

# **SAINT TERESA OF AVILA THE WAY OF PERFECTION**

## **PROTESTATION**

I submit all I have written to Our Mother, the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Anything contrary to her teachings are without my knowledge. I beg learned men to review this and to amend any faults. May anything good in this book be for the glory of God and of Mary, his mother, whose habit I wear (although unworthy).

## **PROLOGUE**

### Why This Book Was Written

The sisters of St. Joseph's Convent knew that I had permission from my confessor, Father Banes, O.P. to write about prayer. In their great love they begged me to do this. I know that, due to their love, the poverty of my writing style will be acceptable. May the Lord help me to describe the way of life fitting to this convent. If I do not succeed, my confessor will either correct or burn this manuscript. All will see how useless I am when God does not help me.

I want to describe remedies for some slight temptations. I will also write whatever the Lord reveals. I have no suitable order because I do not know what I am going to say. May everything written be according to the Lord's holy will because I greatly desire to help my sisters make great progress. Possibly their love for me and my experiences with many convents will make this book successful. I will write about small matters and let learned men write about the important questions.

### Small Matters

These small matters can do great harm. The devil needs new weapons to defeat cloistered nuns. Being a wicked woman who has poorly defended myself, I will write only of what I have experienced or what the Lord taught me in prayer. A few days ago I completed my autobiography. Since my confessor might not want you to read this autobiography, I will repeat some things I wrote there and whatever else seems necessary.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THE PURPOSE OF FOUNDING A CONVENT OF STRICT OBSERVANCE**

I founded this convent because of wonderful revelations from Our Lord. I did not intend that it have so much austerity in externals or that it should have no ordinary income. I would have desired no possibility of want. I did this with good intentions, not for my own comfort.

### Making God Some Trusty Friends

I noticed the havoc in France caused by the Lutherans. This troubled me and I asked the Lord to remedy this evil. (I would have died a thousand times to save one soul.) I saw the Lord had many enemies and few friends. I felt that, at least, I could make his few friends trusty ones. I resolved to follow the evangelical counsels and have the other nuns do the same. I hoped that their virtues would counteract my defects. By busying ourselves in prayer, we would be defenders of the Church and of the

preachers who defend her. It seemed that these traitors would send the Lord to the cross again and He would have nowhere to lay his head.

### Sources of Distress

I am sorely distressed. What has become of Christians? O God, those whom you choose for your friends cause you the greatest distress. Do they not think they have caused you enough torments?

In these days, withdrawal from the world means no sacrifice at all. How can we expect worldly people to respect us, when they don't respect You, O Lord? Have we done more for them than you have done? They have won severe punishment. Their pleasures have earned them eternal fire. Nevertheless, it breaks my heart to see so many souls going to perdition, with more being lost every day.

Oh, my sisters, Christ has brought you to this convent for this very purpose. This must be your business, your desires and the cause of your tears. People come here asking us to pray for their incomes. I would rather pray that they trample worldly goods beneath their feet! I do as they ask because they are devout people, but I do not believe God hears my prayers. The world is on fire. People would burn the Church to the ground. Are we to waste our time on such prayers for increased income? No. We must not ask God for things of little importance. Certainly, we must consider human frailty and it is a good thing to help people, but it is not for these things that we must importune God with such anxiety.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **A FULLNESS OF POVERTY**

#### Don't Use Human Means

Don't think you will lack food if you don't please worldly people. Never use human means to gain food or you will die of hunger. If you obey me and die of hunger, then happy are the nuns in this convent. Keep your eyes on your Divine Spouse and even your enemies will provide your food. Do not forget. You have given up a regular income, so don't worry about food. Others have an income. That is their vocation.

#### Worrying About Alms

Worrying about getting money from people will not change their minds. Leave that to Him Who is Lord of those who possess the money. We came here by His command and He will not fail us. If He does, this is even better, just as with the saints who were martyred. Leaving this life for everlasting fullness is a good exchange.

While I am living, I will always remind you of this. I am writing these words for when I am dead. When I possess least, I have the fewest worries. When I have excess, I am most afflicted! The Lord seems to provide for us immediately. My conscience would bother me if I only pretended that I was poor in spirit. It would be like a rich person seeking alms.

#### Effects of Worry

Worrying about alms will lead a sister to ask for what she does not need. She will even ask from someone who needs it more. This would bring harm to us. If this ever begins to happen, I would prefer you to have a regular income.

Never allow material things to occupy your thoughts. If this preoccupation happens in this house, tell the superior. Also, tell the sister who is preoccupied that gradually true poverty will disappear. I write this as a reminder, so that this never happens.

### The Blessings of Poverty

The Lord has made me realize the blessings of holy poverty. I realize this clearly. For many years I professed poverty, but I had no poverty of spirit and was devoid of restraint. Poverty contains all the world's good things. Whoever desires nothing has dominion over everything. Kings do not matter to me. I do not desire to gain their money or their pleasure if I would offend God. Their honors mean nothing. The chief honor of a poor man is to be truly poor.

Honor and money go together. If you desire honor, you will desire money. Hate money and you will hate honor. The world seldom honors a poor man. Poverty embraced for God has the honor of pleasing God. Much has been written about poverty which I cannot understand, so I will write no more.

Holy poverty was esteemed and strictly observed by the Founders of our Order (I was told they never kept anything from one day to the next.). Now that this rule is less strictly observed exteriorly, let us observe it inwardly. Life is short and our reward is boundless.

### Poverty in All Things

We must keep poverty in our house, our clothes, our speech, and especially in our thoughts. In this way, religious observance will not decline. St. Clare said, "The walls of poverty are very strong." She wanted her convents surrounded by poverty and humility. Poverty protects chastity much better than rich buildings. If you build such edifices, I hope they collapse and kill you all!

Why should great houses be built with the money of the poor? Let our houses be small and poor in every way because our King was born in a stable and died on a cross. I do not condemn those who erect large houses but the size of our convents is enough for thirteen poor women. If grounds are needed for enclosure and solitude, well and good, but may God preserve us from a lot of buildings. They will all fall down on Judgment Day.

How happy on that day to see a soul saved from hell because they gave alms and we prayed for them. Do not forget prayers for those who fed us. We are bound to this. I never intended to write this, so it must be from the Lord.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **PRAYING FOR THE CHURCH**

#### Prayer Support For Those Defending the Church

Let's return to the reason for forming this convent. The evils of today are great and no one can quench the fire, namely the problems caused by heretics. Some have risen to oppose heresy but unfortunately, they think that this rapidly spreading evil can be remedied by arms.

It seems like the enemy has overrun the whole country and the Lord of the country has retired to a well-fortified city from which He can attack from time to time. In this city of the Lord, are picked men who do much more than soldiers. The city has no traitors (only chosen men) and it can be defeated only by hunger. As for ourselves, even hunger cannot conquer us. We will die but not be conquered.

Understand clearly. In our little castle, no one must go over to the enemy. We also must ask our leaders (the preachers) to be proficient in the Lord's way and to advance in perfection. The Church (not the state) must defend us. Our purpose is to live and pray to sustain God's servants.

### The Preacher's Responsibilities

I emphasize this because you do not yet understand how much we owe the Lord for bringing us to this convent, which is free from the occasions of sin and from worldly people. We are called to help the preachers who strengthen God's people. They are the captains of God's soldiers.

The preachers have a difficult task. They must live among worldly men, engage in the world's affairs and, yet, be inwardly a stranger to the world. The preachers are enemies of the world. They are in exile, living like angels not men. If they do not live like this they shouldn't even leave their rooms. Those who preach should have no time for imperfections.

### The Preacher's Needs

If these teachers are not detached from earthly things and attached to eternal things, they will betray these defects even while trying to hide them. They are dealing with a world which will certainly observe their imperfections. Their good deeds will be unnoticed and all their evil deeds will be remembered. Who taught these preachers about perfection? They do not practice it. They think they do enough by observing the commandments. Do not think these preachers require just a little divine favor. They really need a great deal.

### Two Goals

Live so you can gain two things from God. First, that there be many religious who are qualified for their task and, secondly, that the Lord prepare those who are not completely ready. A perfect teacher does more than many imperfect ones. Pray also, that after the preachers begin this heavy struggle, the Lord deliver them from all the dangers of sailing on this perilous sea. If we prevail, we will be fighting the Lord's battle even though we remain in the cloister. Then, all the trouble I had in founding this convent in restoring the Rule to its original perfection will be well spent.

### Praying For Others

Some people think we should always be praying for our own souls. Some religious worry about lessening their own time in purgatory. What does it matter if I am in purgatory until the General Judgment as long as one soul is saved? As long as souls profit from my prayer! Don't worry about the pain of purgatory which will end. Let us give service to Him who suffered for us. Seek the greatest perfection. Seek His glory and the good of the Church. These are my wishes.

### The Value of Women

Oh Lord, I have confidence in these sisters whom you sent and who seek only to please you. They have left their few possessions. I believe you will hear their prayers, for in your mortal life you did not despise women. You found faith and love in them. One was your mother (whose habit we wear).

We cannot work publicly for you, Lord and we cannot speak of what we weep over in secret. Yet, you are not like the judges of this world who refuse to consider any woman's virtue above suspicion. The day will come when all will be known. (I am not speaking of my own wickedness which is known by all.) When I see such times as these I feel it is wrong to repel brave and virtuous spirits just because they are spirits of women. Don't listen to our prayers for money, honors or worldly things. But why,

Eternal Father, would you not hear us when we ask only for your Son's honor? Surely, all these scourging and insults will not be forgotten.

#### Acts Against the Blessed Sacrament

How, my Creator, could your loving heart endure an act, which your Son performed to please you but which is now treated so lightly by the heretics? They take the Blessed Sacrament from its resting place when they destroy the churches. Did your Son fail to please you? No. He fulfilled everything.

He had no place to lay his head. Must He now be deprived of places where He can invite His friends and give them the food needed to sustain them? Hasn't He paid sufficiently for Adams's sin? Must this Lamb pay again, every time we sin? O God, do not look at our sins but the merits of your Son, His mother and all the saints.

#### Intercession

Who is it that dared to make this petition? I am such a poor mediator that my boldness might move the Sovereign Judge to anger. In your mercy, have mercy on me. Forget my deeds and see my tears. Have pity on souls being lost and permit no harm to Christendom.

My sisters, commend me to His Majesty and seek humility for me. I do not demand that you pray for the king and the bishop, for you already do this. Remember, if the bishop is holy, his people will be holy, so bring him continually before the Lord. If your prayers, disciplines and fasts are not performed for these intentions, you are not fulfilling the reason the Lord called you here.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE SPIRITUAL LIFE – THREE IMPORTANT PARTS**

#### A Great Enterprise of Prayer

You see our great enterprise. I do not want to be over-bold, but what kind of persons must we be? Obviously, we must labor hard. We must have sublime thoughts that lead to sublime actions. We must keep our Rule to the fullest. I am not asking anything new, only what we are already bound to do.

Our Primitive Rule tells us to pray without ceasing. This is our most important task. If we do this well, then we will also observe the fasts, disciplines and periods of silence. True prayer needs these helps, it cannot flourish in self-indulgence.

You asked me to write about prayer. Read what I already wrote and put it into practice. Before explaining this interior life, I will speak of some necessary practices for those walking the way of prayer. These practices are so necessary, that people who have them (although not given to contemplation) can advance in the Lord's service, while those who do not have them can never be great contemplatives.

#### Three Demands From the Constitution

I am going to ask you to do three things which our founders practiced and prescribed for us. Look nowhere else and learn from no one else. I will explain these three things taken from our Constitution. These are important if we are to preserve peace (inward and outward). The three are:

1. Love for each other

2. Detachment from all created things
3. True humility. Humility is the most important and embraces all the rest.

## **LOVE FOR EACH OTHER**

Concerning love for each other, be assured that love can easily bear any annoyance, no matter how exceptional. If those in the world kept this commandment, they would keep all the commandments. We have too much love or too little love for each other and we don't keep this commandment perfectly.

### Too Much Love

Too much love although it does not seem wrong, brings much evil. Here the devil sets snares. Those who please God in an imperfect way do not see these snares. However, those seeking perfection see clearly that too much love for others deprives the soul of loving God totally.

Much harm is done in women's communities. As a result, all the nuns do not love each other equally. For example, a nun desires to give her friend something or to spend time telling her how fond she is of her. These intimate friendships leave little room for God. I believe the devil initiates them to bring division into religious orders. If a friendship truly serves God, the will experiences no passion and even conquers the other passions.

### Problems With Individual Friendships

In larger convents, there can be many such friendships. However, in our convent (with only thirteen sisters) all must be friends and help each other. For love of the Lord, refrain from making individual friendships. They are poisonous and I see no advantage. I might seem extreme, but believe me, you will have great perfection and great peace. If your will becomes inclined to one person which cannot be helped because it is so natural, place a firm restraint and don't be conquered by your affections. Love inward goodness and give no importance to externals.

Let our will be enslaved only by God. Otherwise, we will be trapped and unable to move. From these friendships result innumerable pettinesses which are so trivial that only some nuns will realize it. These little attachments are wrong in everyone, especially in the prioress.

### Prescribed Cautions

We must be alert as soon as the friendship begins and proceed diligently rather than severely. One important caution, let the sisters be together only at the prescribed hours. They should not be alone together but each one in her room. Our convent should have no common workroom (although this is praiseworthy). It is easier to keep silence if the sister is alone. Solitude is needed for prayer which is the very purpose of this house.

It seems quite unnecessary to command you to love one another because you are always together and indulge in no conversation with anyone outside this convent. You all love God and have left everything for Him.

### Virtuous Love

Here I want to talk about virtuous love between two people and how we know we have this virtue. Please disregard what I have written, if you find this described better in other books.

There are two kinds of love. The first is purely spiritual, not mingled with sensuality or nature's tenderness. The other love is mingled with sensuality and weakness. This latter is a worthy love and is lawful between relatives and friends.

### Friendship With A Confessor

I want to speak of a spiritual love which is untainted by any sort of passion which would spoil its harmony. If this leads us to treat others (such as a confessor) with discretion, then it is profitable. If the confessor tends toward vanity, then conversation should be avoided and confession should be brief. The sister should tell the superior and go to someone else.

The safest approach when the devil tries to ensnare you is to make a confession to a learned priest and follow his advice. People often don't take advice even when someone might be harmed by what is happening. At all costs, avoid doing nothing. The devil must be stopped quickly and consulting another confessor is the safest way (if this is practicable).

This is a dangerous matter and can harm everyone. Don't wait. Take every possible step to stop everything at the beginning. Those given to a life of prayer must be attached only to a great servant of the Lord. They will love him only if he likes to speak of God.

The devil can do a great deal of harm. If this remains undiscovered, the soul can be ruined without knowing how. A vain confessor will tolerate vanity in others. God deliver us! If there is only one confessor and he gives the wrong advice, the nuns will be unsettled because their conscience will advise them differently. The confessor, who should be bringing peace becomes the source of harm. I attach importance to your understanding this, because it has caused much trouble in some places.

### Liking Your Confessor

Don't dwell upon whether you like your confessor or not. Why should we not love those who help our souls? If I see my confessor as holy, learned, and taking much effort for my benefit, liking him will help my progress. This affection helps us to do great things for God.

If the confessor is spiritual and learned, then his knowing that you like him can cause great harm among cloistered religious. So, do not tell him of your affection. If your confessor helps you and indulges in no vanity do not worry about being too fond of him. If he indulges his vanity, then get another confessor even if this is painful for you.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **GUIDELINES ABOUT CONFESSORS**

#### A Liberty of Spirit Concerning Confessors

I hope that no one in this convent experiences these oppressions of soul and body. I also hope that no confessor is such a close friend of the superior that penitents would leave grave sins unconfessed. What trouble the devil can make here when people are concerned about honor. The convent doesn't

have to have only one confessor. Getting a second confessor won't ruin the discipline and getting a confessor from outside the order is no disgrace.

Oh daughters, praise God for this liberty that you have. A few other priests, besides your regular confessor, can provide light. I want superiors to allow a holy liberty. Ask the bishop to provide some other confessors who are learned. If you find some who combine learning and spirituality, the Lord will grant even greater favors so that your works and prayers have a sure foundation.

#### Need For A Good Conscience

The first stone of this foundation is a good conscience. Make every effort to be free even of venial sins. You would think every confessor would know this but I went to a priest who had a complete course in theology. He did me much harm by saying that some things were not important. He wasn't trying to deceive me. He did not know any better. I also met a few others just like him.

The firm basis for prayer is the light to keep God's law perfectly. Without this, the building collapses. Therefore, every nun must be free to discuss spiritual matters with the right confessor. If commanded to go to one confessor, they can still discuss spiritual questions with another priest without going to confession. Every soul should get all the help she needs.

#### Various Confessors

This is the superior's task to provide various confessors. Since our sisters have set aside bodily consolations and receive only spiritual consolations, I beg the superior to see that they receive them. God leads his handmaidens in different ways and one confessor cannot be acquainted with every way. There will be no lack of holy persons to offer guidance. God, who nourishes our bodies, will give light to the soul.

Possibly a confessor will lead a sister astray. However, he will be much more prudent if he knows this sister is consulting another confessor also. I hope the devil never enters this house by this door. I ask the Bishop to give the sisters this liberty and not to withdraw it when there are available confessors who are learned and spiritual.

#### The Bishop's Wise Decisions

I have had experiences in many convents. I speak this way so that this convent can grow in perfection. No vicar or confessor should have freedom to go in and out of the convent. They are to watch over the good living of the house and report to the superior. However, they themselves are not superiors. If anyone hears confessions regularly, he should be the chaplain. Every nun can make her confession to another priest if the superior is notified. This is our present practice. Our bishop wanted to help this convent in making these decisions so he consulted many learned and spiritual persons. Future superiors must follow these directions because they were decided upon by learned men after much prayer.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **PERFECT LOVE**

I have digressed much, but that topic of confessors was important. Let me return to that true love which I described as purely spiritual. I fear that few really possess this. Whoever does have perfect love has the greatest perfection. May my words lead people to desire and become attached to true,



spiritual love. Hopefully I can describe when love is spiritual and when love is mingled with sensuality. I cannot always understand, but the Lord will help me to say it well.

### Taught By the Lord

When people are devoted to the Lord, He teaches them many things. He gives clear knowledge of this world's nature and of the existence of another world (let's say "another kingdom"). He shows that the one world is eternal and the other world is just a dream. He teaches that love for the Creator is quite different from love for the creature. Souls understand this by experience. They see what they will gain by one action and what they will lose by the opposite action. They see that the Creator is different from the creature. A person who has learned all those truths loves much differently than someone who has not.

### Effects of This Knowledge

Sisters, you might think that this is nonsense and you already know it, but engrave this teaching on your heart and never forget it. Whomever the Lord brings to this knowledge possesses this love. They are generous and royal souls, not content with loving their own bodies. They don't dwell upon their beauty which is very unsubstantial. If they loved their physical beauty, they would feel confused when they tell God that they love Him.

### True and False Affection

You say that these spiritual persons cannot repay affection which is shown to them. Certainly, they do not seek affection from others. Although they may experience momentary pleasure at being loved, they realize that such pleasure is folly. Instead, they show affection to those persons who can help their souls by teaching or prayer.

All other affection wearies them. They know it does them no good and can do them much harm. They thank people for this love but they do not see themselves as lovable. Others love these souls because God loves them. Therefore, they ask God to bless these people and they feel no further responsibility. This desire for the affection of others is sheer blindness unless these others can lead us to good.

### Laughing At Worldly Affections

When we desire a person's affection, we do this for our own interest. The perfect soul has trodden these blessings of this world beneath her feet. They can love nothing outside of God. What profit comes to them by being loved by others?

These souls laugh at their previous feelings. Formerly they worried if their love was being returned. Certainly, to want our love returned is quite natural. However, the soul evaluates this affection and realizes it is like straw, easily carried away by the wind. They see the good which love gains for their souls (without love our nature soon tires of life). Outside of this, they do not care if they are loved or not.

### True Love For Others

These souls will not just love God. They will love everyone with a greater passion and with a love that brings much gain. These souls love to give more than to receive. Their holy affection truly merits

the name love. (Often other base affections usurp the name “love”.) These special souls love what they see and are attracted by what they hear because what they see and hear is everlasting.

If they love anyone, they look beyond the body. They see the soul and what is there to love. If they see nothing at first, then they dig deeper and try to find gold.

### Doing Good For Others

They would do anything for the good of another soul. They want their love to be everlasting and they know this is impossible unless the person has good qualities. Even if the other person had all natural graces, the soul is still not deceived. If the other person is not in union with God, the soul’s love for her cannot be everlasting because the two souls will be in two different places.

A soul with infused wisdom does not highly prize worldly love. In contrast, those who delight in worldly riches will value a rich friend who is able to afford worldly diversions. Wise souls hate these worldly riches and care nothing for them. Their love for the other person is a passion, because they hope that their friend will love God so as to be loved by Him. They know that no other love can last. They will imitate Jesus, the Captain of Love, and do everything possible for their friend’s good.

## CHAPTER 7

### COUNSELS REGARDING SPIRITUAL AFFECTION

#### Happy If A Friend Makes Spiritual Progress

This spiritual love is impassioned and demands tears, prayers and penances. The soul commends her friend to whomever may prevail upon God. She cannot be happy unless seeing the friend make progress.

If her friend advances but then falls way back, the soul finds no pleasure in life. She is never free from this fear that the friend she loves so much might be lost and the two would be parted forever. She doesn’t care about physical death but she refuses to be attached to someone whom she might easily lose.

#### Illicit Affections

I have described a totally disinterested love, which seeks only that the friend gain heaven. This love is far different from ill-starred earthly affections, and, above all, from illicit affections (May God keep us free of these). Illicit affections are hell and they bring evils which cannot be exaggerated. No need to speak or think of these or even remember that they exist. Never listen to anyone speaking of these illicit affections nor allow them to be discussed in your presence. Even mentioning them can cause harm.

#### Lawful Affections and Spiritual Affections

Concerning lawful affections for others (or for a relative) the soul experiences pain when the others are in pain. Spiritual affection is quite different. At first the soul feels distress at the friend’s trials. Then the soul realizes that these trials are good because her friend will bear them well. The soul prays for her friend to have patience and would willingly suffer the trial for her friend.

This love is a copy of the love that Jesus has for us. He invites the soul to embrace sufferings so that others might gain an advantage. Those receiving this love benefit greatly. However, the soul must

realize that if her friend does not change, then this exclusive friendship must end. The soul must prevail on the Lord (like St. Monica) that her friend lives as she does.

### Honesty in the Friendship

Their hearts allow no duplicity. If they see their friend stray, they will speak to her about it. If the friend does not amend, they will hide nothing. Either the friend changes or the friendship ends. Anything else is not endurable. There would be a war on both parts. A soul can be indifferent about everybody else's salvation but she cannot be indifferent about her friend's salvation. Nothing can be kept hidden. This is a very heavy cross.

### The Value of Having Such a Friend

Happy are those persons who have such a friend who loves them. Happy the day she met her. Oh God, give me many such friends. I prefer them to all the kings of the earth because such friends will do all they can to make me trample upon the world.

Sisters, if you meet such a friend, the Prioress should make sure you keep in touch. Love such persons as much as you like. There are very few of them and God wants goodness to be known.

If you are striving for perfection, you will be told that God is enough. Yet, getting to know God's friends is a good way of "having" God. I know this by experience. Because of such friends I am not in hell, because I always asked them to commend me to God.

### Important To Have This Love

I want you to have this kind of love. At first, these affections may not be perfect but the Lord will increase their perfection. How will this happen? At first, your love will be mingled with human affection but this will do no harm. Sometimes, to show and feel emotion is good and necessary (as being distressed by the trials of our sisters). A sister might have great distress even though the trial is really small. If you are not like this, you still should have compassion on those who are. In turn, you will suffer greatly from what your friend thinks is light. Don't think of the times when the Lord made you strong. Instead, remember your weakest moments.

### No Cooling of Charity

It is important to learn to sympathize with our neighbor's trials. Often, we try to make all trials seem light. You must recall how you were before you desired trials. Otherwise, the devil, little by little, will cool your charity to others (and make this cooling seem like perfection). Be alert, the devil never sleeps. As we come closer to perfection, his temptations are more cunning. If we are not cautious, we can harm others. Watch and pray. This is the only way to discover these hidden wiles.

### Communal Obligations

1. Make sure you always take part in the sisters' recreation for the whole allotted time. This is part of perfect love. Take compassion on each other's needs.
2. Privately, you might find the Prioress' orders to be harsh. Do not say this to anyone (except to the Prioress herself), for this would do much harm.
3. Learn about your own feelings. What are you sorry to see in other sisters and where do you need to show sympathy?
4. Bear with the faults of others and do not be shocked by them because others will bear your faults. Commend to God any sister who is at fault and practice the opposite virtue. Make determined efforts. In this way you can teach the sister by your deeds what she couldn't learn by your words.

### Words of Advice

1. Virtue easily takes root when the soul sees her friend perform virtuous actions. Don't forget this good advice.
2. Each sister must profit everyone by sacrificing herself and advancing in perfection. This friendship is truer than using words (never to be heard in this house!) like "my darling" and "my love". Keep such words for when you are alone with your Spouse. These words are effeminate and I want you to be strong.
3. Do all you can and people will be amazed at what the Lord does in you. After all, he made everything from nothing.
4. Trying to spare others from work by doing it yourself is a clear sign of love and brings peace to the house. May God increase this oneness of heart because we are so few.

### Avoiding Discord

If you are cross with another, take it to prayer. There must be no grudge, party strife or any desire to be the greatest. (In saying this, my blood runs cold. This is the chief problem in convents.) If this happens to you, you are lost. You have driven your Spouse away and He must find another abode. Ask Him to set things right. If your Communions and confessors don't resolve the problem, there is a Judas among you.

The Superior must stop this at the very beginning. If love is not enough, use heavy punishments. We have here both the problem and the remedy. If a definite nun is causing the problem, send her to another convent. Cut off the branches and, if needed, pull up the root. If impossible, keep her in her room so the others don't catch this plague. I would rather our convent caught fire and all die! This is so important that I will write much later. For now, I say this. Provided all are treated equally, I would rather have the nuns show affectionate love mixed with emotion than have a single note of discord.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **BENEFITS OF SELF-DETACHMENT**

We must be detached from "everything else" except God. If we are detached from His creatures, we will embrace the Creator. If we do these tasks every day, the Lord will infuse virtues. We will quickly win the war, because God will take our defense against the devils and against the whole world. To keep nothing for ourselves and to give ourselves totally to God is a great benefit. First, let us praise Him for bringing us together here where all of us seek God alone.

I write about detachment even though many of you could teach me. (It is easier to write about virtues than to practice them.) For me, even writing about virtue is difficult but I will explain virtues by describing the opposite (This is what I possess).

### Value of A Small Convent

This convent is totally cut off concerning exterior matters. Oh God, how did I merit this honor which draws us nearer to you? Realize God's favor in bringing you here. There are twelve of us and God has made us one. How many, who are better than I, would love to be here? Oh God, let the angels praise you, for I cannot repay you. You called me to be a nun because you could not trust me. In a larger convent, my wickedness might not be noticed. So, you brought me here among so few, where my wickedness can be seen. In this way, you removed many occasions of sin.

### Seeing Relatives

Sisters, if we are not good we are more to blame than others. If you cannot follow our customs, please join another convent where God is also served. Do not disturb us who are called by God for His service. In other convents, you can see your relatives. If you wish to see your relatives for your own pleasure, consider yourself imperfect. If this desire remains, then you do not belong here.

The best remedy is not to see your relatives until you are detached and their visits are like crosses. If a sister is fond of visitors and delights in their stories of the world, she will do herself much harm.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **DETACHMENT FROM RELATIVES**

#### Gifts and Conversations

Relatives can cause us much harm. They can intrude on our obligations to God and ruin our peace. We cannot share in their recreations, yet we get distressed over their problems. If they bring us physical comforts, our souls will pay for them. You are free from this temptation because in this convent, you cannot accept any private gift. The Lord provides for all in common.

I am astounded at the harm done by conversations with relatives. Nowadays, religious orders seem to forget about perfection (although the saints wrote about it). How much do we really leave behind if we are not detached from our family? Nowadays, people think that a religious who does not see her family is lacking in virtue.

#### Those Who Love God

We must commend our relatives to God but keep them out of our mind. My relatives were fond of me and I was fond of them. However, when I was in trouble, I was helped by God's servants not by my relatives. Parents are different. They rarely fail to help. If they need comfort, we should give it and be detached. This applies also to brothers and sisters.

If you serve God, your best relatives will be those whom God sends you. If you continue on in detachment, God will give you this freedom to trust those who love you for His sake. They will not fail you. When you least expect, you will find parents, brothers and sisters who seek only God's reward. Others (who want rewards from us) will soon see that we have nothing to give them. This is true the world over.

#### Fleeing the World

The saints' advice about fleeing the world is good and this attachment to relatives is the hardest to get rid of. Some people flee to another part of the country. This is all right. A more helpful solution is to embrace Jesus. In Him we find everything and for His sake we can forget everything. Until we learn this truth, we must keep apart from our family. Later, we can see them. The pleasure of seeing our family will have become a cross.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **DETACHMENT FROM OURSELVES**

#### The Next Step

It might seem that all is accomplished once we have been detached from the world and our relatives. Don't feel secure. You will be like the man who locked his house to go to bed and the thieves were

already inside. There is no worse thief than one who lives in the house! The next step in detachment is to renounce our own self-will. This is the most important decision of all. So much within us destroys the holy freedom of spirit needed to soar to our Maker.

First, always remember that time passes quickly. This shows the uselessness of things. Created things will seem trivial as we aim at eternal rewards. This might seem like a poor help but it will strengthen us. Be careful of growing fond of small things. In this convent, much detachment is done for us but the task remains of being detached from ourselves. Opposing ourselves is difficult because we are very close to ourselves and love ourselves very dearly.

### Humility and Detachment

Humility and detachment from self always go together (like two inseparable sisters). You must love and embrace both. These two virtues are sovereigns of all created things and deliver us from the devil's entanglements. Whoever has these virtues can fight all the forces of hell and the world. The humble and detached soul fears no one because she doesn't care if she loses everything. She fears only displeasing God.

Strangely enough, humility and detachment hide themselves from the soul and she never believes she has them. She so values them that she is always trying to gain them. By doing this, she gains them even more perfectly. How inappropriate for me to praise these virtues.

### Worrying About Health

If you labor to gain these virtues, then you can leave the Egypt of your pleasure because you will have this manna which makes all things taste sweet. First, rid yourself of your love for your body. Some labor so hard to pamper the body. Others always worry about their health. Some think they became religious to stay alive. These do everything to gain good health.

Sisters, we have come here to die for Christ not to practice self-indulgence. The devil tells us that self-indulgence is needed to keep the Rule. So we look after our health to keep the Rule and when we die we haven't even kept it for a month.

### Self-Indulgence

Believe me, there is no need to fear excesses. Our confessors always fear that we are killing ourselves. We are horrified by any possible excesses in physical penances! If only we were so conscientious about everything else! I believe most nuns feel this way. I was self-indulgent and Our Lord provided me with an excuse – we women are weak creatures.

It is amusing to see people torture themselves about physical penances. They get the idea of doing penances, and they fulfill this for two or three days. The devil then suggests that they are doing harm to themselves. Then they don't even do the penances required by the Order. We absent ourselves from choir because our head aches. Then we do this again because it aches again. Then we miss three days in a row so it won't start to ache once more. Very little is the matter with us and we feel we should be dispensed.

### Excused By the Superior

You ask, "Why does the Superior excuse us?" She does not see what goes on inside us. We wail about nothing and say it is a matter of great necessity. She knows your request is excessive but does not want to fail in charity nor judge you harshly.

Oh God, this complaining among nuns has become a habit. Once a nun complained about a headache. I made inquiries and discovered that her pain was elsewhere. Please guard against these things. Once the devil frightens us about our health, we will never get anywhere.

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **MORTIFICATION IN SICKNESS**

These continual moanings about illness are a sign of imperfection. Some illnesses are evident to all. If you can accept the sickness, then say nothing. Someone who is really ill should take the remedies. If you are rid of self-love you won't engage in any unnecessary moaning. Even when a reason exists, say something.

#### Talking About Illnesses

Your numbers are small and you are certainly aware of each other's needs, so there is no lack of care. Do not complain about women's illnesses (these come and go) or else you will always be complaining.

This complaining causes relaxation of discipline in religious houses. As the body is indulged, the soul believes that even more helps are essential. The body loves to be indulged and the poor soul makes little progress. How many people have no one to complain to? We have not come here to indulge ourselves. You are free from the world's trials, so suffer for God. A woman in an unhappy marriage tells no one lest her husband hear of it, so let us keep a secret between God and ourselves. Talking doesn't alleviate the problem.

I am not talking about high fever and serious illnesses. I am speaking of the minor problems where you can keep going. One person can ruin the whole house because the truly sick nun will not be believed.

#### Being Resolute

Remember the hermits whom we try to imitate. They suffered from hunger, cold, and heat. Were they made of iron? They were as frail as us. Once we subdue our bodies, they give us much less trouble. Do not worry. There will always be people to help you. Unless we resolve to accept death and ill-health, we will not accomplish anything.

Do not fear to die. Has not your body mocked you? Why not mock it in return? This resolution is more important than we think. Day by day we gain dominion over the body. This is a great achievement in life's battle. Only those who enjoy this victory can understand the greatness of this advantage. You will never regret the difficulties in attaining self-mastery.

## **CHAPTER 12**

### **DETACHMENT FROM PERSONAL HONORS**

#### Interior Detachment

There are other things which appear trifling but are very important in this great task of making war against ourselves. Once we begin, God also starts to work. He bestows favors so great that our efforts

seem little. As nuns, we do everything. We give up our freedom. We endure fasts, silence and enclosure. We can really indulge ourselves only occasionally. Then, why do we shrink from interior mortification which leads to practicing all the other deprivations with tranquility? Interior detachment is acquired gradually. It means never indulging our will even in small things, until we subdue the body to the spirit.

### Description

This detachment consists primarily of ceasing to care about ourselves and our pleasures. Having surrendered our will to the Lord, what should we fear? A real man of prayer does not shrink from accepting death for God's sake. Sisters, please know that the life of someone seeking to be God's friend is one long martyrdom. I say "long" compared with decapitation which takes only a moment. Life is short. How do we know that our life will not end at the very hour that we resolve to serve God? Set no store on what comes to an end, least of all life itself.

### No Self Glory

It is safest to believe that each hour will be our last one. In this way, we best subdue our wills. If you are faithful to prayer you will gradually reach this mountain without even realizing your accomplishment. It sounds harsh to say that we must take pleasure in nothing. However, we must also mention the consolations and the great good gained even in this life. Detachment gives great security! So practice this and encourage each other.

Be careful of your inner thoughts, especially dealing with precedence. "But I am her senior." "But I am older". "But I worked harder". Quickly check these thoughts. If you speak them they will spread like a plague and cause great abuses. A Prioress who allows this is the beginning of your ruin. Anyone who prays to enjoy the favors of God must always have this detachment.

You ask why I so stress this point. God often grants consolations to those who are less detached. He does this because He hopes by granting these favors the soul would leave everything. By "leaving everything" I do not mean entering religious life because some are unable to do this. However, living among worldly pleasures is a great obstacle to perfection.

### Progress, Prayer and Detachment

We have left the world, but the desire for honor and for things arises also in convents. We are more to blame. Though persons spend years in prayer and meditation, they never make great progress without detachment. Perfect prayer, however, will destroy all attachments.

### Humility and Honors

Ask yourselves. "Do these insignificant things mean anything to you? What advantage or honors do you receive from them? How much humility do you have?" If you were humble the devil could not tempt you about precedence. You would strike him a blow. Every temptation would bring profit. The sister would examine her soul to compare what she has done for the Lord and what He has done for her. She would think of her sins and what she really deserved. Thoughts like these profit the soul so much that the devil won't come back lest he get his head broken.

Let the other sisters profit from your temptations. When tempted to seek honor, ask the superior for a lowly task or do the same task on your own initiative. Force your will to perform tasks you dislike.



The Lord will show you. God deliver us from people who want to serve God while receiving honor. They gain little because their desire for honor robs them. Seeking precedence is poison to perfection.

#### Oversensitivity to Slights

You say these are little things. In convents they spread like foam on the water. Those who seek honor and are sensitive to insult are extremely dangerous. Why is this so? Some trivial slight might have only a tiny root but the devil gets someone to say to the person that this incident was a great insult which even a saint could hardly bear. This is the devil's deceitfulness and he tempts the soul to vainglory.

Our human nature is awfully weak. While saying the slight is nothing, we imagine ourselves practicing great virtue. We pity ourselves because others pity us. We lose our occasions of merit. We grow weaker and we open the door to future temptations. Just when you are ready to accept insults, your sisters urge you to be more sensitive and resist these insults. Don't listen to them. Please, don't let yourselves show charity to a sister who is supposedly receiving insults. This is like Job's friends offering their pity!

### **CHAPTER 13**

#### **RENOUNCING THE WORLD'S WISDOM**

#### False Idea of Rights

I want to set in writing what I frequently say to you. Please do not forget it. Anyone seeking perfection must never think, "I had right on my side." or "They had no right to do this". This is a false idea of right. Was it right that Jesus should suffer? Did they have a right to crucify Him? Why would we only bear those crosses which we have a right to expect? Such a person should return to the world. How does right enter into this at all? I do not understand.

Before speaking of your rights, you should wait until you receive some honor. As a religious, you have no right to have honors in this life. Why then complain about some offense against your honor? Either we are brides of the great King or we are not. What wife does not share in the dishonors of her husband? To desire to share in the kingdom of Jesus Christ and not be willing to share in his dishonor is ridiculous.

#### Accounting Self As the Least

Whatever sister thinks she is accounted the least in the convent, must see herself as the most fortunate. She will not lack honor in this life or the next. Let us imitate the humility of the Virgin Mary whose habit we wear. Let us do this "in some degree", because we always fall short of being her daughter or the spouse of the Bridegroom. If these habits are not kept in check today, they will be venial sins tomorrow. They are very infectious. This sin will soon be accompanied by other sins.

#### Harm From Over-Sensitivity

We who live in community must consider this carefully. If we realized the harm caused by our over-sensitivity about our honor, we would die a thousand deaths rather than cause this harm. The harm we cause has no end. Many other sisters will follow us. They might be harmed more by our one bad habit than they benefited from all our virtues. The devil does not allow a single bad habit to disappear but all our virtues can be ruined by sinful nature.

### Having The Wrong Temperament

A nun should leave before being professed if she saw she could not live by the customs of the house. No convent should allow her to take vows until after many years of probation. I am not talking about shortcomings regarding penances. Although wrong, they do not do much harm. I am thinking of nuns of such temperament that they like to be esteemed. They see the faults of others but not their own. They are deficient in many ways and lack humility. May God help this nun by giving a great spirituality. Otherwise, may God preserve you from keeping her in your community. She will have no peace and not allow you to have any.

### Reasons To Stay Home

We do not take dowries and it grieves me that convents would keep a candidate because of their dowry or their relatives. We have given up worldly honors and no nun should seek honors at the cost of ourselves. Our honor is God's service. If anyone thinks differently, let her stay home!

That is why our founders asked that we have a year's probation. We extended this to four years. I would like to prolong it to ten. To a humble nun this would mean little. If she is good, she will be accepted. If not, why harm one of Christ's communities?

I will define "not being good". I mean a lack of mortification, an attachment to worldly things and a self-interest. Any nun who knows she is not mortified should not make her profession. Otherwise, she will suffer hell on earth. God grant that she may not be in hell in the world to come.

### The Call To Detachment

If you don't believe my words, then time will teach you. Our whole way of life makes us hermits, not just nuns, detached from all created things. This favor is granted to all whom the Lord chooses to live with us. This will be evident in the joy that such detachment gives. She sets aside worldly things to delight in religious practices. If anyone is inclined to worldly things and is not making progress, she should leave this convent. Let her go to another convent. She cannot complain to me. I have warned her.

### The Discontented Soul

Whoever seeks to please God and not herself will find heaven in this convent. However, if she wants more things than we have, she will lose everything. A discontented soul is like a person with severe nausea. She rejects all food (no matter how tasty) and is upset with those who eat well. She will save her soul better elsewhere and even reach perfection because we asked too much all at once.

Although complete detachment in interior matters takes time, mortification in externals is asked immediately. Otherwise, harm comes to all the rest. If a newcomer, for a whole year, sees how we live and makes no progress, then she will make none in future years and will go backwards. She need not be as perfect as the others but her soul must grow healthier. Soon, she will see if her disease can be cured.

## **CHAPTER 14**

### **REJECTING THE UNWORTHY CANDIDATES**

Our Lord helps those who come to the convent with good resolutions. Therefore, we must ask each candidate about her intentions. If she comes for her own interests but is intelligent, the Lord can perfect

her intentions. If she is not intelligent, she will never understand those who are trying to improve her. She will think that she knows better than others. This evil is generally incurable because it is usually accompanied by malice.

#### Evaluating the Candidates

When an intelligent person grows fond of what is good, she clings to it. She sees this is best for her. This is not a great spirituality but at least the soul can make herself useful without troubling anyone. A person lacking in intelligence cannot make herself useful and may do great harm. This defect is not seen immediately because some people are good at talking and bad at understanding. Others talk sharply, but they are intelligent and can do good.

Some are simple people, quite unskilled in business but very skilled in talking with God. Therefore, make many inquiries before accepting novices and make the time before profession a long one. It is often necessary to send a nun away, especially in a convent which practices our austerity of life.

#### Rejecting Unsuitable Candidates

I say this because we don't follow the instructions given by our predecessors. In our day, we worry about offending the relatives. May those who accept unsuitable candidates not pay for it in eternity! These candidates always have some pretext to be accepted but no pretext is valid. If the superior always considers what is good for the house, God will not let her go astray. If she considers anything else, she is bound to err.

Let each sister encourage her superior in this important matter. It is good that we do not accept dowries. We might keep someone because their money has been spent.

## **CHAPTER 15**

### **BEING UNJUSTLY CONDEMNED**

#### Making Excuses

I am a person who does not know what I am doing, so I am writing this book only in obedience to your command. I write the best I can but you can burn this if it is too bad. I need more time to write. A week has gone by and I have written nothing and I even forget where I left off. Here I am – excusing myself. This is bad. Please don't imitate me. To suffer without making excuses is great perfection, edifying and meritorious. I teach this but I don't practice it. May God grant me this before I die.

I am confused. I urge virtue upon you but have not practiced it myself and have made so little progress. I always have some reason to think I am practicing virtue by excusing myself. Sometimes this is needed (to avoid harm) but I don't have the humility to do it only when necessary.

#### Remaining Silent

Great humility is needed to be unjustly condemned and remain silent. This imitates Our Lord. Study earnestly to do this because it brings great gain. Except in the few cases where scandal might result, there is no gain in freeing ourselves from blame, none whatsoever.

Accustom yourself to practice this silence and seek from the Lord the true humility which always results. A truly humble person desires to be condemned unjustly and thought little of. How better to imitate the Lord. No one needs bodily strength for this, just God's aid.

### Interior Virtues

Study these great virtues closely and practice them as your great penance. As you know, I don't like severe and excessive penances which may injure your health. In this case, however, I need not fear because great interior virtues do not weaken the body. They strengthen the soul and can be applied to many little things. This leads to great victories in important matters.

I have never had to practice this virtue. I have never needed to keep silent when unjustly accused because I have never heard anything bad said of me which was not true. If I hadn't sinned in that way I had in other ways and my detractors truly indulged me by saying nothing about these sins.

### Prefers to Be Blamed

I preferred people to blame me for what wasn't true. I truly disliked hearing people discuss my true faults. In small matters, I follow my own inclinations and don't try to be perfect right away.

Learn this practice early. See how much is gained and how nothing is ever lost by practicing each virtue at our own level. We certainly gain by imitating the Lord.

Meditate upon this great gain. How can we be unjustly blamed? Are we not filled with faults? A just man sins seven times a day (Pr.24:16) and it is false to say that we never sin. We might not be guilty for what we are accused but we are not blameless as Jesus was.

### Prayer to Jesus

"Oh Lord, I think of the many ways you suffered undeservedly. What was I thinking when I made excuses for myself? Any good in me comes from your hands. Sometimes, I did not deserve the blame but I also did not deserve your favors."

Why should I want a person so evil as myself to be thought well of by anyone when your enemies said such wicked things about you? This is intolerable and I do not want you to tolerate in me anything that displeases you.

My eyes are blind. Give me light so I desire that everyone hate me because I have so often abandoned you. What advantage do we gain by explaining ourselves to others? What does it matter if everyone blames us, as long as you do not blame us?

### Good Resulting From False Blame

Let us meditate upon what is real and what is not real because sisters, we will never gain perfection unless the good results from false blame. Hopefully, the person who blamed you will experience confusion when she sees that you allowed yourself to be unjustly condemned. This lifts up the soul more than ten sermons. We must be preachers by our deeds because we cannot be preachers by words.

The good and the evil you do will not remain secret. If you do not make excuses for yourself, someone else will defend you. Our Lord defended Magdalene in the Pharisee's house. Jesus had no one to defend Him until the Good Thief spoke out. God will get someone to defend you. If not, there will be no need. I have seen this myself. So, be glad when you are blamed and soon you will see the good results.

This is the only way you can gain your freedom. You must not care if they speak well or ill of you. You must see this as God's business, because you are quite uninterested in what the person is saying.

Let not replying become our habit. This seems impossible and, at first, it is difficult. However, gradual attainment of this freedom is quite possible.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE CALL TO CONTEMPLATION

#### A Game of Chess

(Editor's note: Chess was very popular in Teresa's time. Originally she removed these paragraphs because of not wanting people to realize she knew so much about this worldly game.) I hope you do not think that I have written too much about prayer for I have only begun to place the board (as they say). Let me explain by a comparison. A person who cannot set out the pieces of chess correctly will never plan the game well, and if he doesn't know how to place the king in check he will never gain a checkmate. (I shouldn't talk about games. We forbid them in the house. But now you know what kind of superior God provides for you.) However, the game of chess is sometimes legitimate and if we play it well we will checkmate the Divine King and He will not desire to move out of our check. The queen (supported by the others) always gives the king the most problems.

#### Humility and Love

Humility is the greatest queen for she brought Him down from heaven in the Virgin's womb. By humility we too draw God into our soul. Mysteriously, God gives humility most to the soul who has it most, and least to one having it least. Humility cannot exist without love nor love without humility. Both virtues can exist only where there is great detachment from all created things.

#### Meditation

Sisters, you ask why I am talking about two virtues on which many books exist when you asked me to explain prayer. My answer is this. If you asked me only to explain meditation, I could advise you to practice that prayer without having these two virtues because meditation is the step to acquiring these virtues. The Christian life depends upon the soul beginning to meditate and no one should neglect God's grace that leads to meditation. I have written about this elsewhere.

#### Contemplation

Contemplation is another matter and a great error is made here. If a person spends a few minutes each day thinking of his sins (a basic responsibility of every true Christian) people call him a great contemplative, and expect him to have great virtues. He even thinks so himself and he is quite wrong. He only knows how to set up the chessboard. Yet, he believes that by knowing the pieces, he can gain checkmate. Really, the Divine King only lets Himself be taken by someone who totally surrenders.

Sisters, if you want me to tell you how to attain contemplation, I must first speak at length about what is important. If you do not wish to hear this or to practice these virtues, then just continue with your meditation all your life. However, you will not attain contemplation. I may be wrong, for I have been striving for contemplation for twenty years.

#### Mental Prayer

I will explain mental prayer so you can practice it correctly. However, if we do not have these virtues we cannot even practice mental prayer well. Later, these virtues must be in a higher degree to

practice contemplation. The King of Glory will only be united with us if we strain for the greatest virtues. I will explain this. If I say something untrue it is not intentional, just that I know no better.

To snatch a soul from the devil, God is sometimes pleased to raise this soul (who is in an evil state) to perfect contemplation. Such persons will not be in mortal sin at the time. Before granting contemplation, the Lord will give them a vision (even a very good one) to draw them back to Himself.

### Not Yet Contemplation

However, He will not grant this soul contemplation for that is the state of divine union when God delights in the soul and the soul in God. There is no way the Pure One of Heaven can delight in an unclean soul or delight in what is not His own. By mortal sin, the soul becomes the property of the devil. She delights in the devil's pleasures which are really continuous tortures even on earth. The Lord has enough children of His own without taking the children of others. Yet God will do what He frequently does – snatch them from the devil's hands.

Oh God, why do we make you wrestle with the devil? Didn't he take you in his arms to the pinnacle of the temple? What a sight. The Son of God standing by the side of darkness. The devil felt fear but didn't know why. God kept him from understanding.

### God Wrestling For Us

We Christians should feel ashamed to make God wrestle with an unclean beast. O Jesus, your arms are strong. They are not weakened even by the tortures of the Cross! How quickly love heals. I believe that if you had lived, your love for us would have healed your wounds with no need for medicine. Oh God, will you give me this medicine to heal what grieves me? I would eagerly desire such a health-giving ointment.

### The Invitation of Early Favors

To return to my teaching. Some souls are completely lost but God sees He can regain them and He leaves no stone unturned. Although they lack virtues, God gives them consolations and emotions which begin to move their desires. Occasionally, He brings them to a state of contemplation (though rarely and for a short time). He is testing them. He wants to see if His favors make them desirous of preparing themselves so they can enjoy these favors often. If they don't, may God pardon them! God has brought them close to Himself and still they remain attached to earthly things.

Personally, I believe God does this to many souls but few prepare themselves for more favors. If we do everything possible, He will continue to give His favors until we arrive at a high degree of prayer. If we do not give ourselves completely to Him, He will be doing us a great favor by letting us stay in mental prayer. Then He will visit us from time to time as an owner visits his workers in the vineyard.

### Those Who Respond

Those who do respond are His beloved children. They never want to leave Him and He never leaves them. He seats them at table and gives them His own food. How happy, O daughters, to leave our few petty things to arrive at so high a place! Even if the whole world cries out against you, what does that matter? You are in God's arms! He can free you from everything. By one command He created the world.

Do not be afraid if He wants to speak with you. He seeks only your greater good. His love for these special souls is strong and He displays this love in every possible way. Why not show Him our

love? What a wonderful exchange – His love for our love. He can do all things. We can do nothing except as He enables us. Unfortunately, we make weak resolutions. If His Majesty lets us gain everything by doing almost nothing, let's not be foolish and fail to do it.

### Crying Out: I Am No Saint

Our troubles come, O Lord, by not having our eyes fixed on you. We would soon arrive at perfection if we kept our eyes on the road. Instead, we stumble and stray. One would think this way was new and never trodden before. It seems as if we were not Christians or had never read the passion. We get hurt by some small point of our honor. We cry out, "Well, I am no saint".

God deliver us from saying, "I am no saint". We may not be a saint but it would be good to think of what we could be if only we would try. God will do His part if we do ours. Let us put our hand to the plough. Perfection is why we have come here. Whatever service the Lord wants, let us venture to do it quickly. That kind of venturesomeness should always characterize this house because it increases humility. God is no respecter of persons. He helps the strong and asks us to have holy boldness.

I have strayed from the point of explaining mental prayer and contemplation. It seems irrelevant but maybe you can understand my rough style better than the eloquent books.

## **CHAPTER 17**

### **ACCEPTING THE LORD'S ROAD TO PERFECTION**

Before talking about prayer directly I want to stress the importance of humility. The chief teaching on humility is that you must practice it often and know it well. It is the principal virtue for those who pray.

How can a truly humble soul think herself as good as a contemplative? Certainly God can make the soul humble. However, my advice is that she always take the lowest place. This makes the soul ready to be led to contemplation. If contemplation is not given, she is still happy in serving and praising the Lord. Instead of getting what she deserves (to be the devil's slave in hell) God has brought her to this convent.

### Different Roads

God leads us by different roads and the soul that thinks she is on the lowest road might actually be on the highest one. Although every nun in this house practices prayer, we are not necessarily all contemplatives. We would be greatly discouraged if we didn't understand that contemplation is a gift. It is not necessary for salvation. If God does not require it, why should anyone else?

We will gain perfection if we do what is said here. In fact, we will gain much more merit. We labor for God and He stores up what we cannot enjoy in this life. Don't give up prayer. Sometimes, the Lord delays and gives us, all at once, those rewards that He had been giving to others for years.

### Difficulties In Prayer

I spent fourteen years, unable to meditate except while reading. Some cannot even meditate while reading. Others can only recite vocal prayers with a certain pleasure. Some find their thoughts wandering and when they try to concentrate on God are filled with a thousand foolish scruples about their faith.

I know an old woman, a penitent, who for many years spent hours daily in vocal prayer. Mental prayer gave her no help at all. She just thought about the vocal words. Many are like this and, if they are humble, they will be in the same state as those who enjoy consolations. They may even feel safer because we cannot tell if consolations come from God or the devil (who tries to fill us with pride). There is no fear if consolations come from God because they bring humility (cf. Ch.17,18,19,28 of Autobiography).

Some humble souls feel that it is their fault when they fail to receive consolations. If they see someone with the gift of tears, they feel badly that they are not so advanced. Tears are not always a sign of perfection. Greater safety exists in humility, mortification, detachment and the virtues. Please, do not fear that you will fail to gain perfection.

### Saint Martha

St. Martha was holy but not necessarily a contemplative. Would you not want to be like Martha who so often received Jesus into her house and ate at table with Him? If she were absorbed in contemplation, no one would have prepared the meal. Our convent has all kinds of persons. Nuns who are active must not speak against those absorbed in contemplation. The contemplatives know that the Lord will speak for them. This makes them forget everything.

Somebody must cook, so rejoice to be a Martha. True humility is to be ready to do what the Lord wants, always considering ourselves unworthy to be His servants. If contemplation, mental prayer, vocal prayer, caring for the sick and doing the lowliest task serves the Guest who comes to eat, what should it matter if we do one thing better than another?

### Accepting the Lord's Choice

The choice is the Lord's not ours. Do your best in everything and let the Lord of the house choose your task. If you prepare yourself for high contemplation and he does not give it (I think He will if you have detachment and humility), He is storing it up for you in heaven. He knows you are strong and can carry His cross without this gift.

A sign of His friendship is to receive what He accepted – the cross. Realize that you might not receive as great a reward from contemplation. Don't meddle in the Lord's judgments. The choice is His. Every sister would choose the life of the contemplative, but we gain most when we have no desire to gain what seems best to us. You cannot lose. God permits a mortified person to lose only when He plans a greater gain for her.

## **CHAPTER 18**

### **THE TRIALS OF CONTEMPLATIVES**

To you whom God is not leading on the road of contemplation, please know that contemplatives carry heavy crosses which God sends in many ways. The trials given to contemplatives are intolerable and could not be carried without God's consolations. Clearly, God leads those He loves most by the road of trials. The more He loves them, the greater the trials. God does not hate contemplatives. He calls them friends.



### Trials and Rewards of Contemplation

God does not admit to close friendship those who love pleasures and want to be free from trials. God gives His close friends greater trials and leads them by a rugged road. They think they are lost and must go back to the beginning. God then gives them to drink – not water but wine. They get inebriated and don't even realize what they are going through so they can bear it. True contemplatives are courageous and resolute in suffering. If they are weak, the Lord gives them courage.

Those leading an active life see the consolations given to the contemplatives and think that favors are all they experience. You probably couldn't endure their sufferings for even a day. The point is this. The Lord knows everyone and gives each soul her own work according to what is best for the soul, for God's glory and for the salvation of others.

### Ready For Work

If you prepared yourself for God's service, then His work will not get lost. God's work is our purpose and we must do this not for a year or ten years but until death. Let us leave nothing undone. We are like soldiers who have served long but still must be ready to go whenever the captain sends them. Does an earthly captain not pay his soldiers? How much better is our payment? Soldiers die and God knows who pays them.

Seeing his soldiers present and ready, the captain assigns them duties (not as well as our heavenly Captain). If they are not present, they receive neither pay nor an assignment. So, practice mental prayer or at least vocal prayer. To avoid being a foolish virgin, do not neglect the hours of prayer because you never know when the Spouse will call you. If He does not call, you are still doing what is suitable. True humility comes when you do not think you are fit for what you are doing. A humble servant will be blessed in her active life and will be better off than some contemplatives.

### The Standard Bearer

In battles, the captain and the standard bearer have the greatest obligations. The standard bearer cannot defend himself because he must always hold the standard. So it is with contemplatives. They must carry the standard of humility and accept blows while delivering none. Contemplatives must raise the cross and never let it go, no matter what the perils. If the standard bearer lets go, the battle is lost. This is true with God's work. Much harm is done to those who are not advanced if they see God's friends acting in a way not befitting their office.

The average soldier might withdraw from extreme danger and no one will observe them. However, the officers in an army have all eyes fixed upon them. The king confers these noble offices, but the holder has great obligations. Please understand. We do not know what to ask for and must leave everything to the Lord. True humility is satisfied with what is given by God. Some people think they have a right to ask God for favors. This is a strange kind of humility! God seldom gives favors to these souls. He knows they cannot drink His chalice.

### Humility

You are making progress if you see yourself as the worst of all and if you act for everyone's good. Progress in perfection has nothing to do with consolations, raptures or visions. We will not really know their value until eternity. However, the virtues of humility, mortification and strict obedience (never going an inch beyond the superior's orders) are unfailing sources of a heavenly inheritance that will never cease. Attach the greatest importance to obedience. Without this, she is not a nun at all. Since I am writing for good nuns, this single word suffices.

### Obedience

If a nun under a vow of obedience doesn't take the greatest care to observe the highest degree of perfection, why is she in the convent? If she fails in obedience, she will never succeed in the contemplative life (or in leading a good active life). Even a person in the world who is trying to live a contemplative life must surrender her will to a confessor who understands her. In this way, she will make progress more quickly than in years by acting otherwise.

These are the virtues you must desire to obtain. Don't be concerned about other types of devotion. They are very unreliable and would be delusions from the devil. Why seek to serve the Lord in doubtful ways when there are so many safe paths? Why plunge into these perils? I have said much because this advice is needed for those whom God leads into contemplation. If you have no need of what I wrote, you may find it pleasant reading. Follow the Lord's will in everything and you will have no cause to fear.

## **CHAPTER 19**

### **BEGINNING TEACHING ON PRAYER**

Not having written for a while, I cannot remember what I said. I will just write and not worry where I left off. Really, many good books have been written by competent people for souls who pray, so you would make a mistake to heed anything I have written.

### Books on Prayer

There are books of daily meditations on Our Lord's life and passion. There are meditations on Judgment, hell and what we owe to God. These books are excellent in how they plan the beginning and the end of prayer time. Anyone who practices this prayer and has a habit of prayer has found a road by which the Lord will bring her to the harbor of light. If she begins well, she will end well because when the understanding is kept in restraint, the soul walks restfully.

### Explaining a Trial

However, I wish to explain something else which will help you (if the Lord will help me). I will explain a trial which many souls suffer. You will find some comfort in my words if you experience this trial.

### Failing To Conquer All the Enemies

Some souls (and minds) are as unruly as horses that are not yet broken in. No one can stop them. They are never still. Even a skilled rider will sometimes be in danger while on this horse. Therefore, he must ride with great care. Some souls are like this by nature. For others, God permits this trial. I feel sorry for these souls. They are like thirsty people who see water a long way off. When they seek this water, someone bars their path at the beginning, the middle and the end.

After much labor, these souls conquer their first enemy but allow themselves to be conquered by the second enemy. So, they prefer to die of thirst rather than drink water that will cost them so much. Their strength and courage have come to an end. Possibly they might even conquer the second enemy. However, their strength ends before the third, even though they might only be a few steps away from the living water that Jesus promised the Samaritan woman. "Whoever drinks this water will never thirst again."

### Never Thirst Again

Jesus' words are true because if souls drink His water of perfect contemplation, they will never thirst again. Their thirst for the eternal will then exceed any natural thirst here on earth. The soul thirsts to experience this thirst because she knows how precious it is. This thirst, although grievous and exhausting, creates the very satisfaction which allays the thirst. This thirst quenches only the desire for earthly things and God satisfies this thirst with His greatest favor, leaving an even greater desire to drink of this water again.

### First Quality - Water's Power To Cool

Water has three relevant qualities. First, water cools things. No matter how hot they are, water tempers the heat and even puts out large fires. However, when there is tar in the fire, water only makes it grow more fierce. What a marvelous thing! A fire with tar is strong and its contrary element, water, can make it grow more fierce. I would like to talk with someone who understands these qualities so they can explain this to me.

Sisters, you will be glad if God gives you to drink of this water. You will understand how a genuine love of God is strong and completely free from earthly things. You can rise above and be master of the whole world. Even though water and fire are contrary elements, water cannot quench the fire of love. Fire is the absolute master and subject to no earthly power.

### Power Over Creation

Now you see, sisters, why I have insisted that you seek this freedom. Is it not funny, that a little nun in our convent can gain mastery over all the elements of the whole world? No wonder the saints with God's help did as they pleased!

Fire and water obeyed Saint Martin. Birds and fishes obeyed St. Francis. Many other saints had powers over nature. Helped by God and doing all they can, the saints could almost claim this power as their right. They were masters of the world because they had despised the world and subjected themselves to the Lord of the Universe. Therefore, earthly water has no power over this heavenly fire because its flames reach high and its source is not of earth.

### The Water Of Tears

Other fires of God's love are small and can be quenched by the least things. This fire will not be quenched even if doused in a sea of temptations. The fire will burn and still gain mastery. Rain from above will quench this fire even less because this water and this fire have the same heavenly source. These elements help each other and produce the same effect.

The water of true tears (which comes from true prayer) fans this flame and keeps it alive. At the same time the fire cools the water of tears. What a blessed gift – that fire should cool water! This fire when combined with the heavenly water of tears even freezes all our earthly affections. Nothing of earth has enough warmth left to induce us to cling to it. We remain attached to any creature only if it increases God's fire. This fire is not easily satisfied and it can enkindle the whole world.

### Second Quality – To Cleanse

The second quality of water is to cleanse things. What would the world be if there were no water for washing? Do you know the cleansing power of this heavenly water (when it is unclouded and freed

from mud)? I am convinced that the soul is purified and cleansed of all sins once the soul has drunk of the water of contemplation.

### God's Choice Not Ours

God does not allow us to drink this water of perfect contemplation whenever we wish. The choice is not ours. This Divine Union is supernatural, given to purify the soul from the mud of its sins.

Other types of prayer (as excellent as they are) come through the understanding and are like water running all over the ground. The soul cannot drink these waters at its source and they are never free from impurities. This type of prayer is not living water because something of the body's influence and the baseness of our nature clings to the soul.

### Imperfections in Meditating

I will explain further. Let us say that we are meditating on the world and how it will come to an end. We do this to despise the world. Yet, we are thinking about worldly things which we love. Inevitably, we are slightly distracted. In trying to banish these thoughts, we are plunged into them again. Certainly, we must meditate on the evil of the world but we should not grow careless.

### Freed By Contemplation

Contemplation of the Lord frees us from this care because He will not allow us to look at ourselves. Instead, He calls us to His side. In a single moment He reveals more truths and gives clearer insights than we could gain in years. Our sight is poor and the dust of the road blinds us. In contemplation we arrive at the end without even understanding how.

### Third Quality - Water's Power to Quench Thirst

The third power of water is to quench thirst, which is a desire for something we need to live. From lack of water we die by thirst and by too much water we drown. Oh Lord, how I would like to plunge so deeply that I drown in this living water! This is possible.

### Theresa's Experience

The soul's desire for God can increase so much that human nature can no longer bear it. I myself experienced this living water in such abundance that I would have been drawn out of my body by raptures if God had not consoled me.

I saw clearly that I would die of thirst if something wasn't done. I was drawn out of myself and I found the world so intolerable that I was overwhelmed. However, I came to life again in God. In this way, God let me have experiences that would normally cause my death (if I had remained within myself).

### Made Capable of Receiving

Understand this. Everything in God is perfect and everything He gives us is for our welfare. No matter how abundant these waters, nothing is superfluous. If the water is abundant, He gives the soul the capacity to drink. Does not a glassmaker form the vessel to receive what is necessary?

Our desires for this water come from ourselves and, therefore, they are not perfect. Whatever is good in these desires comes from God. However, we are indiscreet and we think we can never have too much because the pain is so pleasurable. We have an immeasurable longing and we stimulate this longing. Sometimes it can cause our death. What a happy death! Yet, by living, we could have helped

others. The devil has something to do with this. He tempts us to be indiscreet in our penances so we ruin our health. This is important to him.

### Being Careful

Anyone who has attained this fierce thirst must be careful. Even if she does not die, her health will be ruined. Also, she must not give outward expressions to her feelings, although at times she cannot hide them.

### Limiting These Desires

When assailed by these strong impulses (which only increases our desires) we must not add to them but gently check the impulses and turn our attention elsewhere. Unfortunately, our own nature can play a great part in these experiences and feelings.

Some people desire everything, even bad things. These people have not achieved true mortification (which is always profitable). So, it is wise to check these desires. I am not saying these desires should be uprooted but they should be limited. For example, a person like St. Paul desired to be freed of the body to be with God. This caused him pain (and is also a great joy). He needed mortification to limit this. Sometimes this desire so oppressed him that he almost lost his reason.

### Theresa's Experiences

I was of an impetuous nature, but had grown accustomed to curbing my will. I thought my will was completely annihilated. Yet, this attempt to hide my feelings almost destroyed my reason. In this case, even though the desire came from the Spirit, true humility caused me to fear because I could not claim to have gained sufficient charity to bring me to this state.

### Changing Our Desire

I believe we can change our desire to plunge into this water. We should reflect that if we lived we might give light to a soul which would be lost. Also, if we serve God more on earth, we shall deserve to enjoy Him more in heaven. These types of thoughts are appropriate to these trials. By willing to remain here to serve God, we gain much and leave ourselves in God's hands. That is always the best.

### Discretion

What if the devil is the source of these desires? Cassian tells the story of a hermit tempted to throw himself down a well so he could see God sooner. The Lord never allows his servant to be so blind. His desires bring illumination, moderation and discretion. We must be watchful. For example, we can shorten our prayer (even when experiencing great joy) if we see our bodily strength waning. Discretion is needed in everything.

### The Rewards

Sisters, why have I first described the end of the battle and the reward of drinking this heavenly water? I did this so you might not grow weary or be discouraged by the trials. Often a soul has arrived at the fountain and needs only to stoop and drink the water. I don't want you to think that you do not have the strength or that the water is not for you.

Remember, Our Lord invited all by saying, "I will give you to drink". He did not say, "I will give drink to those I see as worthy." He said that all are to come. I believe none will fail to receive as long as they stay on the path. May the Lord help you to seek, because the water must be sought to be gained. We never lack consolation on this road.

## CHAPTER 20

### ENCOURAGEMENT TO WALK THE ROAD OF PERFECTION

#### A Contradiction?

In the last chapter, I seemed to be contradicting myself. I consoled those who had not yet reached the contemplative state by saying the Lord had many roads and many Mansions. Yet, I repeat, His Majesty has provided for us and He forbids no one from drinking from the fountain of life. If He does, what good reasons He had for forbidding me!

#### All Can Drink

He did not make me cease after I had begun to drink. Instead, He plunged me into the waters. This is certain. He will forbid no one to drink. He publicly calls us to do so.

However, He is so good and forces no one to drink. Rather, He enables all who follow Him to drink in many ways so all can be comforted and none die of thirst.

From this rich stream flow large streams and small streams. There are even little pools for children (the beginners) who might be fearful of large streams. Sisters, you will not die of thirst on this road. You will always have the water of comfort. Do not tarry on the way. Strive until you die. Our only goal here on earth is to strive.

Pursue the road with a determination to die rather than not reach the goal. You will always have some thirst but in heaven you will drink abundantly. God grant that we never fail Him. Amen

#### Setting Out On the Way

Let us consider how to begin the first stage of this journey. This is important. First, I want to remove all fear. Possibly, the person does not have the determination that I just described. They should still set out on this road. Even taking one step will do much good.

Suppose someone had a rosary with a specially indulgenced bead. If she uses this one bead she will gain much more than if the rosaries just stayed in the box. So, even walking a short distance along this road brings light and helps the soul to see other roads. She does herself no harm by just walking some part of this road.

#### The Conversation of True Friendship

So, sisters, by your conversation encourage all to begin. This is true friendship and (as you know from meditation) we must love our neighbor. In your worldly friendships it is not time for child's play but for God's work. In speaking to a relative or friend, don't use such phrases as "If you love me" unless you have a noble goal that will profit the person. This phrase might be needed to get them to listen seriously because even one kind word can deeply influence someone. Afterwards, you will have time to speak about God. I do not forbid such phrases if used to bring blessings to someone. Used for any other reason, they could do harm.

#### Speaking of God to Friends

Everyone knows you are nuns and your business is prayer. Do not say, "I do not wish to be considered good". What people see in you will bring them good or harm. Your conversation must be such that people learn your language. If they do not, then be careful not to learn theirs.

It doesn't matter if you are considered ill bred or hypocritical. You will gain much. Only those who learn your language will still come to see you. You do not spend much time speaking with someone who knows only Arabic. If you would speak of God, worldly people won't bother you or harm you. I know by experience the harm done to a soul that tries to keep up with the world. For this journey to perfection, the soul must have great peace and quiet.

You need not teach this new language of prayer to your friends. Just tell them what they will gain. Do this constantly, always to help them. They will realize the gain and will seek out the Master to teach them. What a favor, in describing this road, if the Lord uses you to arouse others to seek Him. There is much to be said. I wish I could write with both hands and not forget one thing while saying another! Sisters, may you speak of this road better than I have been able.

## CHAPTER 21

### DETERMINATION IN SETTING OUT

Do not be dismayed at all you must take into account. This road contains precious treasures so the cost is high. Soon we will realize that we have paid nothing compared with the reward.

I must speak of those who will never halt until they reach the goal and drink the life-giving waters. This is where I must begin. The soul must have a determined resolve never to halt, no matter what might happen. No matter how hard the labor or what people might say, they must continue. Whether they reach the goal or die on the way, they will go on. Even if the very world dissolves before them, they will not stop.

Still, people discourage this unlimited seeking. They say, "It is dangerous". "Someone gets lost doing this". "It can lead to delusions". "It is bad for women". "Some prayed and still committed sin". "These subtleties are of no use". "It is enough to say Our Fathers and Hail Marys".

#### Need For This Book

I agree with this last remark. It is good to base your prayer on words given by the Lord. Certainly if we were not lukewarm, we would not need this book. I am writing for souls who cannot recollect themselves by thinking on the mysteries. Some need these special methods of prayer. Some are so ingenious that nothing is good enough for them. So, I will give teaching on the beginning, middle and end (without spending much time on the higher stages). They cannot take books from you and that is all you need.

The best words are found in the Gospels, which bestow more recollection than books written by questionable authors. I can give you some helpful teaching by staying close to the Master. I will not attempt to explain these divine prayers. Instead, I will give just a few thoughts on the Our Father. Otherwise, we can kill our devotion by consulting many books. The true Master does his best to help his pupil enjoy being taught.

#### The Question of Danger

Pay no heed to anyone who frightens you by saying the way is perilous. While seeking a treasure you will travel a road filled with thieves. This will always be dangerous. Worldly people will give up

much sleep to gain worldly wealth and will have no peace. When you are on this road to gain this treasure (or to take it by force) you are walking a safe road, trodden by our kind and His saints.

People will tell you the road is full of danger. Yet what dangers are present for those who are not even on the road! What an incomparably greater risk in losing the treasure! These souls fall headlong into dangers. Having no one to help them, they perhaps lose this living water altogether. They drink neither from the pool nor the stream. How can they travel this dangerous road of life with no water to drink? They will die of thirst. See clearly, daughters. Whether we want to or not, we all must journey to this fountain. Don't let anyone mislead you by showing you any other road but prayer.

#### No Danger In Prayer

You yourselves require both vocal and mental prayer. If someone tells you prayer is dangerous, you must see the person himself as your greatest danger and flee. You need this advice. You must possess humility and virtues but God forbid that prayer should be a way of danger. This fear was created by the devil who is very clever.

#### Pretext Not To Pray

The world is blind. People forget all those who have fallen into evils by neglecting prayer. Compared with these multitudes are the few people who practiced prayer and the devil caused them to fall. By doing this, he caused others to fear to practice virtues. Some use this as a pretext. They flee from good to save themselves from evil. This is the devil's wicked invention. "O Lord, your words are misunderstood. Save us from this weakness."

#### True Servants Who Help

One blessing exists. There are always a few people who will help you. When the true servant is beset with these fears, her desires increase because she sees the source of the devil's attacks. This causes the devil great anger. He has sown his weeds in others and leads astray those who think they are zealous for God. Then God raises up someone to open their eyes so they see the devil's fog that obscures their path.

God is good. One man begins to tell the truth and souls gradually see the path. People say this road is dangerous but this servant of God makes souls realize that it is good. If people advise against frequent Communion, this servant communicates even more. By one or two souls fearlessly following His path the Lord can gain many.

#### No Fears

Sisters, stop fearing and stop listening to popular opinion. Believe only those who model their life on Christ. Practice humility. Keep a good conscience. Despise worldly things. Believe what the Church teaches. If someone tries to frighten you, say that your Rule demands that you pray without ceasing. If they want you to use only vocal prayer, point out that the mind and heart should be in what you say. This is mental prayer (and even contemplation if God so wills it).

## **CHAPTER 22 UNDERSTANDING MENTAL PRAYER**

#### Describing Mental Prayer

Mental prayer has nothing to do with keeping your lips closed. I speak to God with full consciousness. This is more real than the words I say. In doing this, I am combining mental and vocal prayer. Also, you are not praying if you say an Our Father and think of worldly things.



When you speak to so great a Lord, you must think of who He is and who you are. How can you speak to a King with deference unless you are clearly conscious of His position and your position? To behave respectfully, you must learn the custom of correct address. Once I had to see a lady who was to be addressed, “Your Ladyship”. I had never used that term before. I didn’t write it down and got it all wrong. She laughed and told me just to use polite address.

### Mental and Vocal Prayer

How can you, the King without end, suffer all this? The phrase “whose kingdom shall have no end” always makes me happy. I praise Thee that your kingdom will endure forever. Never allow those who praise you to do this only with their lips. Christians, what do you mean by saying mental prayer is unnecessary? You do not understand what you are saying. You don’t know what mental prayer is or what contemplation is, or how vocal prayer must be said.

So that you do not fear, I will always speak of vocal and mental prayer together. I do not want to unsettle you while you walk on this path. It is important that you know that you have made much progress. If a traveler is told he has taken the wrong road, he wanders and searches. This tires him and delays his arrival.

### Thinking of God Before Speaking to Him

Who can say it is wrong to think of God before saying the rosary or divine office? Just consider who you are and whom you are addressing. Then you will spend much time in mental prayer even before saying vocal prayer. We cannot address a prince and a peasant woman (like myself) in the same way.

We do this because God is humble and does not refuse to hear me. He does not forbid me to approach Him nor have His guards throw me out. The angels know that God prefers the unskilled language of the peasant boy to the speech of the most learned man when this is not accompanied by humility.

### Having Good Manners

Just because God is good we must not have bad manners. We must realize His holiness, if only to show our gratitude for allowing someone like ourselves to approach Him. Do we not recognize the lords of the earth? We are told of their fathers’ names and their wealth. We honor earthly lords not because of their merit but because of their possessions.

Daughters, praise God that you have left a world which honors people for the money they get from their tenants. Recreation is a good time to think how people in the world waste their time. You should laugh about this!

Oh Wisdom, without beginning, without end, without measure in your works. O Beauty containing all beauty. Would that I had all eloquence to understand that to know nothing is everything. I could then describe some truths for meditation so we could learn something of Your nature.

### Knowing the Beloved

In prayer, try to understand to whom you are speaking. With a thousand lives we could never figure out our behavior to God before whom the angels tremble. He can do all things. So, rejoice in the qualities of your Spouse and know Him to whom you are wedded.

A bride knows beforehand whom she is to marry, his qualities and possessions. We, who are already betrothed, should think about our Spouse before He takes us home with Him. These are not forbidden thoughts to betrothed women. It should not be forbidden to discover who He is, where He dwells and the riches He promises. To be happy in a marriage, a woman must know how to make her husband happy and how to be compatible with him.

Should we have less respect for our Spouse? Let us be brides who want to spend our life with Him. A woman is fortunate when her husband wants her conversation for himself alone. She should grant his desire, for in him is all she can desire.

Understanding these truths is to practice mental prayer. You can practice vocal prayer also but don't speak to God while thinking of other things. This often happens from not understanding mental prayer. My point is clear. Amen

## CHAPTER 23

### BEING RESOLUTE

#### "Lending" Instead of "Giving"

From the very beginning, you must be resolute. I will give you two or three reasons. When we decide to give anything (as an effort to be recollected) to Him Who has given us so much and yet are not resolute, we are really lenders. We expect to get our gift back. This is not "giving but "lending". If the two are friends and the lender has given many free gifts, his friend will certainly consider the lender to be mean when he expects everything back. What if a wife has received all her jewels from her husband and still refused to give him a ring as a sign of her unending love? Does the Lord deserve less? Should we take back our gifts to Him?

#### An Example

For example, we resolve to give Him a brief period of time for prayer. (This is just a small portion of the time we spend on ourselves.) Give it freely and resolve never to take it back – no matter what trials or aridities we suffer. Realize that this time is not your own and you must give an account if you do not give it entirely to God. "Entirely" does not preclude that some legitimate occupation might infrequently cause me to omit this. God is not in the least meticulous and he sees your firm intention.

Souls which lack generosity are not large hearted enough to give. They only lend. Still, let them make some effort. The Lord reckons everything to our credit and He is not the least exacting in his reckonings. He is generous, easily forgiving even when we owe a large amount. Concerning our pay, He always rewards us generously.

#### Devil Fears Resolute Souls

We should also be resolute so the devil cannot tempt us. He fears resolute souls. They do him much injury and they even gain great profit when He tries to harm them. We must watch. The devil is treacherous and takes advantage of careless souls. When the devil knows that a soul is changeable and not resolute in doing good, he will pursue that soul day and night, suggesting endless difficulties. I know this by experience. Unfortunately, none of us realize how important is being resolute.

### No Retreat

A resolute person fights more courageously knowing he cannot retreat. A soldier in battle is resolute if he knows he will die if he is conquered. A man will fight more resolutely and will fear the enemy less if he understands the importance of victory and how his life depends on it. From the beginning, we must be firmly convinced that if we fight courageously and not allow ourselves to lose, our gains will make us rich.

The Lord who called us to drink of this spring will not allow us to die of thirst. I have often said, “People are timid when they have not learned the goodness of the Lord from experience. Experiencing His friendship is a great thing because He pays most of the cost.

### Wanting Some Interest

I am not surprised that the inexperienced always want some interest on their investment. Jesus promises us a hundredfold. He also says “Ask and you shall receive”. If you don’t believe Jesus’ words, sisters, there is no use wearying my brain to tell you. The souls who doubt this will lose little by putting Jesus’ words to the test. God gives us much more than we ask. I call as my witnesses those who know this by experience.

## **CHAPTER 24**

### **OVERCOMING THE BEGINNING PROBLEMS**

#### The Basic Problem

I want to speak to those souls who cannot practice recollection or tie their minds down to meditation. I cannot even speak to them about contemplation and mental prayer because many are terrified by these words. If someone this fearful becomes a member of this convent, I want to teach them how to practice vocal prayer. Because souls are wearied by long vocal prayers, I will teach the Our Father and the Hail Mary.

#### Not Satisfied With Mere Repetition

We can say these prayers from mere habit, feeling that repeating the words is enough. Let learned men discuss whether that is sufficient. You, my sisters, must not be satisfied with mere repetition. When I say the Creed I must understand what I believe. When I say the Our Father, I should understand who is this Father and who is Jesus who taught us this prayer. If you say it is enough to know the Father once, then logically it must be enough to say this prayer only once. Do not pupils love their teachers and talk often about them? Jesus the great Master is our teacher and He is so anxious for our profit. May we often think of Him when we say the prayer He taught us.

#### Being Alone

Jesus often prayed alone and He teaches us to say this prayer when we are alone. We cannot speak to God while speaking to the world. Yet, this is what we do when we let our minds wander and make no effort to control them during prayer. When we are ill, prayer becomes difficult. At other times, God tries His servants and allows them to become incapable of fixing their understanding upon Him.

The soul’s suffering shows she is not at fault and she must not blame herself. She should just busy herself with some virtuous action. The best we can do is just be alone so God can reveal His presence and answer our petitions.

### Praying Attentively

God is never silent. Just beg Him to speak. Imagine the Lord is teaching the Our Father to you. The Master is always at your side. Learn one thing. To say the Our Father well you must never leave the side of the Master who teaches you. You will claim that this is meditation, that you cannot do this and that you want to stay with vocal prayer.

At first, it is difficult to practice this type of prayer, but it is wrong to excuse yourself by claiming you are capable only of vocal prayer. Truly, I am describing mental prayer but mental prayer does not differ from vocal prayer when the person realizes to whom he is speaking. Are we not obliged to pray attentively? My best remedy is to fix my mind on Jesus, the first person to say the Our Father. Let this practice become a habit because it is totally necessary for anyone to pray as a good Christian.

## **CHAPTER 25**

### **A CONTEMPLATIVE VOCAL PRAYER**

Realize the great benefits of saying vocal prayers perfectly. While saying the Our Father, you might be lifted to contemplation. His Majesty then shows that He is listening. He speaks to the soul by putting a stop to all her thoughts and literally taking the words out of her mouth.

The soul understands that the Master is teaching her without a word being spoken. The faculties no longer work yet they rejoice. The soul is enkindled by love without understanding how. She rejoices but does not know how. She only knows that the understanding is not the source of this gift. The will embraces this joy. The soul perceives a blessing which she could never learn, a gift from the Lord of heaven and earth – perfect contemplation.

### Comparing Contemplation and Mental Prayer

In mental prayer we understand the words and realize we are speaking with God. Thinking of God's greatness and our lowliness is mental prayer. Do not let the name frighten you. To recite the Our Father or Hail Mary is vocal prayer but this must be preceded by thinking of God (mental prayer). Using both kinds of prayer we ourselves accomplish something. Contemplation is different. God does everything and we do nothing. The work is His alone.

### Encouragement to Seek Contemplation

Because I have taught about contemplation before, I will only describe it briefly. If a soul has reached this stage, this book will provide her with some teachings and she should consult it frequently. I say this with confusion but many have claimed that the book has helped them. Those who have not yet received the gift of contemplation should press forward quickly. The Lord grants this gift and does not deny it to the soul which fights to reach the end of the road.

## **CHAPTER 26**

### **METHODS OF RECOLLECTION**

#### Mental Prayer During Vocal Prayer

Let's return to vocal prayer. In this way we can reach a stage when God can give us everything at once. Begin with examining your conscience, confessing your sins and making the sign of the Cross. Since you are alone, look for Jesus, your Companion and Master.

Imagine that the Lord is at your side. See how lovingly He teaches you this prayer. Stay with Him as long as you can. If you grow accustomed to His being at your side, if you love Him and try to please Him, you will never be able to send Him away. He will never fail you and you will have Him everywhere. Is this a little gift – to have such a Friend always beside you?

### The Gift of Recollection

Sisters, your minds cannot reason and cannot dwell on God for a long time. They are always wandering. Therefore, you must form this habit of prayerfulness at all costs. You are certainly capable. For many years I could not concentrate. This was a great trial. I know if you approach the Lord, He will grant your request. Even if a year passes, this time will be well spent. What hurries us? We can certainly form this gift of recollection habit of being always at the Master's side.

### Eyes Upon Jesus

I am not asking you to think of Jesus, to meditate or to form ideas of Him. I am only asking you to look at Him. Let the eyes of your soul look upon the Lord. You can look at ugly things. Why not look at His beautiful image? He never takes His eyes off of you. He has seen your thousands of sins and yet still gazes at you. Is it so burdensome to avert the eyes of your soul from outward things to look at Him? As He says to the Bride, He only waits for us to look at Him. He longs for us to look at Him. If you want Him, you will find Him. Effort is not lacking on His part.

### According to Our Moods

They say that to have a happy marriage, the wife must be sad or joyful according to whether her husband is sad or joyful. This is how the Lord treats us. He conforms to our will. If you are happy, then look upon the Risen Lord and His joyful victory. This will gladden you. You can rejoice in the battle which won a great Kingdom for you. Why would you infrequently turn your eyes to Him?

If you are sad, look upon Him in the garden. How greatly He suffered and never complained. See Him scourged at the pillar, His flesh torn to pieces. See how He was denied by friends and left so completely alone. You can comfort each other. Look at Him carrying the cross. He will look upon you with His compassionate eyes and comfort your grief. He will forget His own sorrows because you are comforting Him by looking at Him.

### Words From the Heart

Seeing His plight, you might want to cry out to Him, "Oh, my true Spouse". Do not use forms of prayer but use words coming from your heart. "Are you so needy, Lord, that you will accept my poor companionship?" "Lord, why do the angels leave you alone? Why does your Father not comfort you? Oh, Lord, what am I suffering for you? How can I complain when I see you in such suffering? Can I imitate you? Let me count all trials as blessings. Wherever you go, I will go."

Take up your crosses, sisters. Be deaf to all your detractors. Stumble and fall with your spouse. Don't draw back or give up. Think of the weariness of His journey. No matter how much you suffer, His sufferings will comfort you. Yours are as nothing compared with His.

### Mary and Magdalene

You say that if you had seen these sufferings with your bodily eyes you would have gazed forever. Do not believe it! Anyone who will not make the slight effort necessary to gaze on the Lord present

within her (which is done with a minimum of trouble and danger) would not want to be with Magdalene who looked death straight in the face. What must the Virgin Mary have suffered? Threats and insults. The people were not exactly polite to her. Those people had the courtesy you meet in hell. They were the devil's ministers. Yet, these two women did not even notice these sufferings. They saw only the pain of Jesus.

### Trials and Communication

If you are not ready for your trifling trials you would not have endured those trials. I am speaking from experience! It might be helpful to get an image of Our Lord (not to wear around your neck) but to use regularly when You talk to Him. He will give you the words. Do you not have words to say to people on earth? Why do you not have words when you talk to God? Words will not fail you once you have gained the habit. If you never speak with someone, they become a stranger. You forget how to talk to them and feel you do not know them. Friendship loses its power when communication ceases.

### Returning to the Habit of Recollection

Having a good book is a great help to meditation. With this book you can say your vocal prayers carefully and get your soul used to recollection. For many years your soul has been away from your Spouse and needs careful handling to return. We sinners have accustomed our souls to go after pleasures ("pains" would be a more correct word). Now our souls do not even know where they are going. As a result, the soul needs to love much just to stay at home. Without that, we can accomplish nothing.

If you can form these habits of recollection, you will gain blessings that I cannot even describe. Keep at the Good Master's side. Be resolved to learn all that He teaches. He will make you a good disciple. He will never leave you (unless you leave Him first). Listen to words from His Divine lips. They will convince you of His love. What a joy that the Master loves you!

## **CHAPTER 27**

### **EXPLAINING THE OUR FATHER**

#### Opening Words

The very first words, "Our Father, Who art in heaven", reveal both the Father and the Son. O Lord, this favor should come at the end not at the beginning! You are revealed as the Father of such a Son, and Jesus as the Son of such a Father. What great gift! If our understanding would be so filled and our will so occupied with this sentence, we need not say another word. Daughters, here is perfect contemplation. The soul should enter into herself so the Son can show us where the Father dwells in the Heavens. Let us leave this world. If we truly prized this favor, we should remain on earth no longer.

#### Obliging God to Be Our Father

O Son of God, how can you give us so much with your first word? What humility to make yourself our Brother. You give us all that can be given. You will that we be God's children. Because your word cannot fail, you oblige Your Father to be our Father. As our Father, He must bear with us. If we return to him (as did the Prodigal Son) He must forgive us. As a Father, He must comfort and sustain us in trials. He must be better than any earthly father (since all good is perfect in Him). He must cherish us, sustain us and make us fellow-heirs with You.

O Jesus, because you love us, nothing is an obstacle. Also, you have been here on earth with us and have many reasons to care for our good. But, Your Father is in heaven. You should consider His honor. Since You have given yourself for us, leave your Father free. Don't oblige Him to do much for wicked people like myself.

#### Revealing A Truth – Deceiving the Devil

O Jesus, you have shown that your will is His and His will is Yours. Even with this open confession, you deceived the devil. He did not know you were the Son of God. How could he fail to understand this from these opening words? Even I see clearly that you spoke as a beloved Son and what you say in Heaven will be done on earth.

You are a good Master who grants this favor so we will love what You teach. While we say these words with our lips, should we not try to picture this love? Might this love not tear our hearts to pieces? What son would not try to learn who his father is, especially a father with such goodness and dominion?

#### All Are His Children

If God were not so great, we would not want to be his children. In the world, if a father ranks lower than his son, the son feels no honor in recognizing him. Let the religious sister whose earthly father is of the highest birth, not speak much about him. Our convent would become a hell.

Look at the apostles. Peter, the fisherman, had more authority than Bartholomew, the son of a King (so they say). The world makes a fuss about who comes from the finer clay. This is like discussing whether clay is better for bricks or walls! May God deliver you sisters from such discussions (even if carried on in jest). If a sister talks about this, give her heavier penances. We all have a good Father, given us by Jesus. Let no other father be known. Find comfort in His arms. He will never send you away.

#### Effects

What cause for comfort! I will stop writing. Whenever your minds ponder the Father and Son, the Spirit will always enkindle you and bind you to Himself in Love.

## **CHAPTER 28**

### **THE PALACE WITHIN**

#### “Who art in heaven”

To pray well, you must know what heaven is and where to seek your Father. You must learn this by experience. This is an easy way of concentrating and bringing about the recollection of your soul.

God is everywhere and wherever the King is, there is His court. The fullness of glory is wherever He is. Augustine sought God in many places and finally found Him within himself. A distracted soul should understand this truth and speak to the Father with delight in Him. No need to go to heaven. Just speak quietly and He will hear.

#### A Place To Be Alone

We do not need wings to search. We just need a place to be alone. We need not feel strange in His presence. We must speak to Him as to a father, telling him our troubles, asking for His help, while remembering how unworthy we are.

Don't be bashful, as if timidity was humility. True humility does not refuse God's gifts. It is pleased with them, while realizing they are not deserved. What if the Emperor of Heaven came to my house to do me a favor and I didn't accept His gift? What if he asked what I needed and I decided to stay poor?

Daughters, stay away from that humility! Speak to God in various ways – as Father, brother, Lord, Spouse. He will teach you how to please him. Ask him to treat you as His bride. How important is the truth that the Lord is within us and we should be there with Him.

### God Within

If we pray this way, even if we use only vocal prayer we will be recollected much sooner. This is called recollection. When the soul uses her faculties to enter into herself and be with God, the Divine Master will come more speedily and grant the Prayer of Quiet. Hidden within herself, the soul can picture the Son in His Passion and offer Him to the Father. This does not weary the soul which does not seek Him at Calvary because He lives within her.

### A Quick Journey By Sea

A soul who can shut herself within this little heaven of the soul (where the Maker of heaven and earth dwells), who looks at nothing else and avoids external distractions, will journey quickly on an excellent road. She will drink this heavenly water in a short time. These souls travel by ship and, with good winds, will reach the shore quickly. Those going by land take much longer.

These souls have already put out to sea. Although they are still in sight of land, they do all they can to recollect their senses. This recollection, if genuine, produces definite effects that are difficult to describe. The soul sees the world as nothing but toys, so they rise from play and enter a castle to withdraw from their enemies. These souls withdraw from their senses. As she closes her eyes, her spiritual sight becomes clear. A person who closes her eyes in prayer (an admirable custom) tries not to see the world's things. This effort is needed only at the beginning. Soon, the soul gains mastery over her senses and gains strength over the body.

### The Senses Turn Within

At this beginning stage, recollection is not so profound and the body will insist on its rights. If the soul cultivates this habit of recollection and makes the effort for several days, the benefits will show. By praying, we will realize that the bees (our faculties) are returning to the hive (God within us) to make the honey without any effort on our part. The Lord wills that the soul, by means of these efforts, gain power over the senses. Soon, the soul will just signal her desires for recollection and the senses will obey. Later, the senses may come alive but (due to their surrender) they will emerge as slaves and do no harm. When the will calls, they will respond more quickly. Having entered the soul many times through recollection, the senses remain there in perfect contemplation (as the Lord wills).

### Quickly Enkindled

Note these teachings carefully. They will become clear for anyone who puts them into practice. We can begin our sea-voyage and we must travel quickly by learning how to get used to these good habits. Such souls become secure from the occasions of sin and the Divine fire is more readily enkindled in them. They stay so near the fire that any little spark will cause them to burst into flame. When not distracted by outside cares, the soul remains alone with God and thoroughly prepared to be enkindled.



### Image of the Palace

Imagine a palace of priceless worth inside us, a palace fit for the Lord. The greatness of this palace depends partly on you, because a soul full of virtues is the most beautiful of buildings. Inside this palace dwells the great King, who is seated on your heart and has promised to become your Father.

We women receive help from this type of figure. We can realize that what we have within is more precious than anything outside of us. The soul's interior is not empty. If we, women, knew what a great Guest dwells within, we would abandon the vanities of the world which are worthless compared to our inner treasure. When an animal is hungry, he seizes whatever attracts him. We should act much differently because we have such a heavenly Father.

You might think that all this is obvious but it took me some time to see and understand. I knew I had a soul but I didn't understand its value or Who lived there. However, when I closed my eyes to the world's vanities I saw clearly. Before then, if I had known that the great King lived in my soul, I would have stayed with Him and not allowed His dwelling to get so dirty. Imagine this. His greatness can fill a thousand worlds yet He confines Himself in my soul as He confined Himself in His mother's womb. He has perfect freedom but because he loves us, He fashions Himself to our measure.

### Giving Ourselves Entirely

He doesn't reveal His greatness all at once. Otherwise, the soul would feel dismayed seeing that her littleness can contain His greatness. Instead, He enlarges the soul according to His future gift. By this power, He can make the palace larger.

My point is this. We must give Him our soul so He can remove what He wants and put in what He wants. He has a right to ask this but He does not force our will. He takes what we give him. However, He does not give Himself entirely unless we give ourselves entirely. Let us not deny Him. He works quite differently when the soul keeps nothing back. This is extremely important because He wants everything to be in order. How can He occupy the soul, when she fills herself with junk and vulgar people? If that is the state of our soul, it would be a great gift if He even stayed a short time.

### The King's Friends

He is not alone when He comes. The King comes with His police guard. They stay with Him and pray for us. Heaven is not like earth. Here, if a King shows favors to a poor man, people become envious and mistreat the person. The King's favors cost Him dearly.

## **CHAPTER 29**

### **ACHIEVING THE PRAYER OF RECOLLECTION**

Take no account of earthly favors and never mistreat someone who is shown a favor. Your reward is from the Lord. We came to this convent to seek rewards in the life to come. Seek what endures because earthly favors do not even endure a lifetime. Today, one sister pleases the superior. Tomorrow, you might please her. It is of little consequence, so don't give way to jealousy. Remember that your kingdom is not of this world and everything in this life changes.

### Being Forsaken

The best remedy is to be out of human favor for the sake of the Lord who dwells within you. Look within. You will find the Master. The less outward comfort you have, the more He will console you.

He never fails the afflicted who trust in Him. David said that He never saw the just forsaken (Ps. 37:25). If you believe this, why destroy yourself by worry?

“Oh Lord, if we really knew you, nothing else would matter. You give all to those who trust in You.” What a great gift to see how deceptive are earthly things and honors. These only deflect us from entering into ourselves. If only someone could make you realize this because I certainly cannot.

### The Companion Within

I want to describe this holy companionship with the Great Companion in which nothing hinders the soul and the Spouse from being alone together. The soul desires only to shut the door and keep the whole world out so she can dwell with God. I say “desires” because this is not a supernatural state. Although this depends on the soul’s will, by God’s favor, she can enter by her own accord. “By God’s favor” means if the soul does everything that this book says.

Without God’s favor, nothing is accomplished. We do not have the power to think a single good thought. Recollection is not a silencing of the faculties (a higher gift bestowed by God). Rather, the soul herself shuts up the faculties. Books teach us how to gradually acquire this habit of approaching God by going within ourselves during our ordinary occupations. Even recalling His presence within me for just a moment has great usefulness.

### Vocal Prayers

I am still talking about vocal prayers, by which we just abide with the Person to whom we are speaking. When we talk to God but think of other things, we turn our back to Him and imagine He is far away. Why, Lord, do we not see Your face when it is so near?

The teaching is clear. We must recollect our outward senses and occupy them with some image. Then, we can enjoy the Lord of heaven within us. Once we are happy that He is within us, we can easily say our vocal prayers. If we stay close to the Lord, He will show that He heard our very first “Our Father” (even though we said many). He loves to save us from worrying. If we truly realize that He is with us, it might take us an hour to say one Our Father. Like any father, He wants to comfort us and doesn’t want us to tire out our brains by doing much talking.

### Interior Recollection

Sisters, accustom yourself to say the Our Father in this recollected way. This method establishes habits that prevent the faculties from becoming restless. Test this. Forming new habits is difficult but soon you will not grow tired in seeking this Father because you will know He is within you. Before the Lord taught me this method, I received no satisfaction in prayer. I now receive so many benefits from interior recollection that I write about it very much.

### Practicing Recollection

Any sister who wants to acquire recollection (for it is in our power to do so) must not tire of using this method. By this important labor she will gain self-mastery. Using the senses to serve the interior life is a profitable victory. When a sister is speaking, she must remember Someone within her is speaking. When a sister is listening, she must remember Someone within her is listening. No sister ever needs to withdraw from His companionship.

A sister who practices recollection many times each day, will grow accustomed to this gift and will experience its benefits. Once having received this treasure from the Lord, the soul will never exchange it for anything.

Everything costs a little trouble but this care will be well spent. If you practice recollection for a year (or even six months) you will succeed in gaining it. This will be a great benefit in such a short time and a sure foundation upon which the Lord can build. May His Majesty never allow you to withdraw from His presence.

## **CHAPTER 30**

### **GAINING CONTEMPLATION THROUGH WORD AND PRAYER**

#### **“Hallowed Be Your Name”**

##### Particular Petitions

In approaching an important person, we consider ahead of time what to say. We would especially consider what we should ask for. Our good Jesus taught us to make our petitions very particular. Could Jesus not have taught us to say, “Give us, Father, whatever is good for us”? God knows everything and no more need be said.

This was your prayer in the Garden, O Jesus. You left Yourself in the Father’s hands. However, we are not as resigned as You. So, You taught us to ask for specific gifts. Otherwise, we would not accept what the Lord gives us (even though it is the best possible gift).

What puts our faith to sleep? Do we do not realize that we are to be punished or rewarded? Daughters, you must know what you ask for so you don’t throw the gift back in God’s face. Do you ask what is for your good? If not, do not ask. Instead, seek light because you are blind. How often we detest the food which gives life- and prefer what will cause death (a terrible and eternal death).

##### Putting the Two Petitions Together

Jesus tells us to pray: “Hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.” Be awake to the Master’s wisdom. Only by giving us His Kingdom here on earth, can He lead us to glorify His Father’s name. Therefore, Jesus put these two petitions together. To help you to pray without ceasing I will tell you all I know about this matter. (You won’t read this book until learned persons have approved it).

##### Heavenly Life

Freedom from earthly problems will be a special joy in heaven. We will have tranquility, glory, a constant rejoicing, perpetual peace and interior satisfaction as we hallow and praise the Lord. We will bless Him because no one is offending Him. All souls will love Him. They cannot cease loving Him because they know Him. This is what we should be doing on earth. Here we love Him imperfectly. If we knew Him better, we would love Him differently.

##### An Angelic State

Must we be angels to do His will perfectly? To do His will as in heaven is a sublime petition but it seems to be the Master’s wish. He never tells us to ask for the impossible, so, a soul living on earth must be able to reach this state. Still, we are on a sea voyage and our state will not be as perfect as those

in heaven. At times, when we are wearied from traveling, the Lord will quiet our faculties and our soul. In this state, He grants a clear understanding of heaven's gifts. These souls (even while still on earth) receive a pledge of glory. They have great hope to perpetually enjoy what they can only taste on earth.

This is contemplation and I will say something of the beginning of pure contemplation (called the Prayer of Quiet). Although I am discussing vocal prayer, do not think that the contemplative and vocal prayer do not go together. This is not true. I know people who practice vocal prayer. God raises them to contemplation without them doing anything or even knowing it happened. For this reason, I attach great importance to your saying your vocal prayers well.

#### A Special Nun

I knew a nun who could only practice vocal prayer. When she prayed, she experienced contemplation. When she said no vocal prayers, her mind wandered. She could not endure it. She would spend two or three hours just saying a few Our Fathers. (May we all practice such mental prayer!) She came and said she could not contemplate or practice mental prayer. She could only say some vocal prayers.

She was old and had lived a devout religious life. As she explained, I saw clearly. She said the Our Father but she experienced pure contemplation. Our Lord had raised her to union with Him and how good life showed that these were great favors. I praised the Lord and envied her vocal prayer.

This true story shows that those who have a bad opinion of contemplatives run the risk of becoming one themselves if they say their vocal prayers as they should be said. I will say more. If you don't want to hear this, then just skip over the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 31

### THE PRAYER OF QUIET

#### “Thy Kingdom Come”

I want to describe this Prayer of Quiet as the Lord has taught me. In this prayer, the Lord begins to show that he hears our petition. He gives us His Kingdom on earth so we might hallow His name.

#### Supernatural State

The Prayer of Quiet is a supernatural state which we cannot reach by ourselves. In this prayer, the Lord gives the soul peace by His presence. All the faculties are stilled and the soul realizes she is very close to God. If the soul were any closer, she would be one with Him in union.

#### Like Simeon in the Temple

The soul does not see God with its bodily or spiritual eyes. In the temple, Simeon saw a little child who seemed to be the son of a poor couple (rather than the Son of the Heavenly Father). However, the child Himself revealed His identity to Simeon. Like him, the soul knows Who is present within, although she does not know how she understands. The soul knows that she is in the Kingdom (or at least near to the King Who will give her the Kingdom). Feeling such reverence, she asks for nothing. She is in a swoon (inwardly and outwardly). Her body does not wish to move. She is like a person near the journey's end, who rests so she can begin again with redoubled strength.

### The Body and Inner Faculties

The body experiences the greatest delights. The soul has deep satisfaction. She is so happy to find herself near the fountain and she is filled even before beginning to drink. It seems there is nothing more to desire. The faculties have no wish to move. This would hinder the soul's love for God.

The mind and the memory are free and can realize that they are in God's presence. The will is not free. The will does experience pain because the soul realizes that the state will end and she will regain her freedom. The mind and the memory occupy themselves with the one thing needful. Anything else will unsettle them.

### Explaining the Experiences

Persons in this state want their body to be motionless. Otherwise, they lose their peace. They don't want to speak and will spend an hour on one Our Father. They are so close to God that they do not need words to make themselves understood. They are in a place near to the King and realize that He is beginning to give them His Kingdom on earth. Tears come, but they weep gently. Their whole desire is to hallow His Name.

They seem to be not of this world. They wish to see and hear only God. Nothing distresses them nor seemingly can distress them. As long as this state lasts they are so overwhelmed and absorbed by delight that they cannot desire anything else. They say with St. Peter, "Lord, let us make three mansions here" (Matt 17:4).

### Another Favor

Occasionally, during this Prayer of Quiet the Lord grants another favor. (Those experienced will recognize this and be comforted to know what the gift is). When this quiet is felt in a high degree and lasts for a long time, the will must cling to something so the peace can last.

This goes on for a day or two. The soul is filled with joy, without even understanding the reason. The soul sees that her whole self is not experiencing this because the will, the most important faculty, is absent. I believe the will is united to God and the other faculties are free to serve Him. While enjoying these spiritual favors the faculties have greater capacities than when involved with worldly affairs.

### Martha and Mary

This great favor unites the active and contemplative life. The faculties serve the Lord in both ways at once. In contemplation, the will works without knowing how. Meanwhile, the intellect and memory serve Him as Martha did. Martha and Mary work together.

The Lord granted me this favor and I could not understand it. I asked a great contemplative (probably St. Francis Borgia S.J.). He said this was possible and that it had happened to him. The soul enjoys great satisfaction in this Prayer of Quiet. This shows that the will is continually united to God (Who alone gives her happiness).

### Advice For Those Who Have Attained the Prayer of Quiet

The following is advice for those whom God has blessed with this Prayer of Quiet. First, the soul experiences this joy without knowing its source. She does know that she could not have achieved this by herself. Therefore, she is tempted to imagine that she can prolong the gift (and may even try not to breathe). This is ridiculous. We can no more control this than make the sun rise. The state is

supernatural and we cannot acquire it. We prolong this state only by realizing that we cannot diminish it nor add to it. Being unworthy, we can only receive it with thanksgiving.

The soul should seek greater solitude so God works within her. Occasionally, the soul can gently say a word to God. We must not tax our brains or they will become active again.

### The Will and the Understanding

Note carefully the following advice. Often, the understanding and memory are of no help in this prayer. While the soul enjoys the highest degree of quiet, her understanding soars so far aloft that it doesn't seem to be in the same house. The understanding seems to be a guest in another house and looks for other lodging because it is not satisfied where it is now.

This has been my own experience. I long to die because I cannot keep my mind from wandering. At other times, the mind is settled and remains with the will (its companion). When all three faculties work together, the harmony is like a husband and wife who love each other and desire the same thing.

An unhappy husband soon makes his wife restless. While in this state of quiet, the will should not even notice the understanding but treat it as if it were a madman. Trying to draw along the understanding only makes the will restless. Then the Prayer of Quiet will become all effort. The soul will lose what God has been giving to her with no effort on her part.

### A Baby at the Breast

Pay attention to the following comparison which the Lord gave me while I was in this state of prayer. The soul is like a baby at its mother's breasts. She gives milk to the baby without the baby even moving his lips to ask. In this prayer, the will loves and the understanding does nothing. Due to God's pleasure, the soul realizes (without any thought) that she is in God's company. In this way, the soul enjoys the sweet milk which God places in her mouth.

God wants the soul to know that He gives the gift and rejoices in giving it. Yet, God does not want the soul to understand how or what she is enjoying. The soul must lose all thought of herself so God can do what is best. The soul must not strive to understand what is happening. Otherwise, she will lose the milk of God's sustenance.

### Not Total Union

This state is not total union with God. In the prayer of union, the soul does not even swallow her nourishment. The Lord places it within and the soul knows not how. In the Prayer of Quiet, God wants the soul to work a little, though so quietly that she is not conscious of it.

What disturbs this prayer comes from the understanding. This can happen because the three faculties (will, understanding and memory) are still at odds. In the prayer of union, God will keep these other faculties suspended and occupied with enjoyment. An experienced soul knows what I am saying.

### A Happiness Residing in the Will

The soul is conscious of having reached this prayer, which is a quiet and peaceful happiness of the will. Yet, the soul cannot decide precisely what this happiness is, even though it clearly differs from earthly happiness. Dominion over the whole world could not bring the soul the inward satisfaction now enjoyed by the will. Other kinds of happiness seem to touch only the outward part of the will.

When the soul is in this sublime supernatural state of prayer and her thoughts wander off, she just laughs and remains in a state of quiet. Thoughts will come and go, but the will has become their all-powerful mistress. The will can easily recall these thoughts without any anxiety. However, if the soul tries to drag back the understanding, she will lose the power which comes from the Divine nourishment. Neither the will nor the understanding will gain if the soul stops eating of this divine food. There is a saying, “In grasping all, you will lose all”. Those who have these experiences will understand what I have written and will praise the Lord for this explanation.

#### Response Needed to Grow in the Gift

Let me conclude. When God brings the soul to this state of prayer, it seems as if His Kingdom has already come to earth. O Blessed request! By saying, “They kingdom come”, we ask for a great good without even knowing what we are seeking.

Sisters, when saying the Our Father be attentive to what you ask for. When God grants this favor we must forget all worldly things. Any soul who experiences this Prayer of Quiet should humble herself. Do not make this petition as if it were nothing. Worse still, do not throw this gift back into the Lord’s face. To accept the gift, the soul must seek to be detached from everything. Otherwise she will make no progress.

When God gives such pledges, He has great things in store for the soul. The soul can only blame herself for not making progress, if God brings her the Kingdom and she returns to earthly desires. Then, He will refrain from showing her the Kingdom’s secrets and only rarely will give His other favors.

I have seen this often. This is why spiritual people are not more numerous. They do not respond in a practical way. They don’t prepare themselves to receive this favor again. Just when the Lord considered the soul His own they remove their will from His hands and focus on earthly things.

#### Accepting the Prayer of Quiet

The Lord does not take back the gifts already given, but He seeks out other souls for His greater gifts. There are souls (and I have been one of them), to whom the Lord gives tenderness of devotion and light about everything. He bestows the Kingdom and this Prayer of Quiet. Yet, the ears of so many souls are deaf and they hurriedly keep repeating vocal prayers. By this Prayer of Quiet the Lord puts the Kingdom in their hands. Yet the soul believes that the Prayer of Quiet will distract them from their vocal prayers.

Do not be like that. Be watchful when the Lord grants this favor. Do not repeat the Our Father in a hurry. Just think of a single petition of the Our Father. In this way, you will hallow His name, praise Him with greater affection and will be faithful in His service. Be cautious about this. It is very important.

## **CHAPTER 32**

### **CONTEMPLATION, HUMILITY AND SURRENDER**

#### **“Your Will Be Done”**

#### Doing His Will

Since the Good Master has made us His brethren and has taught us to ask that His Kingdom would come (His most precious gift) what does he want us to offer the Father? What service should we return to

Him? Oh, Jesus, what we give is nothing compared to what you give us. Yet, you leave us with something to give.

O Jesus, to help us accomplish all you promised, You yourself prayed this last petition “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”. If you had not done God’s will, we certainly could not accomplish it. Now, I know we can also fulfill your word. Only because you have made my earth into heaven, can I do your will. Otherwise, my earth would be barren and doing your will would be impossible.

### Trials and the Lord’s Will

It amuses me that people dare not ask the Lord for trials. As if His sending trials depends on their asking for them. I am not referring to humble souls who feel they are incapable of bearing them.

(I believe that, if God gives a soul enough love to ask for trials, He will give enough love to endure them). If they are afraid of trials, why do they ask that the Lord’s will be done in them? Do they say this because everyone else says it? That would not be right.

Remember, Jesus is our Ambassador with the Father only at a great cost. We must give what He promises to the Father. Let me put this another way. Whether we wish it or not, God’s will must be done (both in heaven and earth). So, make a virtue out of necessity. O Jesus, although my will is not free of self-interest, I freely give it to You because I know how much I gain by freely leaving all in your hands. How much I lose by not fulfilling what I promise in the Our Father. How much I gain by saying the words “Your will be done”!

### Promises Without Action

I will explain all that the soul must sacrifice so no sister can say she was deceived. Don’t act like some religious. They promise and then excuse themselves from fulfilling their promises, saying that they didn’t understand. That can be true. It is easy to say things and hard to practice them.

It seems easy to say we will surrender our will to someone. Then we realize it is the hardest thing to do. Our superiors, when they see us weak, do not treat us strictly. Sometimes they treat the weak and the strong in the same way. This is not so with the Lord. He knows what each soul can bear. He knows the soul that is strong and does not hesitate to fulfill His will in her.

### Jesus’ Resolutions

I want you to realize with whom you are dealing. Also, realize what Jesus offers to the Father on your behalf and what you give to the Father when you ask that His will be done. I want to explain what His will is.

God will not give you riches, pleasures, great honors or earthly things. His love is not so poor as that. He values very highly what you give to Him and wants to reward you by giving you His Kingdom (while you are still alive).

How does He treat anyone who makes this prayer from his heart? Look at His Son who prayed in the garden. With what resoluteness and fullness of desire he made His prayer. Was not the prayer fulfilled in the trials and sufferings which the Father gave Jesus?



### The Measure of Our Love – the Cross

See, daughters, what God gives to His Beloved. From this, understand His will. His gifts in this world are given in proportion to His love for us. He gives more to those whom He loves more and less to those whom He loves less. This is according to our courage and our love for His Majesty. He sees that a soul who loves greatly can suffer much. One who loves little, can suffer little.

I believe that love is the measure of our ability to bear crosses (great or small). So don't let your prayers be words of politeness. Brace yourselves to suffer what God desires. If you give yourself in any other way, you are just pretending to give him a jewel. You show it to him but you take it back when He puts out His hand to receive.

In doing this, we are mocking the One who suffered so much for us. Let us give him, once and for all, the jewel we have so often tried to give Him. In truth, He gives it first to us so we can give it back. How much Jesus thinks of our good. He wants us to profit by giving Him this jewel. Even in life He rewards us. Let me explain.

### Surrender the Jewel

Worldly people do much just by resolving to do God's will. You, my religious daughters, must give more in words and in deeds. Sometimes we even put the jewel in God's hand and then take it back. We are generous and then we are mean. Better if we stopped to think first before we give.

My advice in this book is to surrender yourself totally to the Creator. Place your will in His hands and detach yourself from creatures. You know this is important so I will say no more. Jesus put these words here because He knows how much we will gain by serving the Father. We must prepare ourselves to come to the end of the journey (which comes very soon) and to drink the fountain's living water from the fountain. Unless we surrender ourselves and allow the Lord to do what is best for us, He will never allow us to drink this water. This is perfect contemplation which you asked me to write about.

### Contemplation and Total Surrender

In this perfect contemplation, we can do nothing by ourselves. There is no need to work hard or to make plans. This only hinders and prevents us from saying "Your will be done", (that is, may the Lord fulfill His will in any way He wishes).

"Oh God, if you would do this by trials, then let them come!" If by persecutions, sickness, dishonor or need, here I am! Father, I will not turn my face away and I have no right to turn my back upon them. Your Son gave my will to you and I should not fail you. Bestow Your Kingdom on me so I can do your will. This is what Jesus has asked. I am your possession. Dispose of me according to your will.

### The Rewards

What power this surrender has! Made with resolution, this surrender will draw the Almighty to our lowliness. He will transform us into Himself and effect a union between Creator and creature. Is that not a rich reward? Do you not have a good Master? He knows how the Father's will can be gained and He teaches us the means.

The more we prove by our actions, the more He draws us and raises us above earthly things and ourselves. He prepares us to receive greater favors because His rewards do not end with this life. He rewards our service so greatly that we cannot even ask for more.

### The Rapture

He never tires of giving because He is not content with uniting the soul to Himself. He begins to cherish the soul and to reveal secrets to her. He rejoices when she understands what she has received and all that is still to be given. He causes the soul to gradually lose her exterior senses so nothing may occupy them. We call this rapture.

He makes the soul such a friend. First, He restores her own will and then He gives the soul His own will. The soul is His friend and He is happy to allow the soul to rule Him. “A turn and turn about” as we say. He does what the soul asks and the soul does what He commands.

### The Powerless Soul

Despite her desires, the poor soul is often unable to do all she wants for God, or even to do anything unless God gives her the power. The soul grows richer and richer. The more she serves, the more God gives. The soul falls deeper and deeper into God’s debt. She grows weary of being imprisoned in the body and would gladly pay something of her debt. She is quite worn out.

How can we repay God when He gave us all we have? We can come to know ourselves and surrender to God’s will. When the soul is brought to this state, everything else is a hindrance, causing only harm. At this stage, only humility is of use. The soul must clearly perceive that she is nothing and God is infinitely great, because God’s gift comprehends in one moment what years of labor cannot attain. One piece of advice, do not expect to reach this state by your own effort or diligence. If you do, your devotion will become quite cold. Practice humility and simplicity, saying always “Your will be done”. Obedience and humility achieve everything.

## **CHAPTER 33**

### **THE EUCHARIST**

#### **“Give us this day our daily bread”**

### Obstacles in Human Nature

Jesus realizes that we often do not know God’s will. He knows that some means must be found to help us to fulfill this obligation.

Tell a pampered person that they must moderate their eating so the hungry will not die and they will find a thousand reasons for interpreting God’s will differently. Similarly, a person who speaks ill of others will not be concerned that God wants him to love his neighbor. A religious accustomed to indulgence can be told to set a good example, to remember his promises, to fulfill his vows, to live in poverty, and not to give scandal. He will still want his own way.

How important then is the remedy the Lord has given us. Without this, very few could do God’s will on earth as in heaven. Seeing our need, Jesus made this petition “Give us this day our daily bread.” Let’s realize the petition’s meaning. Count what you have given to God as little because you will receive much more. Jesus knew that we must give all to God. Yet this would be difficult because of our selfishness and lack of courage.

### The Greatest Petition

Before we can be aroused to serve, we need His help every day. So, He decided to stay with us and wanted this important gift to come from the Father's hand. The Son knew that whatever He did on earth, the Father would do in heaven (because their wills are one). However, Jesus wanted to ask the Father's permission. In seeking this "daily bread" He would ask for more than in the other petitions.

### The Father's Decision

What father, after giving us his son, would allow the son to stay among us and to suffer as he had already done? O Jesus, only your Father would do this. I am not surprised at Jesus because He prayed "Thy will be done". He always went about seeking how He could do the Father's will.

But Father, how could you consent to allow your Son to be placed in wicked hands every day? You have consented to this. You see how He is treated. How can you see Jesus affronted every day? How many affronts in the Blessed Sacrament? How many insults through the hands of His enemies? What desecrations from the heretics?

### A Daily Help

Father, how can you consent to such a petition? Do not look at His love which allows Jesus every day to be cut to pieces. You must see to this. He allows no obstacle to stand in His way. Why is He silent? Why does He speak only for us? Let me beseech You on His behalf. Jesus uses the words "daily" and "today". He speaks of "our daily bread" and says "give it today". Why is this? The Father gave His Son once and for all. Now, Jesus belongs to us and He wants the gift to remain until the end of time as our daily help. Let this melt your hearts, my daughters!

Father, how can we purchase your Son? We know how to sell Him for thirty pieces of silver, but no price is enough to purchase Him. Having become one with us by His human nature, He reminds the Father that He can give this human nature to us. So, He says, "Give us our bread". He makes no difference between Himself and us.

## **CHAPTER 34**

### **THE IMPORTANT PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

#### Jesus' Daily Presence

Jesus, already being ours, asks His Father to let us have Him every day (which appears to mean "for ever"). Why did Jesus say "this day" after He had said "daily bread"? I will offer my foolish idea (for we are trying to understand this vocal prayer). Jesus has remained here on earth so we can possess Him also in heaven. He sustains us so we can do the Father's will. By "this day", Jesus means the length of each life, for life is only a day. Jesus tried to strengthen even the souls who are damned, throughout "this day" of their life. He is not at fault in their condemnation. They cannot complain to the Father that this bread was removed when they needed it. So Jesus asks the Father that He can spend this day (the length of our life) in service to us.

#### He is Ours Every Day

The Father willed to send the Son, who will remain here to comfort His friends and to displease His enemies. Because He has given us this bread forever, Jesus prays that we have this "today". Whenever we wish, we can have this bread and not die of hunger (except through our own fault). We can always

find comfort in the Blessed Sacrament. We can bear any need, trial or persecution if we taste of what He suffered.

### Bodily Food

Concerning bodily food, we should remind the Lord of our need and then not be concerned at all. The soul who stays on the highest level of contemplation has left the world and doesn't think about food. In my opinion, the Lord would not have taught us to ask for food. He fixes our desires on heavenly things and wants us to pray to enjoy them even on earth.

Why would He have us be troubled about food? Once we worry about the body, we forget the needs of the soul. Are we so moderate that we would pray for only a little food? Our water from heaven would be less. Daughters, beg the Father to let you have your Spouse this day. May you never find yourself without Him. Let it suffice that He disguises Himself beneath the appearances of bread and wine. Ask Him to prepare you to be worthy to receive Him.

### No Anxiety Over Food

Concerning material bread have no anxiety. Be resigned to God's will. In prayer time, we should deal with important matters. At other times, we can earn our daily bread. Never let your thoughts dwell on this matter. Work with your body, but let your soul rest. Leave your anxiety with your Spouse and He will bear it for you. If you are resigned to God's will, He will not fail you. If I were to find God in my obligations (as I did in the past) I would not ask for anything to eat. Let me die of hunger! What good is a life without God that only leads to eternal death?

### Fed By the Master

To really surrender to God, cease to be anxious for yourselves. A master always feeds a servant who is anxious to please him (unless the master himself is too poor to eat). A servant should never go to his master every day to ask for food. This would be a waste of words! The master would tell him just to do his work and not worry.

Let others ask God for earthly food. You must ask the Father for the heavenly bread of the Eucharist. In this way, our bodily eyes will not see Him but He will reveal Himself in another kind of bread (the Eucharist) which delights us and sustains our life.

### Help For the Body

Is not the Blessed Sacrament ample sustenance for the body and medicine for bodily ills? I was subject to serious illness and suffered great pain. In the Eucharist, God removed this pain in a flash and I was quite well again. This often occurs. Cures from quite definite illnesses are recorded. I will not describe all the effects that I have experienced. I smile when people say they wished they lived when Jesus walked this earth. In the Blessed Sacrament, we have Him as He was then. What more could they possibly want?

### Teresa's Communion Meditation

When receiving Communion, I always try to strengthen my faith by imagining that I saw Jesus entering my house. I do not think of outward things but I enter my heart with Jesus. I recollect my senses so my soul can be conscious of this great blessing. Like Magdalene I weep at Jesus' feet in the Pharisee's house. Even when having no feelings, I knew by faith that it is good to be there.

### Not Our Imagination

Meditation upon the passion is a work of our imagination. The Blessed Sacrament is not a work of our imagination. The Blessed Sacrament is happening now. The Lord is not a long way off. As long as the appearances of bread are with us, we have the opportunity to come to Him.

If the sick were healed by touching His clothes, why do we not believe He will work miracles within us? Will He not give us what we ask? In Communion, is He not in our house? His Majesty will offer great payment for His lodging if we treat Him well.

### Why He Disguises Himself

Do not grieve that you do not see Him with your bodily eyes. If we saw His glorified body, our weak nature could not endure the sight. No one would wish to be left in on this earth. Having seen Eternal Truth, we would see all other things as falsehood. After seeing His Majesty, how could I (who have offended Him) remain close to Him? Beneath the appearances of bread, He disguises Himself. In this way, I can come close. By disguising Himself, He obliges Himself to having us close to him. Otherwise, who would dare approach Him?

### Importance of the Prayer Hour After Communion

Do not lose it. If obedience compels you to service, then leave your soul with the Lord. He is your Master and He will teach you. However, if you start thinking of something else (as if you had not received Him) and care nothing that He is within you, how can He make Himself known to you? Don't complain of Him. Complain about yourself. I do not prohibit vocal prayer because you will say I am forcing contemplation upon you (which you must practice only when the Lord brings you to it). Say the "Our Father", but realize you are in His company and beg Him never to leave you.

He reveals Himself (by deep inner emotions and other means) to those who can profit by His presence even without seeing Him. Delight in Him. Do not lose that excellent and profitable hour after Communion. If you spend this time in the presence of Jesus, you do Him a great service.

Some pray before a picture of Christ. However, this seems foolish when the Living Image Himself is within you. What if we had a person's portrait and the person came to visit us. How foolish to talk to the picture and not to the person? When the person is absent and I feel their loss, and I find comfort in seeing the picture of Him whom I love. What is more attractive to the sight than He Who contains all? Unhappy the heretics who have lost this comfort as well as others.

### Forming A Habit of Prayer

After receiving the Lord, close your bodily eyes and open your soul's eyes. Look into your own heart. I repeat this often. Whenever you communicate if you always make it your habit (not just once or twice) to rejoice in His coming, He will no longer come in disguise. He will make His presence known to you in many ways according to your desires. If you truly long for Him, He will reveal Himself totally.

If we communicate and then run off to earthly things, what can He do? Can He drag us back and force us to stay with Him just because He so desires to reveal Himself? No. When he revealed Himself and plainly told men who He was, they mistreated Him. Very few believed.

### Revelation to His True Friends

Jesus is present in the Most Holy Sacrament. However, He will only communicate His glories and His treasures to those true friends who greatly desire Him. Anyone who is not a true friend and does not prepare to receive Him, must never ask Jesus to reveal Himself. As soon as the commanded hour for Mass is over, the person goes home and drives Christ out of the house. Totally involved in business and worldly attachments, the soul prevents the Lord from taking possession of the house which He already owns.

## **CHAPTER 35**

### **RECOLLECTION AFTER HOLY COMMUNION**

In describing the Prayer of Recollection, I stressed the importance of entering into solitude with God. Recollection is like making a spiritual Communion. He gives favors in many unknown ways if we prepare to receive Him. If we approach a very large fire, but remain far off with hands covered, we would get little warmth. Still, we are warmer than if no fire existed. However, a properly disposed soul is quite different. Because she wants to drive out the cold, she stays near the fire for a long time. Any tiny spark can set her afire.

### Importance of Recollection

This is so important that I always repeat my advice. At first, this practice seems difficult. The devil knows he can do great harm by discouraging this practice. He makes you think you can find greater devotion in some other practices. Trust me. Do not give up this method. The Lord will prove your love by it.

Remember, few souls stay with Him in trials. So, let us endure something and He will repay us. Remember all the people who do not want Him and drive Him out of their souls. We must be different and show Him our desires. Although Jesus will be mistreated in many places, let Him find one soul to have Him as his Guest. Let that soul be yours. If no such souls existed, the Father would refuse to allow Him to stay in the Eucharist. The Father is a good friend to Jesus' friends and He will not hinder His Son in this work in which He fully reveals His love and helps us to bear our trials.

### Preventing Irreverence Toward the Eucharist

The Father has accepted His Son's decision to give us Holy Communion. Therefore, we must speak for Jesus (who never defends Himself). His Son has granted us this favor of Communion and we must ask the Father that He prevent Jesus from being ill-treated in this Sacrament. Since Jesus gave us the Eucharist, let us offer up our sacrifices to halt all irreverence shown to the Blessed Sacrament. The Lutherans seem to want to drive Him out of the world again. This is also true of Catholics who go to Church to offend Him rather than worship Him.

### Remedying Abuses

Why is this, my Lord? Either end the world or give us a remedy against these wrongs. Eternal Father, endure this no longer. Quench this fire. Because your Son remains in the Blessed Sacrament, let these horrible things be stopped. He does not deserve to be in a house where such things happen. Do this for His sake.

Heavenly Father, we dare not ask you that Jesus should no longer stay with us in the Sacrament. You already granted His request that He be allowed to stay in the Sacrament until the end of the world.

If He were to leave, what would become of us? It would be the end of everything! Nothing placates you so much as this pledge of the Sacrament. Please find a remedy for these abuses.

If I had served you well, I could beg this as a favor (because you leave no services unrewarded). I have not served you well and it might be my sins which cause these evils. What can I do except to present you with the holy Bread which you gave to us. So, I return this to you. Calm the sea. Do not allow the ship of the Church to suffer such a storm. Save us, for we perish.

## CHAPTER 36

### FORGIVING OTHERS

Jesus sees that we can do the heavenly Father's will if we have this heavenly bread. However, at times we sin. Therefore, He asks the Father to forgive our sins as we forgive others. Notice that Jesus does not say "as we shall forgive others." We cannot seek our own forgiveness or say "Thy will be done" until we have already forgiven others.

The saints rejoiced in their persecutions which gave them an opportunity to forgive others. However, what can I do? I have few others to forgive and so much to be forgiven? This is a very serious matter. God would forgive our sins (which merit eternal fire) if we forgive the trifling offenses done to us. I have not suffered any wrongs. How can someone wrong me when I deserve to be plagued in this world and in the next? Since I have few persons to forgive, pardon for me is a free gift (the abundant scope of God's mercy).

#### Having No One to Forgive

No one has done me injustice so I have no one to pardon. So, Lord, take my desire to forgive. I would forgive any offense so I could do your will. I am so guilty in your sight that any unjust earthly condemnation would fall short of what I deserve. Others, not knowing my state, would believe I was wronged. When your Son makes this petition I cannot be included because I have nothing to forgive.

#### False Idea of Honor

Some sisters think they have much to forgive. They pay so much attention to mere trifles. By insisting on their rights, they are like children building houses of straw. Oh, Sisters, if we only knew what honor was and what is meant by losing it. I am speaking of myself. I prided myself on my honor but I was just following others. How easily I felt slighted! I never grasped the essence of the matter because I never sought the true honor which profits the soul.

Someone said "Worldly honor and spiritual profit cannot go together". This is true. Worldly honor and the good of the soul can never be reconciled. The world is topsy-turvy. (Thank the Lord for taking us out of it.) God preserve this house from worrying about points of honor. Such conceits never honor God.

#### Honors In Religious Houses

It amazes me to see religious connect their honor to trifles. It doesn't happen in this convent and I want you to stay on the right path. The devil has invented honors for religious houses. It is like we are still in the world, going up and down in rank. In the academic world (of which I know nothing) a person must always go higher (from philosophy to theology).

If commanded by obedience to go lower, the person would feel slighted. Someone would tell him he had been insulted. Next, the devil (who claims authority even in God's law) would find rules for higher and lower ranks. Why among nuns can a prioress never hold a lower office for the rest of her life? Why must we always defer to the senior sister? Why are we not allowed to forget her rank?

### Taking the Lower Rank

Indeed, the Order says that all must be done in order. All of this makes me laugh (or better, to weep). Why do we keep this rule so strictly when we observe others so imperfectly? I should forget my own interests. Others will care for me. We can never rise to Heaven this way. We are attracted to rising higher in rank and dislike climbing down. O Lord, what was your honor? Did you lose it when condemned to death? No, you gained honor for us all.

We have lost our way. We have taken the wrong path from the beginning. May no soul be lost. Let her have a true idea of true honor. We consider ourselves great because we forgave some trifle which was really nothing. Then we ask God to forgive us (as if we are important). May God help us to realize that we don't understand ourselves and that our hands are empty when we come to Him. All earthly things end but punishment is eternal. O Father, I can present nothing to you that merits eternal forgiveness. You must do this for Your Son. He can rightly ask you because He is always being offended.

### Greatness of Mutual Love

How the Lord must esteem our love for one another! We have given Him complete rights over us. This is possible only from love. Sisters, see how important it is to love one another. Jesus could have taught us to pray "Forgive us because we do much penance, or because we praying often or because we fast or we have left everything." He said none of these. We can seek forgiveness only because we forgive. Our desires to be honored have made mutual love the hardest virtue (although the one dearest to the Father). It is difficult to forgive. Therefore, Jesus puts this petition at the end (after he has asked other great favors for us).

### A True Contemplative

Note that He says "as we forgive" because He takes it for granted that we do. Please understand. Unless a soul who has experienced perfect contemplation, is very resolute and makes a point of forgiving all wrongs (large and small), no one should think much of her prayer. Experiencing wrongs does not affect a soul who is drawn by God to contemplation. She does not care if she is esteemed or not. Really, honor distresses her more than dishonor. She prefers the trials. The soul to whom the Lord has given His Kingdom no longer wants this world's kingdom because she will reign in a more exalted manner. She has learned by experience the great progress that comes from suffering. His Majesty rarely grants her great consolations (and then only after many trials). Because true contemplatives must bear heavy trials, the Lord seeks out souls experienced in sufferings.

### The Value of Trials

These souls give everything their proper value. They pay little attention to what passes away. A great wrong or trial may cause some momentary distress but they quickly understand. They see that God has given them an opportunity to gain more divine favors in one day than by trials for years which they sought for their own account. Having spoken to many contemplatives, I know that this happens. Just as other people prize gold, so these souls know that trials make them very rich.



### Never Esteeming Self

These souls never esteem themselves. They would want their sins known. They even speak of their sins to people who esteem them. Even concerning their family descent, they know this means nothing in Christ's kingdom. If they are not well-born, they even make sure that people know. The reason is this. Those to whom God has given great humility forget themselves even when they can offer greater services. They cannot believe people worry about supposed wrongs.

These last effects are present in great souls who enjoy a union with God by perfect contemplation. The first is a determination to suffer wrongs even though distressful. This gift is quickly seen in those who have this grace of prayer. If these effects are not produced, then contemplation was not a favor from God. It was the devil's illusion, making the soul think herself good so she would attach importance to her own honor.

### Always Forgiving Others

When the Lord first grants these favors of contemplation, the soul might not immediately gain this fortitude. As the favors continue, the Lord will give greater fortitude in this matter of forgiving.

A soul who is so close to Divine Mercy and has come to know herself and the greatness of God's pardon, will readily forgive and remain on good terms with someone who has done them harm. The soul remembers God's consolations and she is glad to show God some love in return.

I know many persons raised to this gift of contemplation. In them, I notice many faults and imperfections but I never see the refusal to forgive. When the favors are from God, the person always forgives others.

If you receive high favors, look within yourself and see if these effects are present. If not, then be fearful whether the consolations are truly from God (Who always enriches). Contemplation passes quickly but the gift is recognized by its lasting benefits. Knowing this well, Jesus assures the Father that we are forgiving others.

## **CHAPTER 37**

### **THE UNIQUE VALUE OF THE OUR FATHER**

We should praise the Lord for the greatness of this prayer, which the Master composed so well. Every person can use it in her own way. I am astounded. Just a few words enshrine all contemplation and perfection. We need study no other book.

In the Our Father, the Lord has taught us the whole method of contemplation, from beginning mental prayer to the prayer of Quiet and to that of Union. If I could express myself on this foundation, I could write a whole book. The Our Father explains the effects that happen when the favors truly come from Him.

### Why Not In Greater Detail?

Why did He not expound in greater detail so we could all understand? The reason is this. This is a general prayer. Each soul must interpret it and ask for what she wants. He left the subject matter in doubt. In this way, contemplatives can ask for heavenly favors while still on earth. Those who live in

the world can ask for bread which is needed for their households. They must ask for this bread and for other necessities they might need.

May the Eternal Father forgive my sins even though I have no one to forgive. I need forgiveness each day. May I also have some petition each day to put before Him.

### Conformity of Words and Actions

Jesus has taught a sublime method of prayer and asks that we be like angels (even in our exile). We must make our actions conform to the words which say we are children of the Father and a brother to our brethren. If our words and actions are united, the Father will give us the Kingdom and those supernatural means (such as the Prayer of Quiet, perfect contemplation and all the favors) which He bestows for our trifling efforts. Indeed, all our efforts are trifling.

Remember that all must practice two actions (surrender of our will and forgiving others). Some practice them more and others less. Perfect souls will surrender their entire will and will forgive with the total perfection. Sisters, do what you can and Jesus will accept it. Jesus makes an agreement with His Father. "Father, if you do this, my brethren will do that". He will not fail. To those in His service, He pays well and gives limitless rewards.

When we say this prayer, He has to know that we will do what we say. He, then, will make us rich. Never be insincere. Be honest in your dealings with Him. Trust Him frankly and openly. Never say one thing and mean another. In this way, He will give us more than we ask.

Souls attain real perfection in their petitions only by the Father's favors. Those on the way to perfection should not fear. They have trampled the world beneath their feet. By these effects produced by God's favors they will gain great hope. Absorbed in their joys, these souls easily forget the world and their enemies.

### Lead Us Not Into Temptation

How wonderful that Jesus foresees our perils. Not to enter temptation is the greatest blessing which the soul (while still on earth) can desire. Words cannot exaggerate the importance of this complete security. Jesus saw that the soul must be awakened to her enemies because if she is unprepared the danger is greater. If the soul falls, it will be from a greater height and she will need more help from the Father. Jesus prays, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." In this way, the soul knows the dangers and does not experience deception.

## **CHAPTER 38**

### **EXPLAINING CERTAIN TEMPTATIONS**

#### Trials

There is much to understand here. Souls who attain perfection do not seek deliverance from trials, temptations or conflicts. They know that trials are a sure sign that these favors are from the Spirit and not from illusions. Perfect contemplative souls are not repelled by trials. In fact, they desire and love them. They are like soldiers who love wars. They do not just want to receive their pay but want to become richer in victory.

The soldiers of Christ (those practicing prayer and experiencing contemplation) are always ready for the hour of conflict. They never fear an open enemy. They will not turn their backs and will gain the victory. However, they rightly fear hidden enemies, those devils who disguise themselves as angels of light. Often, the soul fails to recognize this until much harm has been done. They suck out the soul's life-blood and end her virtue because the soul yields to these temptations without even knowing their source.

To avoid temptations that deceive us we must continually pray to be delivered from these hidden enemies. We must detect this poison so truth is not hidden from us. How rightly, Jesus teaches us to pray for us to be delivered from evil.

### Counterfeit Gifts

Consider all the great harm that is done. The devil counterfeits gifts and makes us believe they come from God. This is his least harmful deception. Sensible devotion leads some souls to spend more time in prayer. They will thank God for His favors and prepare for greater ones.

### Importance of Humility

Always seek humility. The devil cannot ruin souls who feel they are unworthy of God's favors. Whenever He tries to cause evil the Lord brings forth good. God sees our intentions. We want to serve Him and stay close to Him in prayer. That is enough. So, be cautious. Do not let your humility break down. Do not become vainglorious. If you ask the Lord, He will save you from delusions and allow you to be comforted only by Himself.

### A Harmful Delusion

The devil harms us by getting us to believe that we have virtues which we do not. This is a pestilence. A soul who receives God's favors, knows she must serve God alone. Souls without humility suffer from delusion. They believe they are doing great thing and feel they should be rewarded. Little by little, this belief does great harm. The soul neglects to cultivate humility (feeling she already has it) and thinks she is safe. Then she falls into a pit from which she cannot escape. Although we have not committed a mortal sin that would infallibly send us to hell, we have sprained our ankles and cannot continue on this road of perfection. How much progress can someone make who is at the bottom of a pit? She is lucky to escape from falling into hell. Certainly, she will never get on with her journey and will certainly not help others. Once a pit is dug, many passers-by can fall into it. The person must get out and fill in the hole, so she and others are not harmed. This temptation is filled with peril. I know from experience. What can we do? Jesus says to pray that we not enter into temptation.

### Another Temptation – The Removal of A Grace

If the Lord has given you a certain grace, realize that He might remove this blessing. This is in His Providence. I have seen this often. For example, I feel I am detached and the next day I cannot believe my attachment to something. At other times, I have great courage. Even when tested, I do not fail. Then, the next day, I find no courage to overcome opposition. At times, I don't worry at all about people's complaints. I even get pleasure from opposition. Then a day comes when a single word distresses me. I have seen this happen to people much better than myself.

Therefore, who can claim a virtue when she does not have it at the needed time? Let us see ourselves as we truly are, always lacking, always in debt and with no means to repay. Our money comes from God and we never know when He will leave us in debt. If others give us praise and honor, let us realize that all our virtues are only on loan. The truth is this. Serve the Lord in humility and He will

always succor you. If we are not strong in humility, the Lord will leave us to ourselves every step of the way. Then we will realize that all we have is a gift from God.

#### Another Temptation – Relying On Our Virtues

Another piece of advice. The devil makes us believe we have some virtue (such as patience). We truly believe we can suffer a great deal for God. The devil encourages this and we are very pleased. Understand this clearly and place no reliance on your virtues. You really only know their names. At the first annoyance, your patience fails. If God allows you to suffer frequently, He is teaching you patience and wants you to repay Him. Practicing patience is a deposit against your debt.

#### False Spirit of Poverty

The devil also tempts us by making us appear poor in spirit. We say we care about nothing. Yet, when we have a chance of getting something, our poverty disappears. We think we are poor by saying so. This is a temptation in so many things. When the Lord gives us a solid virtue, all the other virtues come with it. So, if you think you have a virtue, suspect you are mistaken. The humble soul always doubts their virtues and sees others as having them.

#### The Vow of Poverty

The devil makes you think you are poor because you have a vow of poverty. Certainly you have done this “with your lips”. However, if poverty were in our hearts, the devil could never lead us into temptation (even in twenty years or a lifetime) because we would see that we are deceiving the world and ourselves.

We vow poverty and then we say, “I have this because I need it to serve God, who certainly wants me to keep my body alive.” The devil (in angelic disguise) convinces the soul of a thousand things that she needs. At the same time, he persuades her that she is true to the vow of poverty.

#### An Example

Let’s have a test case. Truth comes by continually keeping watch over ourselves. So, we must recognize the symptoms of anxiety over money. Someone has a larger income than needed. Instead of one servant, he keeps three. Yet, if he is sued in court about his property or a peasant does not pay his dues, he gets upset as if his life were at stake. He justifies himself by saying he must look after his property.

Certainly he should care about his property. However, a person with genuine poverty makes little account of these problems. He attends to his own interest but is never anxious about them. He never thinks about losing something, even all his wealth. If he lost everything, he would consider this a great grace. Material goods are not his principal concern. His thoughts rise above these matters.

#### Religious Men and Women

Monks and nuns are demonstrably poor. They have nothing to possess. However, when some religious receive things, they never see it as superfluous. They always enjoy having something like a fine cloth instead of a coarse one, books to pawn or sell, and comforts for when they become ill.

Is this the vow of poverty? Stop being anxious. Let God provide, come what may. If you want to provide for your future, have a fixed income. By seeing ourselves honestly, we will realize that we do not possess the virtue of poverty and will beg it from God. When we think we have it, we grow careless and deceive ourselves.

## Humility

We do the same with humility. We claim to deserve no honor. Yet, when our honor is slighted, we are not humble. We even accept opportunities to gain more honor. We have phrases on our lips about wanting nothing and we believe they are true. The more we repeat them, the more we believe. Keep on watch. These are temptations. The true virtue brings all the others with it.

## **CHAPTER 39**

### **AVOIDING TEMPTATION**

#### The Devil's Deception – Worry Over Past Sins

Beware of the false humility inculcated by the devil. He makes us uneasy about the gravity of past sins. He depresses us. Causes us to withdraw from Holy Communion and prayer by suggesting we are unworthy. We then wonder if we are worthy and waste time in preparing for Communion. The soul even believes that God has forsaken her and doubts His mercy. Everything she does seems dangerous and fruitless. She loses confidence, thinks she does nothing well and sees only wrong in herself.

#### True and False Humility

Pay attention. At times, thinking yourself to be wicked can be humility. At other times, this is a temptation. I have experienced this. True humility (no matter how deep) never disquiets, troubles or distracts the soul. There is always peace, joy and tranquility. Seeing our wickedness, we know that we deserve to be in hell. We are distressed by our sinfulness and know that everyone should hate us. Yet, in true humility, this distress never deprives us of interior joy and peace. Humility always enlarges our heart and makes us fit to serve God better. False humility upsets the mind and troubles the soul. The devil even convinces us we should distrust God.

When in this state, cease thinking of your sins and think of God's mercy. If your state of mind comes from a temptation, you will be unable to quiet your thoughts and will grow more weary. Recognize this temptation. It happens when we perform excessive penances and believe ourselves more penitential than others. We conceal our penances from our confessor or refuse to give them up. This is clearly a temptation. Always obey. This is the greatest possible perfection.

#### A False Confidence

Another temptation is to feel that we will never return to our past sins or to the world's pleasures. We say, "Now, I realize they came to an end and I get more pleasure from God's things." For beginners, this is a very serious temptation. Being secure, they wander into the occasions of sin. May God preserve them from falling further back!

The devil sees that they will help many other souls and prevents them from rising again. No matter how many consolations you have received from the Lord, always fear falling back. Always stay away from the occasions of sin.

#### Having A Guide

Discuss your graces and favors with someone who can give you light. Have no secrets from him. No matter what level of contemplation you have, begin and end all prayer with self-examination. If these favors are true, you will do this even more frequently because God's favors make us see our unworthiness. In my own experiences I sometimes found myself in these difficulties. No amount of

advice, however, gives us complete security. “Eternal Father, we can only flee to you so as not to enter temptation. With your help, we can easily overcome open attacks. However, how can we be ready for hidden assaults? We can only ask you to guard us.” Few walk this road of perfection and the number will be even fewer if souls are beset by fears.

#### Astonishment When Someone Falls

How strange! People get a greater shock when deception overtakes a person trying to be perfect than when a hundred thousand others fall into open sin. Yet people are right. Very few of those who say the Our Father (as I described) are deceived by the devil. It is an unusual event when someone is deceived. The devils encourage this astonishment because a single soul gaining perfection attracts others.

I am not surprised at people being amazed. Souls are safer on this road of perfection than on any other. People who watch a bull fight are safer than those in the ring. This comparison is very exact. Sisters, do not be afraid to walk the road of prayer. There are many roads of perfection each fit for different persons. By being near the Lord rather than far from Him you will more easily escape from temptation. Ask to be delivered from temptation. You do this many times a day in the Our Father.

## **CHAPTER 40**

### **WALKING IN BOTH LOVE AND FEAR**

“O Master, show us how to live through this dangerous war without frequent surprises.” Sisters, use love and fear. Love quickens our step. Fear makes us look where we are going. We all must walk this road. With love and fear we shall not be deceived.

#### The Obvious Sign

Sisters, you ask how we can be certain that we have these two virtues. Your question is a good one because if we knew we possessed love, we would be certain that we are in the state of grace. However, some indications are so evident that even a blind man could see. They cry out like a gigantic uproar and they are easily noticed because not too many souls possess these virtues in high perfection. Love and fear of God are the two strong castles by which we war against the world and the devil.

To really love God means the soul loves all good, seeks all good, praises all good and joins forces to help defend good people. These souls love only the truth and what is worthy of love. Can anyone love God and still love vanities, riches, pleasures or honors? Can he envy or engage in strife? These souls so love the Beloved that they seek only to be loved by Him and to please Him better. They cannot hide this love. On the third day, Paul discovered he was sick with love. Magdalene discovered this on the first day. And they were certain! Love shows itself according to its strength. A little love shows little. Much love shows itself a great deal. True love always shows itself.

#### Confronting the Devil's Deceptions

Let us get to the point. The devil uses deceptions and illusions against contemplatives who have a great deal of love, which shows itself plainly. Being a great fire, the soul gives a very bright light. If these souls have received great favors but lack great love, they should proceed cautiously. They have great cause for fear. They should find out what is wrong. They must ask the Lord to keep them from temptation (into which they will certainly fall without love). They must try to discover the truth and speak honestly with their confessor. The Lord will use the devil's means (deceptions and illusions) that

he thought would lead to death. Instead, these will lead to life. If the soul submits to the Church, she need not fear the devil's fantasies. He will betray his presence.

### The Devil's Fears

If you feel this love (as well as the fear which I will describe) just go on your way in peace. To disturb the soul, the devil will suggest a thousand false fears (and persuade others to suggest more). If he cannot win, he will try to steal something. The losers will be those who could have gained greatly if only they had believed that these favors came from God and could be given to them. Unfortunately, the soul can forget God's past mercies.

The devil likes to suggest these fears. He has two ways of harming us. First, he makes the soul fearful of prayer, lest she be deceived. Second, he dissuades the soul from approaching God who holds intimate conversations even with sinners. These souls correctly believe that God might do the same for them. I know many sinners who began the practice of prayer. They soon became devout and received many favors.

If you see someone receiving these favors, praise the Lord but do not think she is safe. Help her with your prayers because no one is safe in this life from the sea's engulfing danger.

Wherever you see God's love you will always recognize it. His love cannot be concealed. If we cannot hide our love for creatures, how can we conceal God's love? His love is so strong, righteous, ever increasing and always has reasons to manifest itself. The Lord's sorrows, trials, shedding of His blood and death show the reality of His love which is quite different from worldly love. Those who have experienced both can attest to this.

### After Death

May God help us to experience His love before death. We do not know where we are going after death so it is consoling to be judged by One whom we have loved with a passion. This causes us to forget ourselves. Once we pay our debts, we can walk safely. We are going to a country which is owned by Someone whom we love and who loves us.

This love is greater than all earthly affection. If we love God, we know that He loves us. Always remember how great is the gain if we have this love and how great is the loss if we do not have it. Without it, we are delivered into the cruel hands of the devil who is hostile to all good and friendly to all evil.

What happens to the poor soul who falls into the devil's hands after death? How torn she will be as she goes to hell. How many serpents she will meet! How dreadful the place! Pampered persons (and most going to hell are that) cannot spend a single night in a bad hotel. How will they feel having to spend all eternity in such a wretched inn?

### Our Task

Sisters, don't pamper yourselves. We spend only one night in this bad inn called "earth". Let us do penance. How sweet the death of those who need not spend time in purgatory. May they enjoy glory even now and have no fear. Let us ask God that we might suffer pains in this world. Then we will suffer willingly and not lose God's friendship or grace. May He keep us from temptation.

## CHAPTER 41

### IMPORTANCE OF FEARING GOD

I have enlarged on the topic and yet have said little on this delightful love of God! What must it be to possess this love! Oh God, let me not depart from this life until I deserve nothing in it, until I have forgotten to love anything but You and until I deny the name “love” to any other affection.

#### The World’s Love

I laugh at people who say, “She made me a poor return for my gift” or “Someone does not like me”. Why do they expect a return on their gift? Why do they want someone to love them? In this world, your love becomes your own punishment and you are upset because your will cannot tolerate such childish past-times. Because of my sins, I am quite familiar with this worldly love. I want to free you from it, but now, I must move on to the fear of God.

#### Fear in the Beginner

Those who fear God (and those who see them) are very familiar with this fear. In the beginning, this fear is not deep in most souls. In those few souls whom God wants to raise quickly to heights of prayer, the fear is deep from the beginning. At first, this fear is not seen in everyone. Only as the fear increases can it be recognized. Because these souls fear God they forsake sin, abandon the occasions of sin and leave behind bad company. When the soul reaches contemplation (of which we are treating) this fear of God is plainly revealed and is not dissembled.

#### Growth in Fear

These souls never grow careless and the Lord preserves them from knowingly committing venial sins. They fear mortal sin like fire. I want you always to fear any illusions about your strength. Ask God that temptations not lead you into sin. Ask Him to allow them in proportion to your strength to conquer. Even in great temptations, the soul suffers little harm by keeping a pure conscience. May this fear never be taken from you, for it keeps you in good stead.

It is a great gift, never to have offended the Lord. In the end, every soul shall serve the Lord. Those in hell serve by compulsion and we in heaven serve with our whole heart. If we please God, hell’s servants may lead us into temptation but they can do us no harm.

Do not neglect this advice. Your determination must be fixed. You must prefer to lose a thousand lives rather than commit a mortal sin. You must also be careful not to commit venial sins. I refer to venial sins knowingly committed after long deliberation. This is quite different from a sudden act where the knowledge and the action happen at the same time.

#### Not Being Careless

May God deliver us from any sin (no matter how small) that is committed with malice and forethought. Otherwise, we sin against a great King whom we know is watching us. The soul would be saying, “Lord, this displeases you and I know it. However, I want to follow my whim rather than your will”. Committing a sin in this way (however slight) seems a very great offense.



Sisters, never be careless about this. To gain fear of God, realize how serious it is to offend God. Turn this over in your mind. Your life (and much more) depends upon this virtue of fear being deeply implanted. Until you know you possess fear, you must avoid all occasions of sin. Avoid, also, those people who do not help you get nearer to God. In all you do, be careful. Bend your will. Let your conversation edify. Flee conversation that is not pleasing to God.

#### A Firm Determination

Much care is needed to impress this fear upon the soul. However, by true love, the soul can acquire it quickly. Even a soul with a firm determination never to offend God for any creature, may fall from time to time. We can never trust ourselves. The more determined we are, the less self confidence we should have. Our confidence must come from God.

If you fall, do not be depressed. The Lord will help and the virtues already developed will assist you not to offend again. Eventually, you will walk in holy freedom and can associate with dissolute people without danger. If you truly hate sin, they will do you no harm. Before this stage, worldly people would ruin your soul. Now, you praise God for delivering you from these notorious dangers. Previously, you might have fostered their weakness. Now you can help them because they restrain themselves in your presence.

I praise God that His true servant, just by being present, frequently prevents people from speaking against Him. As in the world, no one speaks against a person in the presence of his friends. So, when people know someone is God's friend, they fear to speak against God.

#### Not Too Strict and Fearful

Do not be too strict with yourselves. This will do great harm and might lead to scrupulosity (which is a hindrance to progress). A soul who is strict and fearful will not lead many souls to God. They will frighten people, who will then avoid God's road, even though they know it is best.

#### Unjustly Judging A Talkative Soul

Another problem is this. Because some people talk freely to profit their neighbor, another person (who is more restrained) judges them as imperfect. These talkative souls are lively and the other thinks they are dissolute. This happens to souls who are not sure of what they can speak about without sinning. This is a dangerous state of mind and leads to uneasiness and continual temptation. Don't judge your neighbor who is not as fearful as you. Another danger is not to speak when you should. The soul fears to speak well of things, believing that she should hate the world.

#### Being Sociable

Sisters, be pleasant when you can. Get along well with people so they like to talk with you and want to follow your life and your virtues. This is important for nuns. The holier you are the more sociable should you be. Even if the other sisters' conversations don't always please you, do not stay aloof. Be pleasant. Humor people. Especially make the other sisters like you.

Remember. While we might be upset, God doesn't pay attention to trifling matters. Don't lose your courage. Otherwise, you will lose many blessings. Let your intention be upright and your will determined. If you stay in seclusion, the devil will implant many imperfections and you will not accomplish all the good you can.

With love and fear of God, we will travel this road in peace. We will not think of every pitfall. Although we cannot be sure of reaching our goal, fear will lead the way. We will not grow careless. If we feel completely safe, we are in great danger. Our Lord taught us this in the Our Father, “Deliver us from evil.”

## CHAPTER 42

### DELIVERANCE

#### Jesus’ Desire

Jesus said “With desire I have desired to eat this with you.” (Lk 22:15) He knew this was His last supper and He asked to be delivered from evil because He was weary of life. (Some people, even at a hundred, want to live longer.) Jesus’ whole life was difficult because His cruel death was always before His eyes. Even more, He suffered from the sins against His Father and the multitude of souls being lost.

For a charitable man, this would be a great torment. How much more did Jesus, with His measureless love, suffer? No wonder He asked the Father to deliver Him from evil and give Him the Kingdom which He owned.

#### Understanding “Amen”

By the Amen, the Lord begs that we be delivered from all evil forever. While we live, sisters, we cannot be free from temptations, imperfections and even sins. Whoever thinks he is without sin is deceived. But if we try to banish bodily ills, why should we not be delivered from sin?

Realize what you are asking. Deliverance from all evils (bodily ills and spiritual faults) seems impossible. I am not talking about great saints but I am referring to sinners like myself. When I realize I am overcome by weakness and lukewarmness I beg the Lord’s help.

#### Totally and Forever Delivered

You can ask in any way you wish. For myself, I ask the Lord to deliver me from all evil “forever”. What good can we find in this life when we are absent from His presence? Deliver me, Lord, from this shadow of death, these trials, these pains, these charges, these formalities. They all weary me. Their enumeration even wearies the reader. This life is not endurable. My realization of my wickedness must be the source of my depression.

“Lord, deliver me from all evil forever because I cannot repay you and I get further in debt each day. Hardest of all is that I am not certain that I love you or that my desires are acceptable to you. Deliver me from all evil and lead me where all good can be found.” If a soul understands what the world offers and knows the blessings which God has in store, how can she desire anything on earth?

#### No Desire to Stay on Earth

When contemplatives ask to be delivered from all evil, their contemplation is genuine. Let them prize these favors greatly. For myself, I ask to be delivered because I am weary of trials and my life is so wicked that I fear to live any longer. Those who taste God’s favors want to pass to a life where they do not just enjoy a few sips of God’s goodness.

They know His greatness partially and they want to see it entirely. They do not desire to remain on earth where joys are so hindered. They want to be where the Sun of Justice never sets. How can they even live here for an hour? Anyone who has begun to enjoy the Kingdom of God on earth seeks only the will of the King and can never be content to live on earth.

### Bending Our Will

How different is life in heaven where we will bend our will to God's. On earth, He wants us to desire truth, but we desire falsehood. He wills us to desire the eternal but we want what passes away. He wills us to desire sublime things but we want earthly things. He wills us to desire the certain but we choose what is doubtful.

What a mockery we make of everything. That is why we ask God to deliver us from these evils. Even if our desire is not perfect we can still make this petition. What does it cost to ask? We would insult God if we asked for a mere farthing. Ask Him for everything! God wants to be generous so let us leave ask for all that He wills to give us. This way, we will surely be heard.

### From Vocal Prayer To Contemplation

You see now the perfection needed for vocal prayer. If you are told that you can say only vocal prayer, do not be discouraged. No superior can demand that you say vocal prayer without understanding to whom you are speaking. Do not listen to anyone who advises you to give up prayer. I intended to explain also the Hail Mary but that must be postponed. Learn to say the Our Father well and you will say your other vocal prayers well.

### At The Fountain

Let's go back and finish the journey. The Lord has saved me much work by showing that all is contained in the Our Father. I never knew this prayer contained such secrets. It comprises the whole spiritual road, from the beginning to the end until God absorbs the soul and gives her to drink of the living water.

The Our Father contains great consolations and advantages. If our books are taken from us, this prayer from the lips of truth Himself will instruct us. Delight in the Our Father. Say it many times each day and learn from its teachings. I should not have ventured to teach such sublime matters but God taught me what to say. He did this, sisters, because of your humility in asking me to write.

The Lord intends me to stop. I wanted to go on but can think of nothing more to say. The Lord has shown you the road and He taught me to write this book. You now know how to act when you reach the fountain of living water and what the soul experiences there. God satiates the soul, removes all taste for earthly things and makes the soul grow in God's service. This book will give much light to those who have reached this fountain.

*Sisters, before you see this book, I will give it to my confessor (Father Banex, O.P.). If he thinks it will benefit you and if you find help in it, I will be comforted. If he gives you this book he will also give you my autobiography. I wrote this at your command and it has not been an easy task but the Lord taught me this secret of evangelical prayer. Blessed be the Lord from whom comes all the good which we think and do. Amen*