. 12-13.
21. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:4.
22. Cf. *Second Council of Constantinople*, canon 7: "The divine Word was not changed into a human nature, nor was a human nature absorbed by the Word." Denzinger 219 (428); Cf. also Third Council of Constantinople: "For just as His most holy and immaculate human nature, though deified, was not destroyed (theotheisa ouk anerethe), but rather remained in its proper state and mode of being": Denzinger 291 (556); Cf. Council of Chalcedon: "to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, change, division, or separation." Denzinger 148 (302).
23. Cf. *Third Council of Constantinople*: "and so His human will, though deified, is not destroyed": Denzinger 291 (556).
24. Cf. Heb. 4:15.
25. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Col. 1:20-22.
26. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:21; Matt. 16:24; Luke 14:27.
27. Cf. Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10-14.
28. Cf. Rom. 8:1-11.
29. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:14.
30. Cf. Phil. 3:19; Rom. 8:17.
31. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Chapter 2, no. 16: AAS 57 (1965), p. 20.
32. Cf. Rom. 8:32.
33. Cf. The *Byzantine Easter Liturgy*.
34. Cf. Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6; cf. also John 1:22 and John 3:1-2.

Appendix B: Session 9, St. Teresa of Avila

100 Themes on Her Life and Work, 46. Christological Formation

Copyright Washington Province of Discalced Carmelites, Inc. ICS Publications, 2011.

Used with permission.

1. Given the centrality of the mystery of Christ in St. Teresa's life and doctrine, it is important to highlight the most notable milestones in her christological formation. Certainly the first seeds germinated in her early childhood. Among the household objects in the inventory made by Don Alonso was a larger-than-life oil painting of Jesus seated at the well in Sychar conversing with the Samaritan woman. After the death of Don Alonso, Teresa brought the precious painting with her to the Incarnation. From the time she was young — she assures us — every night before going to bed she spent some time thinking about the scene of Jesus praying in the garden. Probably this custom came from her first christological readings in the *Flos Sanctorum*, which in the first introductory pages there was a translation of the gospels on the passion of Christ — Monotéssaron — and which were illustrated with a series of twenty drawings, among which figured one, really impressive, of Jesus praying in the garden. Yet even before these readings, Teresa was introduced to the most fundamental truths of the mystery of Christ through the primers and catechisms of her early Christian formation. In them she learned the fourteen articles of the faith, “the seven final ones pertain to the sacred humanity (of the Lord).” They made her memorize them, beginning with the first which is “to believe that the Son of God was conceived by the blessed Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit and not like us: more miraculously!” So they continued until the seventh article, on His return at “the end of the world.” Highlighted in the third article is His passion and death, which Teresa from an early age celebrated with emotion in the Holy Week processions.

2. Nonetheless, the real manual of christological formation was a book from the later middle ages translated from the Latin and known to her with the Castilian designation “the Carthusian.” It was four large volumes written by the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony with the title *The Life of Christ*. It spread throughout Europe from its numerous incunabular editions. It was translated into Castilian at the end of the 15th century and adapted for Spanish readers by the Franciscan Ambrosio Montesino, who published the four volumes in Alcalá at the beginning of the 16th century with a total of 1320 pages. The work consisted of two parts, the first of which presented the life of Jesus from His preexistence in the bosom of the Father to the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida. The second part, went from the messianic profession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi up to the sending of the Holy Spirit. Teresa when already a Carmelite nun, had at her disposal in St. Joseph's the four volumes, and was accustomed to having them with her on days of retreat in the hermitage of Nazareth or that of Christ at the pillar. We do not know if she read the more than a thousand pages of the book by Ludolph-Montesino, but certainly, given the Castilian structure of the work and given its precious content, *The Carthusian* was highly suggested by the contemplative sampling of Teresa the reader.

3. In her Castilian version the book contained a long exposition and meditation of the whole history of Jesus. Always for its basis it included the corresponding biblical text, highlighted by major type to differentiate it from the commentary. The most important section of the work

centered on the steps of the Passion of the Lord (volume 4). The book presents them as a dramatic liturgical sequence, from what occurred at Compline on Holy Thursday, passing through Matins of that night, until what occurred at the hours of Tierce, Sext, and None and Vespers of Friday. Most important for a reader like Teresa was that each episode or each commentary concluded always with a touching prayer to the Lord for the purpose of reaching His person and entering into His mystery. It was the terminal contemplative moment of each section.

4. The entire book was preceded by a preamble of the author in which he imparted to the readers an introductory base with some keys for reading, meditation, and contemplation. These nineteen pages constitute a kind of little, introductory treatise not only for the comprehensive reading of the book but for access to the mystery of Jesus, based on eight premises, which are first stated and then developed at length. It is enough here to repeat this series of the eight premises.

- That in the practice of virtues, and in every perfect life, Jesus Christ alone is the true foundation.
- For people to exercise themselves in the life and contemplation of the Redeemer is something very beneficial for seven reasons.
- The preeminence of the life of Christ contemplated and lived. It is one of the great benefits that those receive who occupy themselves in the contemplation and guarding of it.
- An industriousness about contemplating without error the life of Christ.
- A brief summary of the exterior conditions of Jesus Christ and His properties.
- The perfection and beauty of the arrangement of the face and members of the Son of God.
- The excellence of the holy Gospels over all the other sacred scriptures.
- The discord and difference of some things present between the four evangelists is real concord.

5. We will highlight only a few of the data that undoubtedly influenced Teresa's christological attitude. Above all, *the industriousness to contemplate*, proposed in the fourth premise. It is summed up in a precious instruction: "With all the affection of your soul, with diligent and delightful fervor, holding yourself in the contemplation of these mysteries with some delay, leaving aside all other cares, be present to these things that were said and done by the Savior as though with your own ears you heard them and with your own eyes saw them; for they are very sweet to the one who thinks of them with desire and more to the one who tastes them. And therefore, even though many of them are counted as past, examine them as though you thought they were all present to you, because in that way you will undoubtedly taste a greater sweetness and read the things that have already taken place as though they were being done now; and fix your eyes on past facts as though they were present; and thus you will find the

mysteries of Christ to be more pleasant.” This was all a program of christological prayer that Teresa put into practice in her own way of prayer.

6. The introduction insists especially on the beauty of the face of Christ: this is the theme of the sixth premise, which proposes to the contemplative “the face, form, and figure of our Redeemer [in a manner that] you can conjecture His acts deeds, and customs.” And with true mime transcribe the portrait of Jesus, taken from the presumed letter of Publius Lentulus ad Tiberium Caesarem, which probably had already been read by Teresa in the preamble to the *Flos Sanctorum*. It is said that she transported it to her mystical experience: “The vision of Christ left upon me an impression of His most extraordinary beauty, and the impression remains today” (L 37.4).

7. Nevertheless, it was not the details but the mass of christological data contained in the work that gave Teresa an incomparable christological introduction. The Carthusian brought to the reader one by one all the biblical texts referring to Jesus. This book by the Carthusian is an immense christological spirituality. Perhaps this is the reason why Teresa includes the book in the list of indispensable books for the libraries of her Carmels (C. 8).

Appendix C, Session 9, St. Teresa of Avila

100 Themes on Her Life and Work, 98. Jesus and His Sacred Humanity

Copyright Washington Province of Discalced Carmelites, Inc. ICS Publications, 2011.

Used with permission.

Teresa is not a theologian by profession. In her writings there is no treatise, not even a sketch, on Christology. Yet in her life as in her work we have a case of panchristianity comparable to that of St. Paul or St. Francis of Assisi.

1. Perhaps in no other aspect of her spiritual life did Teresa have the fortune of a formation so rich and complete. As we already noted, in her childhood she had the luck of reading the primer pages of the *Flos Sanctorum*, the Castilian version of Gerson's *Monatésseon*, which offered her the text of the Passion according to the four Gospels, illustrated with a series of vignettes capable of having a strong impact on the sensitivity of the child Teresa. Later, as an adult, she likewise had the fortune of being formed by reading the best and most copious *Life of Christ* by the Carthusian, following step by step the history of Jesus and the biblical texts of both Testaments alluding to him. Each chapter was crowned by an emotive and absorbing prayer. Teresa will follow, moreover, in her religious life the daily course of the liturgy with frequent reading of the Gospels.

2. In the process of her spiritual life there occurred two moments of christological experience. There preceded a period of popular piety. Teresa cultivated a devotion to certain passages from the Passion, such as the prayer in the garden, or she imitates the gestures of the women in the gospels, like the Samaritan woman or the Magdalene, she relives imaginatively the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, she unites with the Blessed Virgin in her transfixion at the foot of the cross. Still at the end of her life, on the occasion of the foundation in Burgos, she pauses before entering the city to venerate an image of the Holy Christ. Her christological piety of popular inspiration endured and coexisted with the most lofty experiences of her mystical life. Nonetheless, this second period is much stronger, all brilliant with experiences of a christological mark. During more than 25 years, Teresa lived a long time of strict personal relationship with Jesus Christ, her model, her Bridegroom and Lord. It is impossible to give the history of Teresa without fixing the outstanding milestones of this christological experience.

3. The mystery of Jesus. For a contemplative like her, Jesus is an unfathomable mystery. He is the thicket of the mystery of God made human. He is the book where she saw the truths. He exceeds her pen in any of her exclamations: "Oh, our Emperor, supreme Goodness, Wisdom itself, without beginning, without end, without any limit to your works; they are infinite and incomprehensible, a fathomless sea of marvels, with a beauty containing all beauty, strength itself! ..." (WP 22.6). It is not easy to follow Teresa in her breakdown of the mystery of Jesus. We can only highlight the more relevant facets.

a) Above all, for her Jesus is the *servant of Yahweh*: she is amazed by the mystery of his lowering of himself. He "had no house but the stable in Bethlehem where he was born and the cross where he died" (WP 2.9). At the end of the *Interior Castle* she will recall His condition of slave (IC 7.4.8): "there is no slave who would willingly say he is a slave, and yet it seems that

Jesus is honored to be one" (WP 33.4). Her hair stands on end with only the thought of the humiliation of His Majesty in the Eucharist (L 38.19). In one of her soliloquies she is amazed at the depth of the Trinitarian mystery and has the boldness to address the Eternal Father and ask him how it is possible that he consented to it: "But you Eternal Father, how is it that you consented?" And again, "O eternal Lord! Why do you accept such a petition? Why do you consent to it? Don't look at his love for us . . . for he allows himself to be crushed to pieces each day" (WP 33.3-4).

b) Servant yet Majesty. The sovereignty of Jesus is something that was not able to be diluted in his abasement, nor in the mystery of the intimacy of his communion with Teresa: "O my Lord! O my King! Who now would know how to represent your majesty! It's impossible not to see that you in yourself are a great Emperor, for to behold your majesty is startling and the more one beholds along with this majesty, Lord, your humility and the love you show. . ." (L 37.6). In one of her autobiographical confidences in the *Way of Perfection* she tells her readers of the "special delight" she feels at the recitation of the words "your kingdom shall have no end" (WP 22.1).

c) He is the absolute beauty. Teresa's christological experience is marked by this aesthetic factor. She doesn't tire of proclaiming his beauty (L 28.1-3). Only in seeing him "left upon me an impression of his most extraordinary beauty, and the impression remains today" (L 37.4). She dedicates one of her poems to singing of it: "Oh Beauty exceeding/ all other beauties."

d) He is the Master. Teresa not only tastes each word pronounced by him in the Gospel, but in her mystical experience relives this discipleship. "There is no knowledge or any kind of gift that I think could amount to anything when placed alongside of what it is to hear just one word spoken from that divine mouth" (L 37.4). Teresa had written in her breviary the words of the Master: "Learn of me for I am meek and humble!" They served as a permanent reminder each time she opened the book for prayer that Jesus is the absolute model.

e) Yet above all, he is the Bridegroom. She identified him with the Bridegroom of the *Song of Songs*. He is the *Christ of love*. And she was enamored of him as the biblical bride who dares to repeat: "Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth." "O my Lord and my God, and what words are these that a worm speaks them to its Creator! . . . But who will dare, my King, utter these words without your permission? The thought is frightening" (M 1.10). Yet at the same time Teresa dares to write a poem of loving power: "If the love You have for me,/ Is like the love I have for You. . ." Precisely for this reason, in the *Interior Castle* she presents the height of the Christian life as a bridal fact! The summit of the Christian life is the supreme love on the part of both lovers, Christ and the soul.

4. The problem of the Humanity of Christ. Dramatically lived by Teresa, it served to put to the test her gospel realism. Through *the Humanity of Jesus* she understands his gospel history, his Passion, his works and words, divine and human joined, yet historically realized in his human condition, including his body, first capable of suffering and then risen. It happened that there reached her the old spiritualist current, of neo-platonic origin, according to which high contemplation, that is, the perfect life of the Christian, became so spiritual, even to the point of excluding or passing beyond everything corporeal, so that only the spirit remained: to the exclusion as a result of the humanity of Jesus. Teresa after a brief period of wavering in which,

badly counseled, she ceded to this doctrine, but then reacted against it with all her energy. “I cannot endure it,” she exclaims. She couldn’t bear that there be even a moment in the spiritual life in which one intends to avoid the humanity of Jesus. This time she reasons her thesis like a theologian by profession and arrives at the certain conclusion that all our good comes to us through the humanity of Christ. She dares to propose it as an irrevocable postulate to the theologian reader of the *Life* (22.18), and years later she repeats it with energy in the *Interior Castle* (IC 6.7.15). This is undoubtedly is the strongest position taken theologically by Teresa.

Copyright Notice – 2024

Without limiting the use of the formation materials and to avoid any doubt as to its intent, you must not adapt, edit, change, transform, publish, or re-publish the National Formation Program or any of the formation materials in your possession.

We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Institute of Carmelite Studies for their gracious permission to use extracts from their publications.