

TERESA OF AVILA
INTERIOR CASTLE
INTRODUCTION

A Difficult Task

This is a difficult task. The Lord has not given me a desire to write about prayer and, for the last three months, I have experienced a weakness in my head. Obedience, however, simplifies things that seem impossible. May the Lord who helped me in more difficult tasks, help me here also.

Other Books

I fear I have little to say that I have not already written (under obedience) in other books. I am like a bird, repeating mechanically again and again. However, the Lord will teach me. I would be satisfied if my poor memory is able to recall some things that I said so they will not be lost. I shall be better for having tried to write this, even if no one finds what I say of any profit.

So, I begin in this year 1577, under obedience to persons of great learning. If I say anything contrary to Catholic teaching, it is from ignorance not from malice. I will always be subject to the Church.

I am writing this for the Carmelite nuns. My director said they needed someone to solve their difficulties about prayer. He felt that a woman best understands a woman's language. He also said that they loved me. Really, I can't see myself being a help to anyone else. Certainly the Lord would grant me a big favor if one nun is helped to praise God a little better. If these nuns credit me with anything, it is because they have as little understanding of these matters as I have ability to explain them (unless the Lord bestows it).

FIRST MANSION

CHAPTER 1
THE IMAGE OF THE CASTLE

*Topic: The Beauty and Dignity of the Soul and the benefit of
knowing the favors that come from prayer.*

Because I did not know where to begin, I asked the Lord and He gave me a foundational image. The soul is a castle with many rooms (just like heaven), a paradise in which God takes delight. It does great good to think of heaven's gifts. Certainly, God made each soul (because it is meant for the King) with incomparable beauty and capacity.

Our minds, no matter how acute, cannot understand either God or the soul which is made in His image and likeness. Really we cannot comprehend the beauty of this castle because, although only created, it is still made in God's image.

The Soul's Value

What a great pity that we don't understand ourselves and who we are. What if a person didn't know his father, mother or his own country? Our stupidity is even greater. We live in our bodies but don't discover the value of our soul. We seldom consider our soul's good qualities and Who lives in them. We focus instead on the castle's outer walls — our bodies.

The Most Inner Mansion

Imagine this castle with many Mansions. The most important mansion is at its very center, where secret things pass between God and our soul. By pondering this comparison, you might grasp some of God's favors. Really, there are so many that nobody can understand them all, especially I. What a great consolation if the Lord helps you to know the joys of the blessed. To realize that God can commune with us leads us to love Him for His boundless goodness.

Why See God's Favors

Only someone lacking humility would find it harmful to realize that God grants favors. Also, we should rejoice in seeing His favors in others, knowing that He can do the same in us.

Did not Jesus bestow sight on the blind man even though the apostles thought the blindness came from sin? (Jn.7:2) He does not grant favors due to our holiness (look at Paul and Magdalene) but He grants them so we might praise His greatness.

Speaking of God's Favors

Some say that we should not talk about God's favors because this scandalizes the weak. Really, we must disclose these favors to awaken others to receive them. Certainly, those for whom I write know about God's favors. Others will learn them by experience. Remember — God places no bounds to His work. Sisters, only go on this road if the Lord leads you.

The Door of Prayer

How do we enter this castle? Is this question absurd when we ourselves are the castle? "No". We can "be" in a place in many ways. Some stay outside this castle (with the guards) and have no interest in learning the nature of this wonderful place, the person Who dwells there or how many rooms it has. Prayer books advise us to enter our souls.

Those Who Do Not Enter

Souls without prayer are like paralyzed people who cannot control their hands or feet. Some people are so busy with external affairs that they seem incapable of entering themselves. They spend all their time with the creatures and reptiles in the outer court. They are endowed with the power to speak with God but they do not use this power. Unless they realize their miserable condition they will become pillars of salt like Lot's wife (Gen.19:26).

The door to the castle is prayer and meditation. This prayer must be mental, because vocal prayer without thinking of God just moves the lips. If a man speaks to God without seeking to express himself properly (just saying words by repetition) he is not praying at all. Sisters, I hope none of you pray this way. If you make prayer an interior matter, you will not fall into poor prayer habits.

Entering the Castle

Paralyzed souls are like the man who lay for thirty years next to the pool. They are in great peril. Some souls do eventually enter the castle. Although absorbed in worldly affairs they pray a few times a month. Although still preoccupied with worldly treasures, they shake their minds free. Realizing that they are going away from the castle door, they turn around and eventually enter the rooms in the lowest floor. Because many reptiles enter with them they cannot appreciate the castle's beauty. Yet, they did much just by entering. Sisters, you are not one of these but this is the only way I can explain some of my ideas. Without personal experience it is difficult to understand. However, I must treat some subjects which never concern us.

CHAPTER 1.2

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Topic: The ugliness of a soul in mortal sin and how the Mansions are to be understood

I want you to consider what this beautiful castle will be like when the soul falls into mortal Sin. No thicker darkness exists. Though the Son Himself is still in the soul's center, it is as if He is absent and the soul is not capable of enjoying Him.

The Effects of Mortal Sin

The soul finds profit in nothing. Her good works are of no avail. Separated from God, the soul cannot please Him. Since mortal sin pleases the devil, the soul shares the devil's darkness.

The Lord showed me a soul in mortal sin. If other people also saw this they would not commit sin nor place themselves in an occasion of sin.

My daughters, pray for these souls who have become sheer darkness. The works of a soul in grace please God because they come from the spring of life from which the soul produces fruit. By mortal sins, the soul leaves this spring, becomes rooted in evil-smelling waters and produces only misery. However, the spring and the sun remain in the soul. It is like a thick black cloth being placed over a crystal in the sunshine. Its brightness has no effect.

The Soul's Dignity

O soul, understand your true nature and you will remove this pitch that blackens you. If your life ended now, you would never see the light again. How sad to see a soul whose senses are distracted and whose faculties (the guards of the castle) are blind and uncontrolled. What fruit comes from a tree rooted in the devil?

Any evil is possible to a soul in mortal sin. May God deliver us from this greatest of all evils which bring eternal evils with it. Daughters, ask God to deliver you, for we labor in vain if we do not keep the city (Ps.127: 1).

Results From God's Favors

God's favors taught me two things. First, I saw the consequences of sin. Second, I received a great humility and realized that God alone produces our good works. After this, whenever I did or saw a good deed I went to the Source and praised God (not myself) for any good action.

Sisters, just remember this. We women are slow and we need instruction in everything. May God help us to understand these comparisons.

Teaching On Prayer

May the reader be patient with me for I often say many irrelevant things to say one that is to the point. I even write with no idea of what to say. Yet, we need teachings on prayer because our Constitution requires many hours of prayer each day but doesn't tell us what to do or what the Lord does in our souls.

As I explain what God does, think of this interior castle which is so little understood. Although the Lord has given me light, I never understood many matters as well as I do now. To explain these difficult points, I first must teach what is already well known. (This happens when a person is as stupid as I.)

Describing the Soul

Imagine the Mansions are in a row but fix your attention on the center palace occupied by the King. Think of a palmetto (a Spanish shrub with many leaves and a central edible kernel). Before eating the kernel, the leaves are removed.

The soul is spacious and many rooms surround this central palace. A soul which prays (much or little) has a great dignity and God allows it to roam through these Mansions. He does not compel it to remain a long time in one room (except the room of self-knowledge). No matter what high state the soul has gained, she can never neglect self-knowledge. Humility is like a bee always making honey. Without humility all is lost.

Just as the bee flies from flower to flower, the soul must sometimes emerge from self-knowledge to see God's greatness. Doing this, the soul easily sees her own baseness. Sometimes we can get too much knowledge of self. We gain the greater heights by seeking God's power.

Self-knowledge

Let me explain clearly. Self-knowledge is so important that even souls raised to the heavens must always cultivate this humility. Before soaring off to the other rooms, enter first the room where you acquire humility. If the road is safe to walk, why desire wings to fly? Profit by walking. However, we can truly only know ourselves by knowing God. In His holiness we will see our own sinfulness.

The Devil's Questions and Strategies

This approach (of looking at God instead of ourselves) has two advantages. What is white looks whiter against something that is black. Also, turning toward God (and away from self) makes our will more noble and ready to embrace the good.

The devil tries to keep us buried in our wretchedness. So he places questions in souls called to prayer. "What will people think of me?" "Dare I begin this task?" "Am I led by pride?" "Am I not a sinner?" "Can I do this lofty work of prayer?"

People think these questions come from humility. Really they come from a distorted idea of our nature. By setting our eyes on Christ and upon His saints, we will be ennobled and our self-knowledge will be free from fear. Although we are only in the first Mansion, we already find riches of a great price. The devil uses his wiles to prevent souls from this self-knowledge.

Entering the First Mansion

Think of these first Mansions as having a large number of rooms. Good intentioned souls enter them in many ways. In each room are many evil spirits to deceive these souls (in later Mansions, the devil is less successful). At this early stage, the soul is engulfed in worldly

pleasures and ambitions. Her senses and inner faculties are easily vanquished (even though the soul wishes not to offend God).

These souls must stay close to God, His mother and the saints because their own powers have little strength for self- defense. Much harm comes from misunderstanding humility and self-knowledge. I won't say any more here.

Light From the Center

The light from the king's palace (in the center) hardly reaches these rooms. Although not as dark as the soul in mortal sin, this soul has many bad things within herself which prevents her from seeing the light. The soul's eyes are filled with dust and the soul's wild beasts close her eyes to all but herself. The soul is so absorbed in worldly things, honors and possessions that she cannot see the castle's beauty due to these impediments.

Later when she enters the second Mansion, the soul must set aside unnecessary business. Otherwise, she will never reach the central palace and will be bitten by poisonous reptiles.

Being Watchful

Daughters, we are farther along in these secret Mansions. In the convent, we are free of these outward things. May the Lord give us freedom from inward things also. Beware of useless cares. In very few Mansions are we free from the devil. Our faculties can overcome but we must be watchful against the devil. He becomes an angel of light with many ways to deceive us. We do not even realize he is with us.

Examples

He works like a noiseless file. Let me give some examples. A sister undertakes penances when the superior says that permission is always needed. This sister ruins her health and cannot keep her Rule. Another sister zealously seeks perfection. She sees the faults of others and is always telling the prioress, yet, she cannot see her own faults.

The devil also tries to destroy charity among the sisters (causing much harm). Remember, perfection is love of God and love of neighbor. So, let us refrain from indiscreet zeal against others.

Mutual love is so important that we should not look for faults in others. This is especially harmful in a Prioress. No sister should discuss faults with others. This starts a habit of slander. Glory to God that we keep almost continuous silence! Nevertheless, be on guard.

SECOND MANSION

CHAPTER 2.1

THE NEED FOR PERSEVERANCE

*Topic: Trials of Perseverance to reach the final Mansions.
The devil's fierce war. Not missing our way
in the beginning.*

I have already written about souls who enter the second Mansion (Autobiography — Ch. 11-13 and the *Way of Perfection* Ch. 20-29) and it will be impossible not to repeat here much of what I have said.

To Whom Written

I write this chapter for those who practice prayer but are not resolute enough to leave the first Mansions (although they want to). These souls won't avoid the occasions of sin (which is a very perilous condition). However, they do desire to escape from the snakes and do understand their spiritual condition. There is great hope for them. They are better off than others in the first Mansion who can neither hear nor speak.

The State of the Soul

These souls understand when the Lord calls because His Majesty has become their good neighbor. God shows them mercy even when they engage in worldly pleasure, fall into sins and rise again. The Lord wants their companionship and ceaselessly calls them to approach Him. These souls suffer because His voice is so sweet and they cannot immediately do His will.

God appeals to them through sermons, good books and other means. He speaks to them in sickness and in their prayers (however feeble). Sisters, do not be discouraged. God will wait for us (even many years) when He sees us trying.

Perseverance is completely necessary to gain the goal. The soul suffers greatly (more than in the preceding Mansions). In the first Mansion the soul had little hope and gave little resistance. Now, the soul is keener and sees the battle clearly. The devil reminds the soul of earthly pleasures and honors. He threatens the soul with impaired health if she undertakes penances (her true desire).

The Soul's Reflections

The soul knows not whether to move ahead or to go back. Reason tells the soul she is mistaken. Faith, on the contrary, shows her that earthly pleasures pass away. Many rich and famous people are now in their graves (their bodies filled with worms).

The person wants to return love to God Who has been so kind. Her understanding shows the soul that God is her best friend and that, outside the castle there is no peace. All the soul needs is within the castle. The soul must not be like the Prodigal Son who left his home to eat with swine.

Vanquishing the Devil

By these reflections the soul vanquishes the devil. Yet, by vain habits, she still desires the world more than the gifts of faith. The poisonous creatures do this to her. She is bitten and her whole body swells with the poison. She needs God's mercy to save her from death. Also, the devil will send great trials if he sees the soul ready for greater progress.

At this point, the soul must not be deluded. She must walk in the right direction by associating with those who have already entered the other Mansions nearer the center. If the soul is resolute like the strong soldiers who accompanied Gideon (Judges 7:5), the devil will soon cease troubling her.

Not Seeking Favors

In the beginning, the soul must not seek spiritual favors. This is a poor foundation for a large building. In other

Mansions, the soul will seek only God's will and will receive all the needed manna.

This is a curious thing. The soul is still young in prayer (hardly born!) and has a thousand imperfections. Yet she complains of dryness. Sisters, you must be different. Seek the cross which always grants freedom. If God also gives you consolations, thank Him.

You think you will be strong if God gives you inner consolations. He is the judge in this. We don't know what to seek. The beginner has one task — to resolutely conform her will to God's will. This comprises the greatest perfection and results in the greatest progress. No use dabbling in other strange things.

The Trials

We cannot ask God to do our will. Often God allows us to be affected by evil thoughts and anxieties. He even lets us be bitten so we can grieve at having offended Him.

So, even if you fall, do not lose heart. You can see what harm you can do to yourself. The evil in our own house shows us the need for prayer.

We need the inner peace that Jesus promised (Jn.20:21) because our own inner faculties are at war. By Christ's blood this inner war can cease. Those who have begun a life of prayer must not turn back (to fall a second time is worse than the first). As God leads them into the other Mansions, they will gain power over these beasts and enjoy many good things, even in this life.

You know already how to behave in these disturbances (Autobiography Ch.11 and 19). Prayerful recollection must come gently and not from strenuous efforts. In this way, you can pray for a long period. Please consult people with experience. Fulfill your duties. If we persevere in prayer, all will be for our profit. Start afresh each day so you do not lose ground.

Should the Soul Begin?

Some might feel that they better not begin and that they should just stay outside the castle. This is absurd! The door to heaven is prayer. We must first enter our own souls to know our wretchedness and God's mercy. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn.14:6) and "He who sees me sees the Father." (Jn.14:9). We certainly cannot know Jesus if we never look at Him and we cannot do works unless united to His merits. We must pray to appreciate His gifts and to work to enter His glory.

THIRD MANSION

CHAPTER 3.1

WALKING IN FEAR

Topic: The Insecurity of Life and the Value of Walking in Fear

To those who have gained the third Mansion, I say "Blessed is he who fears the Lord" (Ps.102:1). Unless he turns back, this man is blessed for he is on the road of salvation. He

has overcome his past and has a "security" of conscience. "Security" is the wrong word. I always mean "If he does not stray".

Fear of Losing God

We are like men with enemies at the gate. We must always be armed and afraid of being surprised. Oh God, although we hope to lose this life for you or spend it in your service, we would wish you to take us from this life. Let us die with Thee because life without Thee is nothing. Sisters, pray for the complete security of the blessed. Remember, some saintly people fell into grave sins and we cannot be certain that God will give us the needed sorrow.

Fear of losing God overwhelms me and I can hardly write. What security can I have of God living in me when I have so misspent my life? I know this depresses you for you want to think that I have been holy. So would I! But what can I do when I have lost so much through my own fault? I say this with tears because obedience has placed this heavy task of writing to you (who could teach me). Hopefully you will gain some profit from this foolhardy woman.

Value of Fear

I cannot help being what I have been and I can only trust in Jesus and His Mother (whose habit we unworthily wear). Since you have such a good Mother you need not be scandalized at my unworthiness. Mary is so good that even my sins are not enough to tarnish this sacred Order.

Even being in this Order and having Mary, you must not be too sure of yourselves. Don't even be confident because you are cloistered. Do penance. Talk about God. Pray and avoid the world. Even doing all this does not justify laying aside our fears. Repeat often "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord" (Ps.102:1).

Souls In The Third Mansion

I am a bird with a broken wing, incapable of saying anything of value. Let me return to the souls in the third Mansion. God has given them a great favor because they desire not to offend God, even by venial sins. They pray, do penance, use their time well, serve their neighbor, and govern their home.

There seems to be no reason for the Lord to deny them access to the final Mansions. No one would want to lose this wonderful goal when they have overcome the troublesome stages. However, more is needed. Words are not enough.

Patience With God's Closed Doors

Look at the rich young man who wished to be perfect (Matt.19:16-22). Many experience periods of aridity because they are like this rich young man. (I am not speaking here of good souls whom God plunges into interior trials for their profit, or those who suffer melancholy.) I am speaking of souls who would not commit even a venial sin and would make good use of their lives. These are impatient when the door to the King's presence remains closed.

Need For Humility

A king has many vassals who do not enter his chambers. So, daughters, enter within yourselves. Get away from your good works (as Christians you must perform these and many more). Look at the saints who did enter. How are we different from them? Even with all our sins, we think we deserve to enter. To deserve anything never entered the heads of the saints.

Oh, humility! I hear people talking about their aridity, and I fear they lack humility. (I am not talking about those special interior trials.) Always, let the Lord test us. He knows well how to do it.

Look at these carefully ordered souls. See all that they do and then realize that you are wrong to complain. God can only reward us in proportion to a love which is proved by works. God does not need these works but He does need our resolute will.

Not Seeking Favors

We feel that we have become religious and left everything. St. Peter left only some fishing nets, yet God still esteemed his sacrifice. This is a good beginning. Do not return to those reptiles, even in desires. We must abandon all and still consider ourselves unprofitable servants (Lk.17:10). The more we give, the more we are in God's debt. We are fortunate to repay God something (when He has created us and died for us) and shouldn't be asking him for gifts.

I have written these thoughts in a jumbled state. The Lord will make them clear, so that your periods of dryness will humble you. Do not be restless. This is the devil's goal. In true humility, a soul is more content in receiving nothing than in having favors. Unfortunately, we are more fond of spiritual sweetness than the cross. Let us have fortitude to go forward in dryness.

CHAPTER 3.2

TRUE PROGRESS IN PERFECTION

Topic: Aridity in Prayer and How the Lord Tests Us

The Mistake of Restlessness

Some souls have reached this state of living an upright life for many years. Yet, when the Lord gives them some test they become restless and depressed. This has exasperated me and I fear for them. They accept no advice and think they can teach others.

I comfort them by expressing sorrow at their troubles. I do not argue with them. They are convinced they are suffering for God's sake when really it is due to their imperfections. This is a further mistake because these sufferings should pass quickly.

Certainly, God withdraws His helps from souls so they can see their limitations. They understand this is a test and they perceive their shortcomings. They see they are still attached to earthly things. This comes from God's mercy and the soul grows in humility.

Some Examples of This Problem

It is different with the souls I am talking about because they think they are highly virtuous. Therefore, I will tell you about them so you can learn and be prepared.

A childless rich man loses part of his wealth but still has enough to provide. He grows restless. How then can the Lord ask him to leave everything? The man might want to give his money to the poor, but he loses his tranquility at the thought. The man should realize that he suffers because he lacks freedom of spirit. Let him pray for this.

A person with more than enough wealth, sees the opportunity to acquire more property. Let him take the opportunity. But if he continues to strive for more and more property (always with a good motive for I speak about devout people), he will never ascend to the King's inner Mansions.

Some people might lose their good reputation and God gives them the grace to accept this. However, they grow restless, not able to do what they want or unable to control their feelings. Are not these the very people who meditated on the Lord's sufferings and desired to suffer? They

must not see their troubles as due to another's fault and think that they themselves are meriting much.

Purpose of Trials

These examples are not exactly applicable to the religious state but many others can be brought forth. Trifling incidents will arise. In these trials you will discover if you are really detached and have mastered your passions. Wearing the religious habit is not as important as surrendering your will to God. If we have not come this far, then let us practice humility (the ointment for our wounds) and the Physician will soon heal us.

Zeal For Penances

These people want to do penance but these penances are carefully ordered so as not to injure their health. These people will never kill themselves. They are eminently reasonable folk! Their love cannot overwhelm their reason. Would that our love would hate this habit of serving God at a snail's pace! We shall never get to the end of the road. We are always fatigued. Lucky that we do not get lost! If we could go from one country to the next in a week (even with rain and snow) why do we take a year? Let's get the journey to perfection over with! I could say a lot. I fear I myself have gotten no farther.

Proceeding with such caution, we are afraid and find many stumbling blocks. Others cannot make the journey for us. This is impossible. So, leave your reason and your fears in the Lord's hands. Let our Superiors be concerned with our bodies. Our task is to journey with good speed. Don't worry about your health. Anxiety only hurts it.

Progress By Humility

Our progress does not depend on the body. This matters the least. Our journey depends on humility. Lacking this prevents progress. We must see ourselves as having taken just a few steps while others have taken many. We should always see ourselves as worse than everyone else.

Without humility, the excellent state of a religious has a thousand troubles. Because human nature burdens us, we must have complete renunciation. Those in the later Mansions don't have this burden. Even in our present Mansion, Our Lord repays us and gives us a spiritual sweetness greater than earthly pleasures. He even gives us the consolations of future Mansions to prepare us to enter them.

Spiritual Sweetness and Consolations

I believe that spiritual sweetness and consolations describe two different realities. I will explain this in the Fourth Mansion. When you understand the nature of each you can pursue the better one. This will console the souls whom God has brought far and shame those who think they have everything. Hopefully they will be humble and not inwardly discouraged. Our reward depends not on consolations but on our love and the truth of our actions.

Why should I discuss these favors? I write under obedience and what I say is true. When I had none of these favors or experiences I never expected to even know them in my life. It was my joy to think I was pleasing to God (although I had great pleasure in reading about them in books). If I, so unworthy, pleased God how much more a humble soul will please Him.

We should know the spiritual delights which we lose through our fault. These consolations are filled with fortitude and make the soul progress. So we should know how to gain them. If God holds them back, He will give the soul other means. Whatever He does is best for us.

Obedience

Souls in this state are ready to rise higher. Their greatest need is obedience. A person who is not a religious, should have someone to direct them. (Otherwise they do themselves harm.) They should not choose someone like themselves but select someone who is disillusioned with the world. It is a great advantage to have someone who knows me.

Also, we are encouraged to see others who do what we thought impossible. We emulate their efforts, as young birds watching their parents. Also, we must be determined not to offend the Lord for we are still near the first Mansion and our fortitude at this stage is not yet on solid ground.

We are not yet like souls practiced in suffering, who do not fear the world's storms and do not desire worldly pleasures. We, however, might not survive persecutions and would return to worldly pleasures.

Not Neglecting Ourselves

So look to your own shortcomings and leave other people alone. Although our exterior behavior is good, this is not everything and all cannot travel our road. So, just live by your silence and your Rule. If we do not neglect ourselves, we will help others.

FOURTH MANSION

CHAPTER 4.1

SPIRITUAL SWEETNESS AND INNER TRIALS

*Topic: Difference between spiritual sweetness and consolations
and between thought and understanding.
A help for those having distractions*

At this point, I ask the Spirit to guide me because I will write about supernatural prayer. I did this fourteen years ago. (Autobiography — Ch. 11-27). Although I have more light, it is still difficult to explain everything. May God lead me!

Preliminary Remarks

These Mansions are getting nearer to the King's dwelling. They are of such beauty that it is difficult to describe their exquisite things to those who are devoid of experience. Those with experience will readily understand. Although no rule is infallible, a soul usually must live a long time in the other Mansions before reaching here. Yet, Our Lord gives to whom He wills, whenever He wills.

Poisonous creatures seldom come here and when they do the soul profits from them. If the soul had no temptations, the devil might mislead it and the soul would lose occasions of merit. A soul absorbed in consolation is not safe because the Spirit does not remain continuously in this way.

Natural Feelings

Returning to my subject, I call sweetness what we get from our meditations and petitions, that is, acts coming from our own nature (although inspired by God). Since this sweetness results from our own works, we rightly feel satisfaction. However, this same satisfaction can come

from numerous sources. A person could acquire property, or successfully conclude a business venture or find someone who had been missing. They shed tears of joy as I myself have done.

Feelings in Prayer

These feelings in prayer seem purely natural, although their source is nobler. Worldly joys begin in nature and end in God. Although spiritual consolations begin in God, we experience them in a natural way. Oh Jesus, I wish I could explain this better!

Psalm 119 reads, "I will run the way of your commands." (V.32) An experienced soul will see in these words the difference between sweetness and divine consolations. The inexperienced soul will not. Sweetness does not enlarge the heart. The soul experiences happiness at what it is doing for God. The soul sheds a few bitter tears which come from the lower passions. This proceeds from sensuality.

Feelings of Devotion

I have experienced this but don't have the learning to explain it. I would weep over Christ's passion but would end with a headache. Also, to weep over my sins was a great favor, but these tears come partly from nature and partly from being faithful. These eventually led to God. The soul should prize these experiences but have the humility to realize that the experiences don't make the soul more virtuous.

Souls dwelling in the fourth Mansion are familiar with these feelings of devotion. Although they use their understanding in meditating, they should also spend short periods in a second gift, praising God and desiring His glory. However, when God gives them this second grace, they must accept it and not try to finish their meditation.

Aroused To Love

I have written much previously. (Autobiography Ch. 12) To make progress and ascend to the Mansions it is important to love much not to think much. Do what arouses you to love. Often, we don't even know what love is. Love does not consist in our happiness but in a firm determination to please God in everything and to ask Him to advance the glory of His Son and His Church. Even if your mind is distracted, your heart is still focused upon His glory.

Understanding And Thought

Four years ago, I realized that thought (or "imagination") is different from understanding. Thoughts fly so fast that only God restrains them. The understanding is a power of the soul and is very timid. I was confused to see that my understanding was occupied with God while my thoughts were all distracted.

Oh Lord, we need knowledge of our interior powers. We suffer trials because we do not understand ourselves. Many grow discouraged with prayer because they do not understand. We cannot restrain our thoughts anymore than we can control the heavens. We might be united with God in His Mansions while our thoughts stay outside suffering many distractions. We must not abandon the struggle. These trials come from what we don't understand.

Inner Trials

In my head there are so many noises like running rivers and whistling birds. This is in my soul's higher part for the spirit moves upward with great velocity. I'll explain this disturbance

in the later Mansions. Our Lord gave me this understanding because physical turmoil does not affect my prayer. My soul's tranquility, love, desires and clearness of mind remain intact.

Not Worrying About Distractions

Why does my soul's higher part experience no disturbance? I don't know. I suffer no pain when I am in prayer. My faculties are suspended. The pain comes when the suspension ends. It only matters that I persevere in prayer.

We must not worry about these thoughts. They come either from the devil or the weakness of our nature. So, let us have patience. We must also eat and sleep and these are burdensome obligations.

Not Worrying About Inner Trials

We all experience scorn and other trials in life, but these cannot equal interior trials. All strife can be accepted if we find inner peace, but these troubles come from within ourselves. They are painful, even unbearable. The Lord will free the soul even from these trials, as we reach the last Mansion. Oh Lord, take us to a place where these weaknesses do not make sport of us.

Describing Afflictions

These weaknesses assailed me for many years. (Other sisters are more fortunate.) I was a wicked person and I took vengeance on myself. I will describe these afflictions so you may see their necessity and not grow distressed. Although we will have these thoughts, our will and understanding must keep working.

The troubles vary with our health and the seasons. The soul, although not to be blamed, still must suffer (hopefully with patience). Although the soul is told to take no account of these thoughts, further teaching is needed to offer consolation. The Lord will give light but we must understand the work of our imagination, our nature and the devil.

CHAPTER 4.2 CONSOLATIONS

Topic: Consolations and How to Attain Them

I had to stop due to business and ill-health and I forgot what I was writing. I think I was talking about consolations being bound up with our passions. These cause sobbing. In some, they cause constrictions of the chest and other uncontrollable physical responses. I have not experienced many of these. There is some cause for comfort since these lead to a desire to please God.

The Two Water Basins

What I call "consolations from God" (elsewhere called "Prayer of Quiet") are different from spiritual sweetness (as experienced souls can testify). Imagine two fountains whose basins are filled with water. I am fond of this element and have observed it attentively because God hides many mysteries in these little creations.

The two basins are filled in different ways. In the first basin, water comes from a distance through numerous conduits made by human skill. In the second basin, there are no conduits. It

is built at the very source of the water which is noiseless and abundant. The stream flows on even after filling this second basin.

Diverse Effects Of The Two Basins

The first basin is like our meditation where we work hard and tire our understanding. Satisfaction fills our basin but with much noise.

In the second basin, the water comes directly from God who grants a supernatural favor. This gives us a sweetness which is not like earthly delights. Bodily refreshment happens later when the basin is completely filled and the water overflows the Mansions and reaches the body. This water begins in God and ends in ourselves. Experienced souls know that the whole person (body and soul) enjoys this sweetness.

Psalms 119 also speaks of the heart being enlarged (V. 32). However, the heart is not the source. The source is more interior, the center of the soul (which I will explain later). God often reveals to me great mysteries within myself.

O God, how wondrous is your greatness. We are like silly shepherd-boys who think they know Thee but we know almost nothing because you are so wonderful. You have placed secrets in ourselves that we cannot fathom.

Enlargement of the Heart

I return to this "enlargement of the heart". It is a helpful image because as this water flows from our soul's center it spreads within us and causes interior dilations and blessings which the soul cannot understand.

It is as if a fragrant perfume were cast on a blazing fire. Although the light of the fire cannot be seen, the fragrant smoke penetrates the soul and extends even to the body.

In the Prayer of Quiet the soul feels no heat but the fragrance of the prayer penetrates the soul and body. This is the best I can explain it. Inexperienced souls must believe that this happens. Although we can perceive this, we cannot acquire it by our striving, for it is the precious gold of Divine Wisdom. In this state, the faculties are not in union with God but are absorbed and amazed at what happens. Maybe I am contradicting what I wrote fifteen years ago. Perhaps the Lord has given me a clearer realization. I am just writing what I understand.

Tested By Actions

Certainly the soul's will is united to God's will. Yet, the genuineness of this experience is tested by the soul's actions after the prayer. The soul has to recognize the Lord giving a great favor (and greater ones to come if she does not turn back). So, sisters, strive for this prayer. Even though you cannot understand these favors, you should know how to obtain them. I will tell you what I have found.

Not Striving For Favors

Sometimes, God grants these favors for seemingly no reason. He does what He wills. In other cases, we must have humility. By our humility the Lord allows Himself to be conquered and grants us all we ask. The first test of humility is to realize that we don't deserve these gifts or are even likely to get them as long as we live.

"How will we gain these if we do not strive?" you ask. We must not strive for these favors for the following reasons:

1. We must love God without the self-interest of seeking favors.
2. When we think we deserve something for our miserable service, we lack humility.

3. We prepare for God's favors by a desire to suffer not by a desire to receive consolations.
4. God is obliged to give us salvation if we keep the commandments. However, He has no obligation to give us consolations. Some I know choose the cross and ask God not to give them consolations.
5. To strive for favors is to labor in vain. This water does not come by our human efforts of meditation or tears. God gives this to whomever He wills (often at surprising times).
6. We belong to God and if we gain a humility and detachment which are true (not just in our thoughts), the Lord will grant favors that we cannot imagine or desire. Be He ever praised!

CHAPTER 4.3

THE PRAYER OF RECOLLECTION

*Topic: The Effects of the Prayer of Recollection and of
Consolations*

A Prior Gift

I want to speak first of another kind of prayer which is a supernatural form of recollection and which almost invariably begins before these previously mentioned consolations. This prayer depends on nothing exterior. The person involuntarily closes his eyes and seeks solitude. Without any human skill, God builds an interior temple for the soul in which the consolations can be experienced. The senses and external things lose their hold and the soul regains its self control.

We say "the soul enters within herself" or "the soul rises above herself" (I have no skill in language). Let us say that the inhabitants of this castle (the person's senses and faculties) have left the castle for years and have consorted with strangers. Realizing what they lost, they approach the castle but do not reenter because their habits are hard to conquer. They walk about in its vicinity. The King sees their goodwill and wants them back. Like a Good Shepherd, He calls and teaches them to know His voice so they don't go away. This call is so powerful that they give up these outside things and enter the castle again.

How Did They Enter The Castle?

Augustine taught us to seek God within ourselves. This is an effective, profitable and a great favor (if God grants this). The efforts of the understanding and the imagination to find God within are good habits, but I am not describing that kind of prayer.

The souls I describe are actually within the castle before they think about God. How they got there or how they heard His call is a mystery. They realize that they are being drawn within themselves. A tortoise withdraws within whenever he wants, but these souls withdraw only when God wills. God favors some people who are ready to abandon the things of the world. I don't mean that married people should leave the world. God can call them to interior things. I am saying that if we give God free rein He will call us higher.

The Gift of "Absorption"

The soul must thank God for this favor which will prepare for greater ones. To prepare to listen to God, the soul must cease to use her reasoning in prayer and be intent upon discovering the Lord acting within. This is the gift of "absorption" and is the only way to cease thinking of created things.

Many do not agree with me, but in this matter I follow St. Peter of Alcantara (1499-1562) who says that at this stage love is already awake.

Reasons For This Teaching

I put forth the following reasons why the soul must do very little:

1. In this spiritual activity, the soul does the most when she thinks and desires least. She must be a beggar before the great Emperor, her eyes cast down in humility. By His secret signs, God shows her that He hears her and permits her to be close to Him. So the soul just keeps silent and makes no effort with her understanding.

Yet, she has much to do. Otherwise, she would experience an aridity caused by her restless imagination and the cessation of thought. The Lord wants her to make requests and to remember she is in His presence. If God has set limits to her human activity in prayer, she pleases Him by keeping those limits. She is free to practice other things like charity and penance.

2. These interior activities are gentle and peaceful. To force any activity does more harm than help. The soul just disregards her own advantages and leaves herself to God's will.
3. The soul's effort to cease thoughts will only arouse thoughts.
4. The soul pleases God by forgetting her own profit and seeking His glory. How can the soul be self-forgetful when being so careful of her own actions? She must just allow God to stir her for His glory. God quiets the understanding by leading the soul into a state of absorption. He illumines the soul's knowledge beyond her own attainment. For this reason, the soul's own efforts would spoil all that God is doing.

Let the soul who has been led into this Mansion, try (without causing any turmoil) to stop discursive reasoning and yet not suspend the understanding nor cease from all thought. Let her remember that she is in God's presence. If this feeling leads to a state of absorption well and good. The soul should not try to understand because the gift is beyond her will. This cessation of thought will frequently happen, although for a short time. The will should enjoy this gift which I have described elsewhere (Way of Perfection, Ch. 31).

The Prayer of Recollection

I want to describe the Prayer of Recollection which comes before these consolations of God. The Prayer of Recollection is a step into this prayer but is far below it. To be recollected, the soul does not need to abandon meditation or the activities of the understanding.

When water springs directly from God, its source, the understanding limits its activity and it cannot understand what it desires. So, it roams all over and is unable to settle down. This disturbed condition of the

understanding causes distress to the will (which is firmly fixed on God). The will must take no notice or it will lose its enjoyment. If the soul abandons herself to God, the Master will teach her what is next. The soul needs only to realize her nothingness and to thank God.

The Effects

I want to discuss the effects and signs of this Prayer of Recollection. The soul is enlarged because the water flowing from the spring has the power to enlarge the basin. So, God uses this water of recollection to dispose the soul to retain all the effects. This gentle, interior dilation frees the soul in serving God. The results are obvious. She is not oppressed by the fear of hell and has no servile fear.

The desire for penance (formerly limited by fears for health) increases. The fear of trials is lessened. She now has lively faith that God will give sufficient grace. She cherishes the desire to do great things for God.

God and the Soul

The soul sees God's greatness and its own miserable condition. She sees earthly things as garbage and becomes master over them. She is totally strengthened and will be able to continue unless she turns back. If she does turn back then all is lost, no matter how high the soul has climbed. Receiving these favors once or twice is not enough. The soul must continually experience these favors.

Need For Fidelity

The soul at this stage is like a child at the breast and must be careful not to offend God. The soul must not give up prayer or else she will die (like a baby refusing her mother's milk). I know people to whom this has happened. Although God granted them favors in prayer they returned to occasions of sin. I warned them that the devil prizes them more than many souls who have never experienced these favors.

If these souls are faithful, they will attract others. This does great harm to the devil and brings great advantage to the Church. Therefore, the devil makes great efforts to bring about their perdition. The battle is quite intense. You, sisters, are free of this peril. May God free you from vain glory. Be careful of the devil's counterfeit gifts (which can be recognized from their effects).

A Warning

I must warn you of a peril. It is this. Some women suffer poor health because of prayers and penance. When they experience spiritual consolations, the physical aspects overwhelm them. They fall into what is called a "spiritual sleep". They mistake their state. They relax and give themselves to this complete absorption. They think this is "rapture". I call it "foolishness". They waste their time and ruin their health.

One person was in this state for eight hours. Although she was fooling her confessor (quite involuntarily), one person understood her. She was cured by sleeping and eating more. The devil wanted to entrap her.

Languor And Joy

When this state really comes from God there may be an interior and exterior languor. There is also great joy at God's nearness. This experience lasts just a short time and does not overcome the body or produce exterior sensation.

If you experience this, tell your superior and relax as much as you can. The superior should increase your food and sleep. If physical weakness continues, then God is calling the soul only to the active life.

Convents have all kinds of people. This type should be kept busy and not left alone. This will be her mortification. God will be pleased and perhaps restore her health. If not, her vocal prayers will bring greater merit than contemplation.

A Danger

Some are so weak in intellect that they imagine things. They believe that they have seen them. This is highly dangerous. I have written at great length about these dangers for two reasons:

1. Most souls who practice prayer are in this Fourth Mansion.
2. The devil can cause his greatest harm here because the natural is still so united to the supernatural. (The later Mansions leave him fewer opportunities.)

FIFTH MANSION

CHAPTER 5.1

PRAYER — THE SOURCE OF UNION

Topic: How prayer unites the soul with God

Few Attain The Gift

The treasures and delights of this fifth Mansion are hard to describe and human comparisons are of no avail. Lord, please send me light so I can teach your servants because you will give these joys to some of them. Hopefully, the devil will not change into an angel of light and deceive these souls who desire only to please You.

Attaining This Higher State

I say "to some of them" because the majority do enter the first four mansions. However, only a "few" attain the gifts in this fifth mansion. "Many are called but few are chosen." (Mt.20:16). Clothed in this sacred habit of Cannel we are called to contemplation. This is the first principle of our Order and the treasure sought by the Fathers of Mount Carmel. Yet, few prepare themselves to receive the gift.

Sisters, we are on the right road when we attain the essential virtues. However, we must do much more to attain this higher state of prayer. Let us pause and ask the Lord so we do not miss anything. May He show us the road and give us strength to dig for this hidden treasure which we have within ourselves. With the Lord's help, I will explain.

Explanation

1. The Lord must give "strength to our souls". We do not need bodily strength to give our all. It is the soul that must give its all (little or small) to buy God's riches and she must hold nothing back. His favors will be small or great according to what is given. This is the test of whether or not our prayer attains divine union.
2. This is not a state in which we dream. In this prayer, the soul seems to be drowsy, neither asleep nor awake. (Indeed, the soul is asleep to the things of this world.) For the short time it lasts, the soul is without consciousness. She has no power to think even though she may want to do so.

3. The soul does not need to suspend her thoughts, because she cannot even understand how or what to love or to desire.
4. The soul enjoys a "delectable death" (dead to the world and alive to God). This death snatches the soul from all her activities.
5. This death is full of delight. The soul seems withdrawn from the body and closer to God. If she still breathes, she doesn't realize it.
6. The mind would like to understand these feelings, but it has no strength and is dumbfounded.
7. Even if the soul is conscious, the person cannot move her hands or feet. She has fallen into a swoon. Oh, God's secrets! I don't mind writing this nonsense as long as I sometimes make sense.

More Explanation

Let me continue:

1. Although the soul is not dreaming, she has doubts about what really has happened in prayer, especially if she is inexperienced in these gifts.
2. The soul wonders if this came from God or the devil. She even asks if this came from her imagination or even her sleep. She has a thousand suspicions. This is good because we can be deceived.
3. There is less opportunity for poisonous creatures to enter and cause troublesome thoughts in the imagination. These do no harm if no notice is taken because the imagination, memory or understanding are no obstacle to these blessings.

The Devil

4. If this is truly union with God even the devil cannot enter. God is in union with the essence of the soul and the devil cannot even understand this secret thing. Even the soul's own thoughts cannot understand what God is doing. How blessed is this state and how much the soul gains! God works within and the soul cannot hinder Him. How much He will give to her!
5. I use the phrase "if this is truly union with God" because if the soul loves vanities, the devil will send her false vanities. These false experiences do not have the same delight, satisfaction, peace or joy of God's transports (whose joys are greater than any earthly delights). The satisfactions of God and those of earth are received differently. Earth's satisfactions deal with the grosser part of the body. God's favors penetrate the bone's very marrow.

Sufficiently Explained and Proved

6. The soul might make some mistakes because these interior matters are difficult to investigate. Really, what I have said is sufficient for any who have experienced these blessings.
7. A clear difference exists between the false and the true and God gives clear indications.
8. Even if learned men are not experienced in these favors, God uses them for His Church.
9. I write about spiritual experiences for which there is no explanation. Learned people, from their reading, can deduce that these favors could have happened.
10. I have the fullest experiences in these matters. If anyone does not believe that God can do this (and much more) they have closed the door. They will not receive.
11. So, sisters, trust that God can do more whether the person receiving is good or bad. God knows what He is doing and our intervention is quite unnecessary.

Divine Indication

12. Here is the decisive indication. God makes the soul completely foolish to impress upon her His true wisdom. In this state, the soul cannot see, hear or understand. During this short period, God implants Himself in the soul's interior.
13. When the soul returns to her senses, she cannot doubt that God has done this. Even if God never grants this favor again for years, the soul neither forgets nor doubts that it happened. Besides this, there are effects which I'll explain later.
You ask, "How can the soul see this when she understands nothing?" The soul sees this only afterward by the certainty which God places within her.

God's Presence

Before my experiences, I did not know God was present in all things by His presence, power and essence. God's favors convinced me of this truth. A half-learned man (about whom I've spoken) told me this wasn't true — that God was only in us by grace. Fortunately, I didn't believe him and got the truth from others.

God's presence has nothing to do with bodily form (as Jesus is in the Blessed Sacrament). It has only to do with His divinity. I don't know how I know this. It is God's work and I speak the truth.

A soul without this certainty has not experienced this essential union with God. She probably experienced a union of her faculties with God or some other favor. Let us stop looking for reasons why this happens (especially if this perplexes our understanding). God brings this about. We are incapable of producing this and also unable to understand it.

The Wine Cellar

I cherish the words "The King brought me into the wine cellar." (Song of Songs 1:3). The soul didn't "go". Scripture says she was wandering about seeking her Beloved. When He wants to, the Lord puts us in the wine cellar. This is the soul's center.

He enters there Himself to show the soul His wonders. He wants her will (totally surrendered to Him) to play no part. He wants even the door of her faculties to be closed. He comes to her center without using any door (cf Jn.20:19) and says "Peace be with you".

In the last Mansion you will see how this occurs in the soul's center. If we desire to see only our own wretchedness and how unworthy we are, then we will see many favors.

CHAPTER 5.2 IMAGE OF THE SILKWORM

Topic: The Prayer of Union and its effects.

Some receive more and others less. Therefore there is much more to describe. Although much can be said of the Lord's works, I will not say anymore here about the nature of this union.

The Lord performs this work and we can do nothing to make Him grant it. Nevertheless, I want to use a suitable comparison to show how we can prepare ourselves.

The Silkworm

God invented the way silk is formed. It comes from a tiny peppercorn (if I am mistaken it is my fault). In the warm weather this seed from the mulberry tree takes life. The silkworms feed on the mulberry leaves and by spinning silk they form a tight little cocoon. Then the worm, which was large and ugly, emerges as a beautiful butterfly.

If no one had ever seen this and we were just told this as a story, we would not believe. No arguments could be adduced that a worm would lose its life working so hard. Sisters, reflect upon God's wonders. If we knew the qualities of everything we would rejoice in being a bride of so powerful a King.

The Soul

The soul is like the silkworm. She receives life by the heat of the Holy Spirit, as she uses all the Church's helps. Frequent confession, good books and sermons give life to those souls who are dead in their sins. The soul nourishes itself on these helps until she is full grown.

When full grown, she spins her silk to build a house in which to die. This house is Christ in which we are hidden (Co1.3:3) and God Himself is our Mansion. When I say that we can construct this Mansion, I am not saying we can add to God. We can, however, add to and subtract from ourselves (as silkworms do).

God Brings About Union

Even before the soul is finished her work, God will take her tiny achievement (which is really nothing), unite it to His greatness and the Lord Himself will be her reward. He will unite her small trials with His great suffering and make both into one.

Sisters, let us hasten to spin our cocoon, renouncing self-love and earthly attachments. Let us practice prayer, penance, obedience and all the good works. Let the silkworm die. This happens when it completes its work. Then we shall see God and be hidden in Him (as the silkworm in its cocoon).

What happens to this silkworm? Quite dead to the world in this state of prayer, it becomes a butterfly. Likewise the soul. She was hidden in God for only half an hour but now the soul does not even recognize herself. She has changed from an ugly worm to a beautiful butterfly!

The State of the Butterfly

The soul cannot imagine how she merited this gift and would now die a thousand deaths for the Lord. She longs for great trials, has vehement desires for solitude, and is greatly distressed when God is offended. I will treat of these in the sixth Mansion where the experiences are almost identical but the effects have greater power.

New Wings

Although the butterfly has never been more quiet, it now has a new restlessness. It knows not where to settle. Compared with its former abode, earth now leaves it dissatisfied. God constantly gives the soul this new wine which brings it new blessings.

The soul has new wings and is no longer content to crawl. Her deeds seem so small compared with her desires. She no longer seems to be herself or even her own likeness. The weakness concerning penances has become strength. The bonds of natural attachments are broken. Everything earthly wearies the soul. She now finds no rest in creatures.

Those experienced in these favors know I have said very little. The butterfly is now a stranger to earth. She seeks a new resting place. But where? The soul cannot return to its former place until God grants her this favor.

Fresh Trials

It seems unthinkable but after such favors the soul has fresh trials, but crosses are always with us. If, after reaching this state, a soul told me that she enjoyed continual rest, I would say that she is still in the previous Mansion with its consolations. These must have been enhanced by physical weakness or even by the devil (who will later wage war against the soul).

The soul has a very high degree of peace. The trials themselves have so noble a source that they bring their own contentment. The soul's discontent arises from her desire to leave the world. This is so strong that the soul finds relief only in realizing that God wants her to stay here.

However, realizing this is not enough because the soul is not yet totally resigned to God's will. She sheds many tears. The soul wants to do more but her capacity does not match her desires. Prayer causes her grief. She sees how much God is offended and how many souls are lost (both of heretics and of Moors). She grieves most over Christian souls. She fears that many are condemned yet hopes that they will amend their lives in God's mercy.

Source of New Grief

Oh the greatness of God! Just a few years ago (even just a few days ago), the soul thought only of herself. Years of meditation upon sin or upon the miseries of this life, could not achieve this new grief. Now the soul has this holy distress, without any effort and sometimes even against her will. The grief seems to tear the soul to pieces. What is this grief and where does it come from?

The Wine Cellar

God has put His bride into the wine cellar. Delivered over to His hands and subdued by His love, the soul knows and desires nothing except what God wills for her. God grants this only to souls He has taken as His own. Without knowing how, the soul is sealed with His seal.

She is like a wax which does not impress herself. The soul doesn't even soften herself. She just remains quiet and consenting. God does everything. He wants her will and requires only that she offer no resistance. The soul knows herself to be His. God gives the soul what His Son had in this life, that is, grief and sorrow over man's sins. What greater gift exists?

Passion of Jesus

Who wanted more to depart from this life than Jesus? Yet, his painful death was not terrible and grievous to Him. His desire that souls would be saved transcended all the pains and made them seem as nothing.

I have often suffered intolerable pains at seeing the Lord offended. If I, who have so little charity, suffer so much, how intolerable must have been the Lord's torments? What were Jesus' feelings as He saw the great sins against His Father?

In His passion, He could see the end of His trials. He had the satisfaction of redeeming the world and of giving proof of His love to the Father. This alleviated His pains. The saints see how small are even their greatest penances and hardly feel them.

This was Jesus' delight in His sufferings. He was obedient to God's will. Yet, He constantly saw sins being committed and souls going to hell. This was so painful that if He were not God one day of such suffering would have ended any number of lives He might have had.

CHAPTER 5.3

THE UNION THROUGH OBEDIENCE AND CHARITY

*Topic: A Union Which the Soul Can Attain Especially
by Love of Neighbor*

The soul must always advance. She makes a mistake if she receives this favor and thinks she has complete security. If she makes no efforts to grow in God's service and strays from the commandments, she will die. The creature coming out of the silkworm dies. Yet, it leaves behind seed from which other silkworms are produced. So, God gives this favor because He wants others also to profit from the gift. The soul, if it leads a good life, will transmit new heat and life. Even if she loses this gift, she can desire that others profit and she can describe these favors to those who would love and serve God.

Union Through Obedience

I received this gift but then went astray. However, I could help others by describing the gift, (even though I had not experienced its full effects). Later the Lord gave me light.

Look at Judas and Solomon who lost their gifts by their own fault. Sisters, our safety is in obedience and in keeping God's law. This refers to everyone, those with this gift and those without.

Although this fifth Mansion is somewhat obscure, much is gained by entering it. Whoever does not receive this gift should know that union with God is still possible if they submit fully to His will. Many think they want God's will but they don't. I say that if your will is submitted to God you do not need the delectable union I have described. The most valuable effect of the gift is a union of wills.

A Desirable Union

How desirable is this union of wills! The soul will be happy here and in heaven! Nothing on earth afflicts the soul except when she sees sins or if her own salvation is in peril. The soul grasps that God knows much better than the soul what He is doing.

There are many kinds of grief. Some come naturally from charity. For example, Our Lord had pity for Lazarus. These do not prevent a union with God. They pass quickly and do not disturb the soul for a long period.

Some joys in prayer reach only the inner faculties and do not touch the soul's center. In the prayer of the last Mansion, the soul's center will be touched and the power of the faculties will be suspended. However, the Lord can enrich souls by many other paths besides the short cut I have described here.

Attaining This Union

Sisters, please note that the silkworm must die. This will cost you the most, because you must live in this world and cannot die by your own choice. This is much harder but the

rewards will be greater. Do not doubt that a true union with God's will is possible. This is the most genuine and safest union which I have always sought most.

Few of us attain this union. Although we think we have done everything, the worms of self-love, self-esteem, judgment of others and lack of charity grow in the middle of our virtues. Remember the worm that attacked the plant of Jonah (4:7). Although committing no sins, we are far from a union with God's will. Due to my own fault I, myself, am far from this union.

God wills that we be perfect and yet we have a long way to go. We don't need great favors to attain this union for He has given us His Son. If my brother dies, my conformity to God's will does not preclude my grieving. We bear sad events by making a virtue of necessity. God asks us only to do two things perfectly — to love Him and to love our neighbor. If we attain these perfectly, we are united to Him.

True Virtues

The surest sign of Divine Union is to love our neighbor because we cannot be sure of loving God. This love for neighbor must have its roots in love for God. Know yourselves better, sisters. Forget all the fine plans that you have in prayer to save your neighbor (which you think you will put into practice but never do).

The same is true of humility and of the other virtues. The devil will run around hell to make us believe we have virtues which we don't. These are imaginary virtues always accompanied by vain glory. God's true virtues are free from both.

Some souls think that they desire humility but get angry when falsely accused. Their resolutions come from their imagination not from their will. The devil uses women's imaginations because we don't understand many aspects of our interior faculties. Sisters, if you knew the importance of love for neighbor you would strive for nothing else.

True Goals

Some are so concerned with their stage of prayer that they are afraid to act, lest they lose their devotional feelings. They understand little about the true road toward union. Sisters, the Lord desires works. So help the sick and don't fear that your devotion will suffer. Fast so that the poor can have some food. That is real union. If someone is praised, rejoice. When you see another's faults, be sorry as if they were your own. I have written much elsewhere on this topic (*Way of Perfection* — C. 7) because to fail in this regard is to be lost.

Possibly you have enjoyed devotion and consolations. You might even have attained the Prayer of Quiet (Some think this means that all is accomplished.). However, charity for others is the key to union. So, do violence to your will to help your sister. Give up your rights. Forget your own concerns. Help your neighbor. This will certainly cost you something but consider what the Lord did for you on the cross.

CHAPTER 5.4

PREPARING FOR THE BETROTHAL (THE PRAYER OF UNION)

Topic: The Need to Proceed Carefully

If this little dove does not settle into earthly pleasures or into spiritual consolations, where will she rest? She will fly higher. I will describe this in the seventh Mansion. I hope I remember this when I come to it. I have been writing this book for five months, so I get confused and say things twice.

I want to explain this Prayer of Union by a comparison. Later I will say more of this butterfly. She always helps other souls but never rests herself because she has not found true repose.

Sacrament of Matrimony

God betroths Himself to souls. The best comparison for this is the Sacrament of Matrimony, although the Prayer of Union is different from Matrimony. Matrimony is a corporal union and the spiritual joys of divine union are a thousand leagues removed from marital experiences. Divine union is totally pure, delicate and gentle and cannot be described even though the Lord makes the soul conscious of the joys.

At this stage, it is not yet spiritual betrothal. When two people are about to be betrothed, their suitability and mutual love are discussed. They meet often to appreciate each other. The contract is drawn up. The bride understands that she will do all to make her spouse happy.

This is a good example of how God acts with the soul. God is pleased with the soul and desires her to know Him better. So, He grants this favor of meeting together. It is a short meeting.

When the giving and taking are over, the soul uses her understanding (not her sense and faculties) to see who this Spouse is.

Results of the Visit

The Spouse leaves her after one visit. However, she is fired with love and does everything to be worthy of this divine betrothal. If she begins to love something else, she loses everything, even the favors God has granted.

Sisters, do not be negligent. Flee the occasions of sin. You are still weak. The needed strength will come in the betrothal which we will describe in the sixth Mansion. You have had only one visit and the devil wants to hinder the betrothal. Later, when the soul is surrendered, the devil will not try at all because he knows he will lose and the soul will conquer.

A Special Soul

I know of souls who have reached this state and the devil has won them back. He will use all of hell's powers because one such soul will win a multitude for God. Just consider how God uses a single martyr to convert thousands. Think of the founders of Orders — Ursula, Dominic, Francis and Ignatius. They all feared to ruin the divine betrothal by their faults.

The Lord grants these favors today just as He did in the past. We must receive them even more now because fewer souls are ready to receive. We must stop being fond of ourselves or fearful of losing our rights. This is a great mistake! May the Lord give us light so we don't fall into darkness!

Two Questions

You probably have two questions: "If the soul is completely one with God's will, how can it be deceived?" and "By what doors can the devil approach when we are withdrawn from the world and receive the sacraments?" In this convent, you truly enjoy angelic companionship and seek only to please God in everything. Certainly, you say, this turning back might happen to

people in the world but how could it take place here? Your questions are justified but always remember Judas who listened to the very words of Christ. So, even this favor does not guarantee our safety.

Two Answers

To the first question, "How can the soul be deceived", I respond. The soul following God's will cannot be lost. However, the devil has artful wiles and undermines the soul in trivial ways. Little by little, he darkens the understanding and weakens the will. Self-love increases. He leads the soul to withdraw from God and follow her own wishes.

This also answers the second question. No convent is so enclosed that the devil cannot enter. Why does the Lord permit this? The Lord wants to set this soul as a light for others. If the soul will fail, it should happen now at the beginning. In this way, other souls are not harmed.

To avoid this failure three things are needed. First, we must ask God to hold us. Otherwise, we will fall into the depths. Second, we must have no confidence in ourselves. Thirdly, we must pay attention to making progress in virtue, especially in our love for each other and in humility. If we ask for light, we will know if we have gained or lost ground.

God, having brought the soul to this point, does not abruptly leave go of her. He makes the devil labor much if he is to recapture her. The Master also gives a thousand inner warnings so the soul perceives every danger.

Conclusion

My conclusion is this. We must always advance. If not, the devil will use his wiles. Why would such an advanced soul not go further? Love must always be active. A soul who is chosen to be a bride and has already conversed with the Spouse must not go to sleep again.

Preparing For the Sixth Mansion

This leads us to the Sixth Mansion where you will see how slight are the bride's sufferings compared to the Spouse's gift. I write this so you are able to forget earthly pleasures and can keep your eyes fixed on the reward. How boundless is His mercy that He communicates with us. Let us run our race with our eyes fixed on our spouse.

May God let me explain these difficult things. I write only for your profit so you can have some idea of heavenly joys without experiencing the delays and trials found here on earth. I would work for Him until the end of the world except I might lose and offend Him. May I do Him some worthy service.

SIXTH MANSION

CHAPTER 6.1 GREATER TRIALS

Topic: Greater Favors Mean Greater Trials

In this sixth Mansion the soul is wounded with love for the Spouse. She seeks to be alone and renounce all that disturbs her solitude. Having seen the Spouse once, the soul desires only to see Him again. (In this prayer nothing is really "seen". I use the word by comparison.)

Interior and Exterior Trials

Although the soul wants no other Spouse, the Spouse disregards her yearnings for the conclusion of the betrothal. In this way, her desires will grow deeper. Since betrothal is the greatest blessing, He wants it to cost the soul much. To bear these trials, the soul needs definite signs of this gain which she now holds. How great are these interior and exterior trials which the soul experiences before entering the seventh Mansion!

If we knew them beforehand, we could not muster enough determination and resolution to endure them. Once into the seventh Mansion, the soul will gladly accept suffering for God's sake because the very nearness of God brings fortitude. I will describe the trials of this sixth Mansion so you will know what will certainly happen. Remember, those who truly taste heavenly things are never free from earthly trials.

A List of Trials

I write this so souls will be comforted and know the trials of those favored by God. Although I do not present these trials in any order, I begin with the least.

The Outcry of Others

This involves the outcry of people who know the soul. They say, "Look how holy she is getting." "She is going to extremes to make us look sinful." "You can be a good Christian without these goings-ons." In all of this, the poor soul is just living by the Rule. Even her friends abandon her. "She is going to perdition". "She is deluded". "This is the devil's work". "She fools her confessors". At one point, I feared that no priest would hear my confession. People told others to be careful about being with me. This goes on for a lifetime!

The Trial of Praise

A second trial happens when the soul is praised. Praise is an intolerable torment because the soul sees how recently she was plunged into sin. This problem grows less for the following reasons:

1. The soul sees that people say good and bad things, so she pays no attention.
2. By grace, the soul sees that all good comes from the Lord, so she praises Him.
3. The soul sees that others are profiting from the good they see in her.
4. The soul so deeply seeks God's honor that this praise does her little harm.

These reasons mitigate the distress of praise. Yet to be publicly praised is an incomparably greater trial than those already mentioned.

The Trial of Criticism

The soul cares little about praise and cares even less about criticism (which is like sweet music). She is strengthened by censures because she realizes the benefits they bring. The soul sees that God permits her persecutors to act and she has a tender love for them. She sees them as true friends and greater benefactors than those who praise her.

Physical Trials

The Lord is accustomed to sending her serious illnesses. This is a greater exterior trial when the pain is severe and acute. The acute pain affects the soul within and without. She becomes so oppressed she would rather suffer martyrdom. God allows these to last only as long as the soul can bear them.

I received these favors forty years ago and every day I have suffered physical pains due to poor health (besides other trials). I have been wicked and these pains are much less than the hell I merited. The Lord will lead others with fewer sins by another route. I myself always choose the way of suffering. The interior sufferings are so great that they make all the physical sufferings seem very slight.

Trials With The Confessor

The first interior torture is to have a scrupulous and inexperienced confessor who becomes very doubtful when dealing with anything out of the ordinary. He thinks that God gives these favors only to the perfect. If the soul has any imperfection he attributes these gifts to melancholy or to the devil.

The poor soul is then judged and condemned by her own confessor. This is a great trial, especially for souls who think they might be deceived because of their past wickedness. During their religious experiences they feel secure, but afterwards they suffer torture because of their past sins and present faults.

If the confessor reassures the soul, she grows calm. However, if the confessor makes the soul more fearful, her state becomes almost intolerable. Beside this, the soul experiences aridity. During this time, the soul feels she has never known God who seems so far away.

The soul also feels she has deceived the confessor due to her inability to correctly describe these experiences. Because her understanding is now dim, the imagination becomes her mistress. The soul believes what the imagination and the devil present to her. She even sees herself as cast off from God. Many trials assault the soul and she feels them keenly. This trial can be compared only with the sufferings in hell, for no consolation is possible.

The devils seem to influence the confessor so he tortures the soul even more. In my own case, the confessor thought the oppression was dangerous and told me to report to him whenever these trials happened. This made things worse. The confessor could do nothing with me. I tried to read books but my understanding could grasp nothing.

Relief By Waiting On God's Actions

In this tempest, we can only wait on the mercy of God. He will lift the whole burden with a single word or a chance happening. When this happens, the soul is filled with sunshine and praises the Lord for this victory. Certainly the soul herself did not win this fight. The enemy had all her weapons and she saw only defeat if the Lord had forsaken her.

This experience of being powerless makes the soul realize how helpless she is. The soul is not devoid of grace for she has never offended God. Rather, the soul does not feel the slightest spark of love because grace is so deeply buried within her. Even God's favors seem like a dream and the soul only knows her sins.

In this state the soul gains nothing from earthly consolations. In fact, to offer earthly consolations is like describing the world's joys to a prisoner about to be executed. Comfort must come from above. God wants us to know that He is king and we are miserable creatures.

The Soul's Options

What will the poor creature do? Trying to pray brings no interior comfort. She does not understand vocal prayer. Mental prayer is impossible because her faculties are incapable.

Solitude is still worse. At the same time, she is despondent in the presence of others. She cannot even describe what the problem is because these spiritual troubles have no name. The best medicine for the soul is to occupy herself with her duties and hope in the mercy of God Who never fails.

Exterior trials caused by the devil are not so common or so grievous. Also, the devil is unable to inhibit her faculties or disturb her soul. She knows that the devil can only act as far as the Lord permits.

Trials Before the Seventh Mansion

We shall explain other interior troubles in these six Mansions as well as other kinds of prayer and favors. Some trials are harder to bear but the soul understands that these are great favors from the Lord.

Severe distress comes right before the soul enters the seventh Mansion. I cannot explain everything because I have had trouble describing even these lower types of trials. May the Lord help me.

CHAPTER 6.2 WOUNDED BY GOD

*Topic: How the Lord awakens the soul.
The experience is sublime and the favors are great.*

Because of these trials, the little dove can make a higher flight. The Spouse now fills her with fervent desires which are so delicate that the soul does not understand. I can describe them but their influence is very subtle.

Wounded By God

These gifts are quite different from earthly achievements or from the consolations already described. God comes to the soul like a rushing comet, when she is totally unprepared. No sound is heard yet the soul knows that God is calling. She has been delectably wounded but cannot say how or by whom. This wounding is a precious experience of which the soul never wants to be healed.

The soul cries aloud to the Spouse. He is present but hidden so He cannot be enjoyed. This grief is sweet grief and the soul has no choice but to suffer. This wound is much more satisfying than the delectable absorption in the Prayer of Quiet.

Sisters, I am unable to explain this well. The Spouse makes it so clear to the soul that He is present and that He is the one calling her that she cannot fail to hear.

The Spouse is in the seventh Mansion and calls the soul to enter there without any utterance of speech. The senses, imagination and faculties dare not stir. Oh God, these are great secrets. Spiritual gifts are so different from what is seen or understood here below. I cannot describe them.

Consumed By Desires

The soul becomes consumed with desire and is conscious of God's presence. Yet, she knows not what to ask for. I cannot explain what causes her so much distress or what greater blessing exists.

I do know that this distress enters her bowels because the Spouse has used His arrow to wound the soul. She feels this love deeply and when He withdraws His arrow, the bowels seem to come with it. God is like a blazing fire. A spark of this fire has touched her soul which feels its burning heat but is not consumed. The experience is delectable but her soul continues to feel the pain.

This delectable pain is not continuous. At times it lasts long and at other times it comes to a sudden end. All is as the Lord wishes. It comes and goes and is never permanent. Therefore, it

never enkindles the soul. The spark dies and leaves the soul yearning to suffer that loving pain again.

Source of the Favor

Physical nature is not the source of this favor. Neither is melancholy, the devil, or some fancy. Its source is the unchangeable Lord. Its effects are beyond those of other devotions. Sometimes we doubt God's favors because of the intense absorption of joy.

In this gift, there is no absorption. The senses and faculties are active. They can discover what is happening but they cannot increase or remove this delectable pain. Those who recognize these experiences must thank God and not fear deception. They should only fear not thanking God and not growing more fervent in His service. I enjoyed this favor for many years. It so satisfied me that if I had suffered great trials for years I would still feel rewarded. May God be blessed!

Greater Security

There is greater security about this gift for the following reasons:

1. The devil could not give the soul this delectable pain. He certainly can give delights but he cannot unite such great pain with tranquility of soul. Any pain he bestows is always restless and combative.
2. The devil has no authority over the region where this pain comes from.
3. The soul gains great advantages. She has a determination to suffer for God's sake, to endure trials, and to withdraw from earthly pleasures.

The devil can never counterfeit this gift. Also, the soul knows that she has not imagined this favor. If the soul doubts, then the experience is not genuine. The true experience is like someone shouting in our ear. This gift is in the soul's interior, and does not come from the imagination.

I will hold this opinion until I hear contrary arguments from someone who is experienced. Personally, I was always afraid of being deceived but I never had fears about this particular prayer gift.

Other Awakenings

The Lord has other methods to awaken the soul. Sometimes, even while at vocal prayer, the soul unexpectedly catches fire. Although not thinking of interior things, the soul is assailed by a powerful fragrance which diffuses through the senses. The soul becomes conscious of the Spouse and desires to enjoy Him. Nothing here causes pain and the soul's desires are not painful. There is little reason to fear, only cause to give thanks.

CHAPTER 6.3

DIVINE LOCUTIONS

Topic: How God speaks to the soul. Rules for guidance and signs to avoid deception.

Locutions

God also speaks to the soul by locutions. This favor is great but perilous. These locutions vary. Some come from without, some from the soul's innermost depths, some from the soul's

higher part and some seem to be said by a human voice. Sometimes they come from the person's own fancy (either from melancholy or from feeble imaginations).

Take no notice of the latter. However, do not tell them that their that the locutions are from the devil. Listen to them but pay them no heed. Just humor such people so as not to distress them. The real solution is that they should give less time to prayer so the devil can take no advantage of their illness. Even with healthy people, there should be misgivings and at first locutions should be put aside. If the locutions are of God, they will increase,.

Sources

Locutions may come from God, from the person's imagination or from the devil. I will discuss how each differs and when they are dangerous. Sisters, many have these experiences and if they are only for your own benefit you do no wrong in believing them. I give you one warning. Don't think you are better than others. Remember, Jesus talked much with Pharisees.

Locutions are good if you profit from them. Take no notice unless the locution agrees perfectly with Scripture. If they are temptations against the faith resist them. They will gradually cease because they have little power of their own.

Signs of True Locutions

Whether these locations come from within, from above, or from without does not say if they come from God. Those from God have the following signs:

1. They have a power and authority in themselves and in their effects. For example, a soul experiencing trials and aridity, hears the words, "Be not troubled". Suddenly a light comes. The troubles are lifted. Even the words of learned men could not have these effects.

Possibly the soul is troubled because the confessor or others have said that the locutions come from the devil. Yet the words, "It is I, fear not" (Lk.23:36) remove all fear and marvelously comfort the soul. No one else could do this.

Or, the soul is worried about a business venture. The locution says that all will go well and it does. The soul gains confidence and is no longer troubled.

2. A great tranquility settles upon the soul and makes her ready to praise God. Oh Lord, what power you leave in these souls by your messengers. (In this Mansion the words are not said by the Lord but by angels.)
3. These words do not vanish from the memory. Some are never forgotten. Contrast this with human words to which we give little credence and which are not so graven on our memories.

Results of True Locutions

These true locations give a complete certainty about future events, even those which seemingly are impossible to be fulfilled. Even when the understanding falters, the soul never loses its belief. Although everything moves in a different direction and many years go by, the soul never loses its belief that God will do what He said.

The soul might see things going badly astray and many years pass since hearing the words. The soul even wonders if the words came from the devil from herself. Yet, at the time of receiving the gift, the soul had no such doubts.

The devil causes this distress, especially if obeying the locution would bring many good works in the face of considerable difficulties. By encouraging such misgivings the devil weakens the soul's faith because it is harmful not to believe that God will do what is beyond our understanding.

The Soul's Inner Conviction

Despite these unfortunate happenings, the soul retains a living spark of conviction. When all other hopes seem dead, this spark remains alive even when the soul wishes it would die. Then, when God's word is fulfilled, the soul praises God in a greater way because His assurances have come true.

I don't know why the soul is so anxious that God's word be proved true. She can only repeat the words she heard even if she seems to be lying. I always recall the prophet Jonah when he feared that Nineveh would be saved (Jonah C.4).

Since the locutions come from God, the soul desires that God always be proven true and the soul experiences great joy when the word does come true after a thousand difficult circumstances and vicissitudes. The soul might suffer great trials because of these locutions but she accepts these rather than believe that what the Lord told her would not happen.

Two False Locutions

There are two false locutions. The first comes from the person's own imagination. In this case the true signs of peace and interior consolation are missing. I know some people who were absorbed in the Prayer of Quiet and in spiritual sleep. (Some people are so weak of constitution that they are carried out of themselves and become unconscious of externals, as a person in sleep.) They think that they hear things from God. Also, a person might ask the Lord for something and then imagine voices telling her it will be given. Anyone with experience with locutions won't be deceived by these imaginations.

The second false locution comes from the devil. Although locutions can come from the devil, if they have the above mentioned signs, then they are of God. However, if the locution is a matter of great importance and demands some action or if it involves a third person, the soul should do nothing before speaking with a confessor (even if the soul understands locutions and sees that this is from God). This is God's will because the confessor stands in God's place and He will make the confessor recognize the Spirit's locutions. If he does not, we have no further obligation. It is dangerous for the person to disobey the confessor and follow her own opinion. Sisters, never act in this way.

Intellectual Vision

Another genuine way the Lord speaks is an intellectual vision. The soul knows this is genuine because:

1. The contact takes place so deep in the soul.
2. The words are spoken clearly (as if actually heard), even though they are uttered secretly.
3. The soul understands so clearly.
4. The effects are so great that the devil could not possibly have a part in this.

Signs That Locutions Are From God

The effects themselves are enough to show that this cannot come from the imagination for the following reasons:

1. The genuine locution is so clear that the hearer notices a single syllable is missing or a special phraseology is used (even of a long exhortation). In a locution from the person's imagination the words are less clear and less distinct.
2. The soul has not been thinking of this matter and the voice comes unexpectedly, sometimes during a conversation or from some passing thought. It often refers to something the soul would never have thought of and could not possibly have invented. The soul cannot be deceived by what it never desired.
3. In genuine locutions, the soul seems to be hearing something. In locutions that are not from God, the imagination seems to be composing what the soul wants to hear.
4. In a genuine locution a single word has more meaning than the soul's understanding could ever create.
5. In a genuine locution much more is understood than what the words convey.

Teresa's Discernment

Some people are dubious about my teaching concerning the differences among these locutions. Yet, I have thought this out because the Lord has frequently granted me this favor. In the beginning, I had doubts whether I was not just imagining the whole thing.

Locutions from the devil can be quickly recognized. He counterfeits his gift by pronouncing the words very clearly as if they came from the Spirit of truth. However, he cannot counterfeit the effects and he cannot leave the soul in peace. His locutions leave only restlessness and turmoil. If the soul refrains from acting, the devil can do little harm.

Less Self Esteem

Even if these gifts come from the Lord, the soul must not think better of herself. As the words grow more precious, the soul should become more overwhelmed by her own sins. Otherwise, the locution is not from God.

The greater the favor, the less the soul esteems herself. She becomes forgetful of self-interest and fervent in seeking God's honor. She fears departing in the least from God's will. She is certain that she has deserved only hell and not these favors. When these are the results, the soul should remain confident that God will not allow the devil to deceive her. However, she must always have misgivings that deception can happen.

When God Speaks

Those who don't experience locutions think that souls should not listen to these words but should turn their attention elsewhere. In this way, they run no risk of these perils. This is impossible. (I am not speaking of locutions from the person's own imagination.) When God speaks there is no remedy. The Spirit inhibits all other thoughts and compels attention. It would be easier for a person with good hearing not to hear someone shouting in their ear.

When God speaks we do not have the power to refrain from thought. We can only think of what is said. God made the sun stand still and he also stills our inner faculties to show that He governs this Castle which gives Him honor. The soul has no choice. It must listen. So, let us fix our eyes on pleasing Him and forgetting ourselves. Hopefully, this is some help to those experiencing locutions.

CHAPTER 6.4 RAPTURES AND ECSTASY

Topic: Treats of rapture (also called ecstasy or trance)

How can this little butterfly find rest in all these trials? Her whole will desires the Spouse's fruitfulness. Knowing she is so weak, the Spouse grants her all she wants, and much more, to achieve this union.

Courage

Although I must stress the need for courage, you will laugh. You wonder what woman would not be brave enough to be betrothed to the king? However, this betrothal demands great courage for our nature is timid and this union is impossible without God's strength.

The Spouse confirms the spiritual betrothal by bestowing raptures. The soul is taken out of her senses. If she still had her senses and saw how close she was to God, she might not remain alive. Genuine raptures are different from women's weaknesses (when we think everything is ecstasy). Some have such poor constitutions that one experience of the Prayer of Quiet would kill them.

I want to try to describe different kinds of raptures. I'm not sure I succeeded when I did this before (Autobiography Ch. 20). I repeat this so there is in one place all that should be said about each Mansion.

Rapture Caused By Words

In one kind of rapture, the soul is struck by a word, either remembered from the past or spoken by God. The Spouse has compassion upon the soul (which has suffered by her yearning) and causes the spark to grow within. Like a phoenix, the soul catches fire and comes alive.

We believe that her sins have been pardoned (if she has used the sacraments). Once cleansed, the soul is united to the Spouse in a way understood only by God and the soul. After having the experience, the soul cannot describe it, even though she can use her interior senses.

Never before has the soul been so awake or had such knowledge of the Spouse. How can the soul understand this secret when the faculties and senses are as dead?

Only God can say. Also, I cannot describe other things that happen in these raptures in the sixth and seventh Mansions (These two Mansions are fused into one. No closed door separates them. However, since many favors are given only in the seventh Mansion I will keep these two separate).

Intellectual Visions

Later, when the soul is in a state of suspension, the Lord reveals mysteries (as heavenly visions). These are so deeply impressed that the soul remembers them and can describe them. However, some intellectual visions cannot be described. They are so sublime that those on earth cannot understand them. Other intellectual visions can be described after the soul regains her senses.

Describing These Visions

I will describe what is meant by an intellectual vision. Some souls will find this helpful. You ask, "If the soul cannot remember what God did, how can she profit?" The profit cannot be exaggerated because the vision is imprinted in the soul's depth and is never forgotten.

You ask, "How can they be remembered if the senses have no image and the faculties cannot understand?" I only know that certain truths about God's greatness remain so firmly planted in the soul and lead her to adore God. Jacob understood much more about his interior lights, but he could describe only a ladder with angels ascending and descending. (Gen.28:12).

Look at Moses. He could not describe all he saw in the bush. If God had not revealed many secret things Moses could not have done his arduous labors. From the secret mysteries he received the needed courage. Sisters, let us realize that with our limited powers we cannot understand God's greatness. Praise Him for allowing us to understand some part.

A Comparison

I am searching for a suitable comparison to explain this. Let us say that you enter the king's apartment which is filled with an infinite variety of glassware and earthenware. Once I was in such a room in the house of the Duchess of Alba (1534). The sight of so much beauty led me to praise the Lord. However, I could not remember or recall what was there or what they were made of even though I was there for two days. I could only remember them as a whole.

So it is here. The soul becomes one with God and is brought into this Mansion where God lives within the soul. While the soul is in ecstasy, the Lord has the soul emerge from her absorption with Him to see what is in the room.

Later, she will remember this revelation but not be able to describe anything or apprehend more than God was pleased to reveal. This is not a vision of the imagination because the soul has truly seen this in an intellectual vision. (Unfortunately I am too stupid to explain anything.)

I believe that if the soul itself does not understand what God reveals, then these experiences do not come from raptures but from a natural weakness. In these cases, the soul by personal effort can remain in this prayer of absorption. However, these experiences are not raptures.

Totally His

In raptures, God takes the entire soul to Himself. She is His property and has become His bride. He is showing her some little part of the kingdom which she has gained.

He won't allow her faculties or senses to disturb her. He commands all the doors of the Mansions to be shut. Only the door of the Mansion where He dwells and where the soul may enter is open. Let those who will not profit from this gift be called accursed.

Sisters, what nothingness we have given up for a God who wants to give Himself to us in this way. What are we doing? Why are we waiting? Why delay even a short time? Let us seek the Lord as the bride did, running through streets and squares (Song of Songs 3:2). Even if worldly delights lasted forever, they are as nothing compared to these treasures and even these joys are as nothing compared to having the Lord as our own.

Our Faults

When will the dust of our faults be removed from our eyes? Although our faults do not totally blind us, as these particles of dust become numerous they do great harm. May our faults be as the clay which healed the blind man (Jn.9: 6-7). Realizing our faults, we beg the Spouse to bring good out of our sins.

Forgive my straying from the theme but I feel sad when I write about these great things of God. I see how much we lose through our own fault. Truly, the Lord gives these favors to whomever He wills. However, He would give them to all, if they but loved Him as He loves us. His Majesty wants people to whom He can give favors.

Ecstasy

The Spouse orders the doors of the Mansions, of the enclosures and of the Castle to be shut. When the Spouse enraptures the soul, she loses her power of breathing and she cannot possibly speak. At times, she loses all power at once. The body seems to have no soul. This lasts only a short period of time. When this profound suspension lifts, the body seems to be itself and to breathe. Yet the body dies again to give the soul fuller life. Complete ecstasy does not last long.

This ecstasy leaves the will so completely absorbed and the understanding so completely transported (sometimes even for several days), everything awakens the soul to love. She is asleep only to creatures.

Effects of Ecstasy

Coming to itself, the soul has even more ardent desires to serve God. She wants a thousand lives to serve God and every tongue on earth to praise Him. She desires penance and feels her own penances are of little account. The soul realizes how easy it was for the martyrs to suffer. They even complain when God gives them no means to suffer.

Secretly or Publicly

They appreciate it when this ecstasy is given secretly. Experiencing this publicly, in the presence of others, causes confusion and lessens the soul's absorption. They know that their suffering might cause criticism instead of giving glory to God. However, anxiety about this shows a lack of humility.

The Lord said to me, "They will either praise me or criticize you. Either way, you will profit." I was encouraged by these words. Our Lord wants everyone to know that the person's soul is His and no one must touch her. People can attack her body, her honor and her possessions. They cannot attack her soul. The spouse will protect her from all the world and from hell itself.

Feigned Rapture

I have tried to describe the nature of true rapture. The effects of feigned rapture (when the person is deceived) are very different. These effects do not harmonize with the favor and cause the favor itself to be discredited. This causes those who receive the true favor not to be believed.

CHAPTER 6.5 FLIGHTS OF THE SPIRIT AND OTHER REVELATIONS

Topic: God exalting the soul by flights of the spirit and other delectable favors.

I call another kind of rapture, the flight of the spirit. The soul experiences this in a different way. She becomes conscious of such rapid motion that her spirit seems to be transported at great speed. Would this not cause fear? So I say again, the soul must have courage so God can do what He wants. Sometimes the body is transported as well. The person doesn't know where she is going or who is bearing her because the soul has no certainty that this comes from God.

Unable to Resist

The soul cannot resist. Resistance only makes matters worse. I had often placed myself in God's hands, because He made me realize that I was no longer in control. The more I resisted His action, the more I was transported. I decided not to resist and made a virtue from necessity. God lifted me up like a powerful man lifts a piece of straw.

A Ship Tossed About

Let's return to the basin of water. In the fourth Mansion, I mentioned that God's action at this stage was gentle and quiet with no movement. In rapture, however, God sets loose the sources of this water with the force of a powerful wave lifting up a little ship. Just as the pilot and crew can do nothing when the waves make a furious assault (tossing the ship about at will) so the soul's interior is even less able to do anything. Her senses and faculties can do only what God commands. The exterior senses are totally unaffected.

Reasons For Courage

I am astounded at this great manifestation of the King. What are the person's feelings? I believe that a soul on the way to hell, if she had this experience, would never offend God. How great then is our obligation when we have been warned not to offend the Lord. We must not merely receive these favors and then grow careless. We must remember our debt to the Lord.

This is another reason why the soul needs great courage. Otherwise, she would be in affliction. The soul reflects on what God has given and on how little the soul fulfills her obligations. The soul even tries to forget her good actions (they are so imperfect) and think only of her sins. Having nothing to offer God, she craves only the mercy He shows to sinners.

A Personal Experience

Once, while I looked at a crucifix and realized I had nothing to offer God, Jesus told me that He was giving me all of His pains to offer to the Father. I ever forgot this experience and, when feeling miserable, I always remember it. Our Lord is happy when we get to know our sins and try to realize our poverty. Sisters, great courage is needed for this last state more than for any other.

In or Out of the Body?

In this sudden transport of the spirit, the soul seems to have left the body. The person is not dead but she cannot be sure if the soul is in the body or not. The soul feels as if she has been to a different world and has been shown a fresh light from that world. This experience is so unlike our world, that she could not possibly have gotten the idea from her imagination. In a single instant, the soul learns more than she could from years of trying to understand heavenly things.

Vision of the Imagination

A vision of the imagination is different from an intellectual vision. The vision is seen with the eyes of the soul (more clearly than with bodily eyes). Some revelations are given without words. For example, if the soul sees a saint, she immediately knows him well.

Other Revelations

Other things are revealed by intellectual visions, such as seeing angels with their Lord. Although seeing nothing (even with the eyes of the soul) the soul grasps indescribable things by an admirable kind of knowledge. (Others with experience can describe this better.) While this is happening, I do not know if the soul remains in the body or not.

Some examples

The sun is so strong that its rays can reach to earth while the sun stays in the sky. So, it must be possible that the soul and the spirit can remain where they are while the higher parts of the soul can rise above herself and receive heat from the Sun of Justice.

The soul's flight begins as quickly as a bullet leaves a gun. No sound is made but clearly movement is taking place. When the soul is outside of herself, great things are revealed. When the soul returns, she has gained much (such as contempt for earthly things). Living on earth is now a great affliction for her.

Israelite explorers brought back fruits from the Holy Land (Numb. 13:18-24). In this experience, the Lord reveals heaven's gifts so the soul can accept the trials of earth. This experience (which passes so quickly) leaves behind such a great profit that only those familiar with it can understand.

This is not the work of the imagination nor of the devil. He could never reveal things that leave such peace.

Three Gifts

The soul enjoys three gifts to a high degree:

1. Knowledge of God's greatness
2. Self-knowledge and humility (for having sinned against God's greatness)
3. A contempt of earthly things (except for those that are used in God's service)

Engraved on the Soul

Because the Spouse gives these jewels, the soul treasures them. These meetings are so engraven that the soul cannot forget them until eternity. To do so would cause much harm. Now do you realize why the soul needs courage? The soul really feels like it is leaving the body, not knowing where she is going. The Spouse also supplies the courage and the soul's fears are well rewarded.

CHAPTER 6.6 **THE GOOD EFFECT FROM ECSTASY**

Topic: The effect of this prayer.

Having so many favors, the soul wants complete enjoyment. Therefore, life becomes a delectable torture. The soul longs for death because everything else wearies her. In solitude she experiences great relief but soon this distress returns. The poor little butterfly finds no repose.

Continual Raptures

Due to her tenderness any occasion whatever increases this fire and causes the soul to take flight. In this Mansion, raptures occur continually and the soul cannot avoid them (even in public). Many persons, especially confessors, cause her problems.

When alone with God, the soul feels interior security. However, she has great distress because she fears the devil's deception. She is hurt only if her confessor blames her (as if she could prevent these raptures). She asks God to lead her by another road because she thinks this way is very dangerous. Yet, having gained so much, she can only desire this road.

The Soul's Dilemma

She wants only to place herself in God's hands. Yet, she feels impotent because she thinks she cannot avoid committing many sins. God gives these souls a keen desire to avoid even imperfections. Therefore, the soul wants to flee people and envies those who live in the desert. Even so, she would plunge into the world to help even one soul. A woman is especially distressed because she is prevented to proclaim everywhere the greatness of God. (Teresa wrote in the 16th Century.)

Oh God, help this fettered little butterfly to do something to fulfill her desires to make you known. Did you not roll back the Jordan for the Israelites to cross over? (Jos.3:13)

The Soul's Determination

Oh God, she is able to endure many trials and is determined to do so. May all realize that everything in her comes from you. She would give a thousand lives to save one soul. She would consider all well-spent and would realize that she does not deserve the privilege of suffering for you.

Such are the effects which remain after the ecstasies. These desires are "permanent" even though the soul at times is fearful and can seemingly accomplish nothing. However, when opportunities do come, the soul shows the true effects of the ecstasies. Then, when the Lord leaves the soul to her own powers, the soul realizes that all usefulness comes from the gift. This clear realization annihilates all self-interest and reveals the mercy of God.

Feelings From the Devil

Sisters, note one thing. You must set aside your great desires to die and see the Lord. These desires to die are found in proficient souls and the devil encourages you to think that you also are proficient. Proceed with caution. The feelings coming from the devil are passionate and the soul feels troubled. Those inexperienced in these kinds of distress will think these feelings are good and stimulate them as much as possible. This will cause injury to their health.

Cause of Distress

This distress can be caused by weak health especially in emotional people who weep easily. They think this is from God and are always weeping. They even induce tears. By this, the devil weakens them so they cannot pray or keep the Rule.

Tears

I seem to be saying that there is danger in everything. If I think crying can be a deception, can I myself not be deceived? Certainly, but I speak only after observing certain persons. I myself am not in the least emotional. My hardness of heart worries me but God's fire always softens me. Tears that come from God's fire are comforting, not disturbing, and seldom do any harm. The good thing is this. This deception about tears can harm the body, but the humble soul will not be hurt.

Don't give much importance to great weeping. Get your work done and practice virtue. When God sends tears, let them come. They will water the ground and bring forth fruit. The less we notice them the more they do.

When we draw water we tire ourselves out. With all our digging we still cannot find a good well-spring. So, sisters, put yourself in God's presence and allow Him to give you water or aridity. He knows best. Our hearts will be tranquil and the devil will have no opportunity.

Prayer of Jubilation — God's Party

Besides the above gifts, Our Lord bestows jubilation and a strange kind of prayer which the soul cannot understand. I write this so you will know this happens in case you receive this favor. The faculties are in close union with God but the Lord lets them free to enjoy this happiness even though they don't understand what they are enjoying or how they are enjoying it.

The joy is so intense that the soul does not want to rejoice alone but to tell everyone, so they too might praise the Lord. It is good for her to make high festival and to show forth her joy. The soul has found herself. She is like the father of the Prodigal. She invites all to the party. She is in a safe place because the interior joy brings a deep peace which cannot come from the devil.

Examples of Saints — Prayer of Jubilation

Impelled by this great joy, the soul cannot keep quiet. St. Francis of Assisi went about crying aloud that he was the great King's herald. Other saints went to the desert to praise God. St. Peter of Alcantra was so filled with joy that many thought he was mad. Oh, what a blessed madness! May God grant this to all of us! Because you live here, sisters, we will not think you mad if God gives you this grace. We will encourage you to praise God even more.

It delights me to see you together and vie with each other in thanking God for bringing you here. Your praise arouses others to praise. How can your tongues be better used? May God often bestow this prayer of jubilation which is both supernatural and beneficial.

Spiritually Drunk

The experience might last for a whole day and the soul will be like someone who has drunk a great deal. Yet the person will not be like an alcoholic (totally deprived of her senses) or like a melancholic person. This is the best comparison I can find. This joy makes the soul forget itself and become conscious only of the praises of God.

So, let us join this soul. Why try to be more sensible than she? What can give us greater pleasure than to do as she does — praising God forever.

CHAPTER 6.7 **THE MYSTERIES OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST**

Topic: Meditating on Christ's Humanity

Sisters, you might think that those who have received such favors would be so sure of gaining heaven that they would have no fear and would not need to weep for their sins. This is a great mistake. The more they receive these favors, the greater their sorrow grows, a sorrow which will never leave them until they are in heaven.

The Soul's Sorrow

This sorrow is of a different kind because the soul thinks less now of the pain to be suffered and more of her own ingratitude to Him to whom she owes so much. By these experiences, the soul sees God's greatness. She constantly grieves because she is aghast at how bold and foolish she has been.

Remembering her past mistakes, she realizes that she has left a majestic God for something very base. The soul thinks more of her sins than of these favors. God's favors are like a mighty river flowing through the soul. Her sins are like the slimy riverbed and are always fresh in her memory.

I had ceased wishing to die so I could see God. However, I did desire death because of my constant suffering from my past ingratitude toward God. Because God had been so patient with me and shown me so many favors, I believed that no one's evil deeds could match mine.

No Fear of Hell

These souls have no fear of hell. They are oppressed by the thought of losing God (but this is seldom). They fear only that they might offend God. They have no anxiety about their pain or glory. They desire a short Purgatory only because they will not yet be with God.

Importance of Remembering Past Sins

To be secure, the soul must never forget her former sinful state. This reflection is distressing but profitable. I keep this in mind because I have been so wicked. Possibly those who have been good have nothing to grieve over.

Even remembering that Our Lord has forgiven these sins brings me no relief. Seeing His goodness to one who deserves only hell, increases my distress. St. Peter and Mary Magdalene (who loved so much and received so many favors) must have found this grief hard to bear.

Meditating on Christ's Humanity

Another mistake is to think that this favored soul should not meditate on the sacred humanity of Christ. I have explained this elsewhere (Autobiography — Ch. 22) and have been told I do not understand these other paths. They say that these favored souls should occupy themselves with the Godhead and leave aside Christ's humanity.

I tried to do this but I could see that the devil was deceiving me. I learned my lesson and I speak out so you will walk with caution. Do not believe anyone who takes you away from Christ's humanity. I will try to explain this better than I did before.

Some souls imagine that they should not meditate on the Passion, or on the Blessed Virgin or the saints (topics which bring great blessings). I cannot conceive what they are thinking. Angels are permanently enkindled in love but we who live in mortal bodies need the companionship of those who lived on earth and have done great deeds for God. The last thing we should do is to withdraw from our greatest help, Christ's sacred humanity. People who do this harm themselves and others.

Entering the Final Two Mansions

I assure you that these souls who abandon Christ's humanity will not enter the last two Mansions. Without Jesus as their guide they will lose their way. They might not even stay securely in the other Mansions. Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" He also said, "He who sees me, sees the Father (Jn.14:6). The meaning of these texts is clear.

Need To Use the Understanding

I have spoken to a great many who have received perfect contemplation and wish to possess this gift forever. That is impossible. However, this experience makes the understanding less able to meditate on Christ's mysteries. The reason is this. Meditation aims at seeking God. Once the soul has found Him she has no desire for the intellectual labor of meditation. The soul has no desire to use her understanding once the will is enkindled. Yet, it is impossible to set aside her understanding before reaching the last Mansions. Otherwise, the soul will lose time because the understanding is needed to enkindle the will.

The Soul 's Faculty of Understanding

Sisters, note this important point. The soul wants to enjoy only love and to meditate on nothing else. This is impossible because the fire that enkindles the will is always going out. The understanding must be used to fan the flame.

Would it be good for the soul to remain in aridity and just await a fire from heaven as Elijah did? Not at all. This would be expecting the Lord to do miracles. His Majesty wants us to realize our sins and unworthiness. He wants us to do all we can. No matter how sublime our prayer, we must meditate on Christ's mysteries.

The Seventh Mansion

A soul brought to the seventh Mansion rarely needs to engage in meditation. In that Mansion the soul always walks with Christ and is always in the company of His divine and human nature. I will explain this later. For now, when the fire is not enkindled and God's presence is not felt, the soul must seek the Spouse as the bride does in the Canticle (Song of Songs 3:3).

Let's not waste time and wait to receive what has already been given. Maybe Our Lord will not give this for a year or even many years. In the meantime, we know how to please God. We must keep His commandments, meditate upon His life and death, and give thanks for all that we owe to Him.

Explaining Meditation and Prayer of Simple Regard

Some say they cannot meditate. This might be true to some extent. Reasoning with the understanding is different from the memory presenting truths to the understanding. I'll try to explain.

Meditation is a prolonged reasoning which uses the understanding. For example, we consider God's favor in giving us His Son, or we recall the passion events from the Garden to the Crucifixion, or we meditate in detail on Judas' betrayal or on the Apostles' flight, etc. This is a meritorious prayer but a favored soul is often unable to practice this.

The Prayer of Simple Regard

However, this soul should not say that she cannot dwell on the mysteries which are often celebrated in the Church's Liturgy. Also, she should not forget these precious signs of God's love in these mysteries. They are living sparks which enkindle the fire.

The favored soul will use these mysteries and will understand them in a more perfect way. When her understanding impresses these mysteries on her memory, the mere sight of Jesus on His knees will suffice for many days, not just for an hour. This is the prayer of simple regard and the will wants to return the favor and to suffer for Christ. So, the memory and understanding have their place. However, because the favored soul cannot reason about these mysteries, she believes she cannot meditate at all.

The Rule of These Acts

Even the most sublime prayer will be no obstacle to these acts. However, omitting these acts would be a great mistake. Sometimes the Lord will suspend the soul's meditation, which will cease against the soul's own will. In this, the soul will find great profit.

Laboring hard at meditation (as I described) would be a hindrance. This beginning labor is impossible for a soul that has attained great heights. A soul that takes this road should not be condemned nor judged incapable of enjoying Christ's mysteries. However, no one is so spiritual that they should neglect these mysteries.

Not All The Time

Sometimes, souls who have acquired the Prayer of Quiet are enjoying these new consolations and think they should enjoy these gifts all the time. Take my advice. Become less absorbed in them (*Foundations Ch.6*) because life is long and filled with many trials.

We need to see Christ and the apostles and how they accepted their trials. Let us not abandon the good company of Jesus and His mother. He wants us to grieve over His sufferings, even if we abandon our own consolations. There must be time for everything.

I am suspicious of anyone enjoying consolations so constantly that she has no time for meditation. Keep on with your meditation and avoid this absorption. If your efforts are not enough, tell the Superior to give you more work. Continuous exposure to this is bad for the brain.

Never Abandon Christ's Humanity

My explanation is clear. No matter how spiritual you are you must not flee from meditating on Christ's sacred humanity. People remind me that Our Lord said that it was expedient that He go (Jn. 16:7). That is no argument. He never said this to His mother. She loved Him so perfectly that His being on earth was a help even to her. Abandoning the humanity of Christ is a perilous road. We might end up abandoning the Blessed Sacrament.

My own mistake did not go this far. I did take less pleasure in thinking of Our Lord so I could go about in this state of absorption in which I was always expecting consolations. I was wrong. I couldn't always have these consolations.

My mind was like a bird flying around for a resting place. I was losing a great deal of time and not advancing in virtue or prayer. I thought I was on the right road until a servant of God showed me clearly how I had gone astray. I have always regretted my failure to realize

how setting aside Christ's humanity could never bring a gain. I want no blessing except those that come through Him.

CHAPTER 6.8 **INTELLECTUAL VISIONS**

Topic: God's communications through intellectual visions.

I want you to see that the further the soul progresses, the closer Jesus comes as her companion. When God decides to give these gifts, the soul walks with him all the time. He reveals His love by appearances and visions. I want to describe these aptly. However, I do not want you to be dismayed if He has not granted these to you. Instead, praise Him that He gives these gifts to others.

Unworthy to Receive

The soul must think herself unworthy and not expect to receive this favor. She becomes conscious that the Lord Jesus is near, even though she cannot see Him with the eyes of the body or of the soul. I call this an intellectual vision.

When I received this I was very disturbed. I could not understand what the vision was, because I saw nothing. Yet I knew it was Our Lord and I could not doubt this vision. Although I had misgivings about this coming from God, I saw that the effects were remarkable. Not even realizing that there was such a thing as an intellectual vision, I did know the Lord spoke to me often in this way. Before receiving this favor I understood his words but I did not know Who the Speaker was.

Last A Long Time

I was frightened by these visions. They lasted for many days – sometimes more than a year. I told my confessor. He couldn't understand how I knew it was the Lord. He asked me to describe Our Lord's face, but I didn't see His face.

Although people said I was mistaken, I knew the vision was genuine, especially when Jesus said, "Be not afraid. It is I." These words had power. They strengthened my companionship with Jesus. The vision helped me to think of Him all the time. I did all He wanted since He was always looking at me. I could draw near to Him whenever I wanted and I knew He heard me. I could not hear Him whenever I wanted to but He spoke to me at quite unexpected times.

The Experiences

I knew He walked at my right hand. This knowledge did not come from the senses. Although the vision was indescribable, it was also unmistakable and provided a feeling of total certainty. The beneficial effects could not come from melancholy.

Also, the devil could never produce such effects. The devil's work would not give me a constant desire to serve God and to reject what leads away from Him. Gradually, I understood clearly that this was not the devil's work.

I still felt misgivings and confusion because I didn't know how I had received this blessing. God's favor always brings confusion and humility. It would be just the opposite if it came from the devil. The gift obviously came from God because no human effort could produce it.

Christ's Constant Companionship

Although other divine favors are greater, this gift brings a special knowledge of God. The constant companionship with Christ brings a love and yearning to give oneself. These are deeper than the other gifts. The Divine Presence also bestows a purity of conscience as the soul becomes sensitive to everything.

Although our nature often makes us lose sight of God's perpetual closeness, by this intellectual vision we can never forget the Lord's presence. The other favors (already mentioned) become more frequent. I knew Who was at my side.

All these effects show the precious quality of this gift. The soul, so undeserving, thanks the Lord and would not exchange this favor for any earthly joy. When the Lord withdraws this companionship the soul experiences great loneliness. Her efforts to regain the Lord's companionship are of no avail because the Lord grants this when He wills.

The Saints

Sometimes a saint is the soul's companion and this is a great help. How can the soul know if it is Christ, His mother or a saint? I cannot answer that for I don't understand how. I am just certain of this. When the Lord speaks He is easily recognized. When it is a saint and no words are spoken, the soul realizes the Lord sent this saint as a companion.

Signs That Experiences Are From God

There are many other spiritual experiences which show how powerless is our human nature and for which we can always thank God. We must esteem this favor greatly and use it to serve God fervently. By these experiences, the soul feels she serves God less than anyone else, even though she has a greater obligation than all. If she commits a personal fault, this pierces the soul's very vitals (and rightly so).

Whoever receive the gifts can see clearly that these effects are due neither to deceptions nor to fancy. Gifts from the devil would not last so long or bring such peace. The soul would be filled with self-esteem and think herself better than others. God is faithful and won't let the devil have power over any soul which wants only to serve Him.

If these favors are withdrawn by God, the soul still gains. If the devil attacks, he will be brought to confusion. You sisters, who travel this road must not be alarmed. It is good to have misgivings, to walk warily and not to grow careless. If these favors do not produce these effects then they are not of God.

Speaking With Confessor

In the beginning, speak of these gifts to your confessor. If he is not spiritual, let him at least be learned. (A learned and spiritual confessor is the best.) If he says this comes from fancy do not be alarmed because fancy does little harm. Just ask God that you not be harmed. If he says it is from the devil, the Lord will console you and give your confessor light. This is true if the good effects are present.

Getting the Right Confessor

Your confessor might be alarmed if he doesn't understand these gifts. This is why he must have both spirituality and learning. To find such a confessor your Prioress should give you permission. After you have consulted your confessor, don't speak anymore. Many times the

devil uses your confessor's temerity to bestow excessive misgivings. What should be secret becomes public and this causes great trials. Let the Prioress exert much caution.

These experiences don't mean that the sister is better than anyone else. God often gives these experiences to the weakest to prepare them to be His servants. We are judged by the practice of virtue not by spiritual favors. The saintliest is the one who serves. On this earth, little is known for certain. We will see that God's judgments differ much from our own.

CHAPTER 6.9 VISIONS OF THE IMAGINATION

Topic: How Profitable They Are

I will describe visions that take place in the imagination. The devil can interfere more frequently in these visions, but when these visions come from the Lord, they are also more profitable because they are in closer conformity with our nature. Nothing, however, compares with the experiences in the final Mansion.

A Comparison

Imagine a precious stone hidden in a golden reliquary. We have never seen the stone but we know that we carry it about and it benefits us very much. We value the stone because its power has cured us of various illnesses. We don't look at it or try to open the reliquary. The owner has kept the key and only loaned it to us. He will open the reliquary when he wants and he will take it back when he wants. This is what God does.

Suppose the owner wants to take the stone out and shows it to you. In this way, you can take greater pleasure, can remember the stone's brilliance and can have the memory more deeply engraved. This is what Jesus does. He clearly reveals to the soul His sacred humanity, both in events during His mortal life and after the Resurrection. Although He does this quickly (like a flash of lightning) the image is so deeply engraved upon the soul's imagination that it will not disappear for all eternity.

This "image" is not like a painting because it is alive. The image speaks to the soul and shows her great and secret things. The soul sees this image for a certain time but cannot gaze at it always (anymore than she could constantly gaze at the sun).

Even though its brilliance could not hurt the interior sight, the vision passes quickly. I cannot speak of exterior sight. I have never experienced exterior light and cannot testify to it. The brilliance of this interior vision is like infused light. The soul remains in rapture because her unworthiness cannot endure so terrible a sight.

Terrible Sight

I use the words "terrible sight" because even though the vision is lovely and delightful and exceeds anything our imagination and intellect can conceive, the vision causes the soul great terror. The soul knows Who is present. It is the Lord. He clearly reveals Himself as the Lord of heaven and earth. Earthly kings don't do this. Their heralds introduce them.

O Lord, how little we know you! If this friendly vision causes us such terror what is it like to hear your words, "Depart accursed of My Father?" (Matt.25:4 I)

Keeping in Memory

Let us be like St. Jerome and always keep this vision fresh in our memory. If we do, we shall care little for what we suffer by obedience. (These are short compared with eternity.) I have never feared the torments of hell. I have always feared the wrath in Jesus' eyes which the damned will see. How much greater would be this condemnation for one to whom He has revealed Himself. For this reason, the soul must remain in suspension, her weakness united to His greatness in a sublime communion.

When An Experience Is Not A Vision

One more comment. If the soul can remain looking at the Lord, it is not a vision at all. This is just a striking idea which creates a picture in the imagination.

A great many souls have told me that their imagination becomes absorbed and they actually see what is in their mind. If they had a true vision, they would realize their error. They have built a picture with their imagination which really has no effects and should be forgotten like a dream.

A True Vision

The true experience is quite different. The soul doesn't expect to see anything. Then suddenly the whole vision is revealed. The soul experiences fear and confusion and falls into a blessed peace. It is like St. Paul's feelings when he was thrown to the ground. The soul is in great commotion. Then all grows calm.

The soul is now totally instructed in the great truth and has no need of another master. True wisdom has overcome her stupidity. She enjoys complete certainty that this is God, no matter how often she is told otherwise.

Difficulties With Confessors

When the confessor insinuates that the soul is being deluded, God allows the soul to hesitate. She wonders how she, a great sinner, could receive this favor? But that is all she experiences. Even the devil cannot shake her firm belief. The more he attacks, the more certain the soul is that God is the source of these visions.

Because the soul cannot adequately describe these experiences, confessors have misgivings. Naturally, they must proceed cautiously to see the effects of these apparitions. Certainly, they must observe the soul's humility and growth in virtues. If the experiences come from the devil there will soon be a thousand lies. If the confessor is experienced (and also had these visions) he will easily discern if they are from God, from the soul's imagination or from the devil. Even without having these experiences, if he is learned and can discern spirits he will answer correctly.

Being Honest

Sisters, speak plainly and candidly to your confessors in describing your prayer experiences. Otherwise, I cannot assure you whether you are following God or yourself. God wants your confessors to know your thoughts and actions. If you do this, nothing will harm you, even if these experiences do not come from God.

God will bring good even if you follow a road by which the devil would destroy you. If you suppose it is God, you will try to serve Him better and keep His image in mind. If the devil were to paint for me a perfect image of the Lord, God would use the image to help my devotion. I would reverence the picture, not the painter. Some people teach that all visions should be treated with scorn. This is wrong.

Not Scorning Visions

I, myself, was told to scorn all visions. (Fortunately, this advice did not come from my confessor. If so, I would have become a lost soul, bound to obey him.) If you receive such advice, don't follow it because the soul derives great profit from this favor.

Thinking upon the Lord the soul recalls His face, which is the greatest comfort. Are we not comforted by seeing a person who always helps us? This delectable remembrance has many other blessings but I have already said much. However, I want to warn you. If you hear that God is granting these favors to others, do not seek them for yourself.

Do Not Seek Favors

There are certain reasons for this warning:

1. To seek favors shows a lack of humility. It is asking for what you do not deserve. A peasant never dreams of becoming the king because he seems so unworthy. So, these favors are never given to a person without humility. God, before bestowing them, always gives this self-knowledge. How can an ambitious soul realize that God does her a favor by not casting her into hell?
2. The soul will certainly be deceived because the devil plays a thousand tricks when the door is left even slightly ajar.
3. The soul will begin to imagine and persuade herself that she is seeing and hearing what she desires.
4. The soul will presume to choose her own path of holiness. The Lord knows the best path and will lead the soul on it if she permits.
5. The soul really doesn't know if she can bear the trials, that always accompany visions. They are very heavy.
6. The soul thinks that having visions would be a gain but they might cause her a loss.

Sisters, there are many other reasons. Just believe that the safest road is God's will. He knows us much better than we do.

Merit and favors

If our souls are in His hands and our wills are resolute, we cannot stray. By receiving these favors the soul does not gain more glory but more obligations. Many saints did not receive these favors and many who did receive them are not saints. Also, these experiences don't happen continually and they always bring great trials. The experienced soul doesn't seek to receive more favors but to profit from those which she has received.

It is true that these favors are the greatest helps to perfection but those who have gained perfection without them will have more merit. I know two people who received these favors (one was a man). Both desired to serve God at their own cost without any consolation.

They complained because God gave them these favors which they would have set aside, if possible. (I am not speaking here of visions which cause great pain but of the consolations given in contemplation.) Their desires were supernatural. The two souls wanted to show God that they would serve without pay. They acted not for their own glory because love finds a thousand ways to express itself.

If possible the soul would invent new methods to be consumed by God. If necessary, she would even remain annihilated for God's greater glory. Praise God who shows His greatness by communing with His creatures.

CHAPTER 6.10 VARIOUS KINDS OF VISIONS

Topic: Other favors given in a different way

By these visions, the Lord communicates Himself in many ways. Some come when the soul is afflicted. Others come when the soul is about to have a heavy trial. Sometimes God just wants to comfort the soul. There is no need to particularize. My only purpose is to explain these visions so that each soul understands their nature and effects. In this way, you won't think every imagination is a vision.

Also, you will know they are possible and you will not be distressed in case you have a vision. The devil loves to disturb you that so you do not praise God. His Majesty also communicates by more sublime and less dangerous ways. These, however, are difficult to describe. These visions in the imagination are easily explained.

Explaining the Intellectual Vision

Let me explain an intellectual vision. The soul is at prayer and in possession of all its senses, when suddenly the Lord suspends the faculties and communicates secret things which the soul sees in God Himself. These are not visions of the sacred humanity. I say "the soul sees Him" but really she sees nothing. This is an intellectual vision, not a vision of the imagination. The soul sees how all things are in God. Although this vision passes in a moment, it remains engraved on the soul and is highly profitable

A Comparison

Because of this vision, the soul experiences great confusion. She clearly sees how wrong it is to offend God. I want to draw a comparison. Let us imagine that God Himself is a large palace. Can a sinner ever leave this palace to commit sin? Of course not. All of his evil deeds, therefore, are done within God's own house. If we always understood this, we wouldn't presume and commit sin! So, consider God's long-suffering that He does not cast us into hell immediately. It is dreadful that God suffers these misdeeds (and we worry about a word spoken against us).

Sisters, let us endure everything. Let us love those who have wronged us because we have offended this great God who has never ceased to love us. Therefore, this intellectual vision, although passing quickly, provides daily profit if the soul keeps it habitually in mind.

A Revelation of Truths

At other times, God reveals to the soul a truth that is in Himself. This makes any truth in creatures seem like thick darkness. God also manifests that He alone is truth. David wrote, "Every man is a liar" (Ps.116:11). These words express an infallible truth. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" (Jn.18:38) This makes me realize that here on earth we don't understand sovereign truth.

If we are to grow to be like our God we must walk in the truth. This is much more than not telling lies. Walking in truth is before God and man. We must not seek to be well thought of. We must attribute to God what is His and to ourselves what is ours. We must account the world as little.

God revealed to me why He so loves humility. God is Sovereign truth and in ourselves we have no good. Anyone who doesn't understand this is walking in falsehood. Whoever best understands this is the most pleasing to God. May God always grant us this self-knowledge.

A True Bride

By granting these favors the Lord treats the soul as His true bride. She is determined to do His will and He will give her the needed knowledge. The soul must not fear these favors because the devil and the soul's own imagination have little part in these gifts.

CHAPTER 6.11 MYSTICAL SUFFERINGS

Topic: Impetuous desires to serve God which endanger the soul's life.

Do all these favors satisfy the dove or butterfly so she can settle down where she is to die? Certainly not! She is in an even worse state. Even after many years, the soul sighs and weeps because each favor causes her more pain. Her desires increase.

The more she learns about God's greatness and of how much He desires to be loved, the more she finds herself far from Him and unable to enjoy Him. Over the years, (I speak of years from my own experiences) her desires increase and she has great distress. Yet she sees clearly that God's actions have no limit. He can lift the soul to the heights in a single moment. This shows how much God desires for the soul.

An Interior Burning

For years the soul has yearnings, tears, sighs and strong impulses. These arise from her love and are accompanied by great emotions. They are like the heat of a smoldering fire which is painful but quite bearable. However, compared with this new gift, they are as nothing.

Wounded By An Arrow Of Fire

While the soul experiences this interior burning, she has some fleeting thought (where or how is not explainable) or she hears a remark about death being a long way off. This wounds her like an arrow of fire, making a deep wound in the soul's intimate depths. This action passes like a flash of lightning but reduces to powder everything that is earthly within the soul. She cannot think of anything concerning her own existence. The experience enchains the faculties and they have no freedom except to do what will increase the pain.

I am not exaggerating. All I am saying falls short of this indescribable experience which enraptures the faculties. The understanding is alert to discover why the soul feels so absent from God. His Majesty aids the intellect and bestows a lively knowledge of Himself. This causes even greater distress until the soul cries aloud.

New Level of Pain and Peril of Death

No matter how experienced the soul has become in enduring great pain, she will cry out because the pain is deep within the soul, not in the body. This is how I discovered that my soul is more sensitive than my body. God revealed to me that this suffering resembles the souls in purgatory who suffer even though they have no body.

These feelings involve a great peril of death. Although the experience lasts a short time, the limbs are disjointed and the pulse grows feeble. It is really quite like death. The body's natural heat fails while the soul burns fiercely. A little more and the soul would die.

In these experiences I felt no bodily pain, even though my limbs were dislocated for two or three days. I had no strength to write after this experience. The body never seems to regain its former strength.

Within, the soul suffers so keenly that the body experiences no pain. The soul takes no notice of her body. In the present case, the soul feels nothing and would feel nothing even if cut to pieces.

No Longer in Control

You will ask why the soul does not just resign herself. Although she has done this all her life, now she can no longer do even this. Her reason is no longer in control. She can think only of the cause of her suffering, namely, that she is absent from God. Why wish to live? She is aware of a strange solitude in which no earthly creature can be a companion. In fact, no heavenly creature can either. Only He whom she loves can be her companion.

All earthly companionship is a torment. She is suspended, unable to come down to earth nor to ascend to heaven. She has an intolerable thirst but cannot reach the water. The soul desires only to be quenched with the waters promised to the Samaritan woman (Jn.4:7-13). Unfortunately, these waters are not given.

A Gift of Purification

Oh God, you afflict those who love you but only to grant them greater blessings. You purify these souls to enter the seventh mansion, just as you purify the souls in purgatory so they can enter heaven. To gain this great favor, the sufferings are just a drop in the ocean.

Although this torment is greater than any other on earth (many of which I have endured) the soul realizes that this affliction is a totally underserved gift. Nothing can relieve this anguish; the soul suffers it gladly and would suffer it all her life. This would be to die not once but to be always dying. (It really is as bad as that.)

Souls In Hell

Let's consider the souls in hell. They are not resigned (as this soul is) nor do they have the delight of God. They cannot see that their suffering is doing any good and they keep suffering more and more. Their torment is much greater than those we have been describing because souls in hell know that they will have to suffer forever and ever.

What can we do or suffer in such a short earthly life that is of any consequence as long as it frees us from eternal torments? The Lord wants us to understand this so we are conscious of how much we owe to Him for freeing us from our sins.

The Soul's Suffering

Let us return to the suffering soul. This state lasts a short time (three or four hours at most) because nature could not suffer this any longer. At one time, I experienced this for fifteen minutes. I was in complete prostration and lost consciousness. I heard the words "life not ending".

During that Eastertide (1571) I had such aridity I didn't even know it was Easter. I could not resist these attacks any more than I could be thrown into a fire and not be burned. I could not hide my anguish. Although unable to see my inner sufferings, everyone knew something was happening.

I want you to know that if you find yourself in this condition, your human nature (weak as it is) can be of help to you. So, let me tell you this. Sometimes, the soul desires to die because the pain is more than she can bear. Her soul seems about to leave her body. She grows afraid and wants the distress alleviated so she does not die. Obviously, this fear comes from natural weakness. Yet, the desire to die does not leave and the soul cannot dispel the desire. The Lord Himself dispels it by granting her a deep rapture or a vision. By these experiences the Spirit comforts the soul and she wills to live as long as God wants.

Loses All Fears

Although this is distressing, the soul loses all her fears of trials because she sees these trials as nothing compared with her deep anguish. The soul would gladly suffer this again, but this can only happen when the Lord wills. When God does will it, she cannot resist the favor. The soul is detached from the world and from her own desires. She becomes fearless in her torments and fears only offending God, seeing that He can torment as well as comfort.

Excessive Rejoicing

There is one other deadly peril. The soul can experience excessive rejoicing. When the delight is excessive, the slightest thing could drive the soul out of her body. This would bring her great happiness.

Sisters, you can see the need for courage. If you ask for these favors, Jesus will say "Can you drink the chalice?" (Matt.20:22). We will reply, "We can." Indeed, God will give us strength and will defend us against persecutions. Even before our death He will repay us (as you will see).

SEVENTH MANSION

CHAPTER 7.1

PREPARATION FOR SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

*Topic: God's favors in souls who have entered
the Seventh Mansion.*

Sisters, you would think there is nothing more to say, but God's works are without limit. Who will ever recount His wonders? What I will say is only a fraction of God's works.

Prizing Our Souls

Knowing more of God's communion with her, the soul praises His greatness and rejoices in His favors. Unfortunately, we do not prize our souls enough. We do not understand the secrets they contain. May my pen describe these secrets which God reveals to every soul in the seventh Mansion.

May no fault of your own hinder the celebration of His Spiritual Marriage with your soul. I tremble at this task and wonder if I should not just end the account of this mansion with a few words. I am afraid that people will think I write from experience. Nevertheless, this personal shame comes from temptation and weakness. So, let the whole world cry out against me! God will be praised (and I might be dead before the world realizes what I have done)!

Before Consummating the Spiritual Marriage

Having pity on this soul which He has spiritually taken as His bride, Our Lord now brings her to the seventh Mansion before consummating the Spiritual Marriage. He needs an abiding place in the soul (as He has in heaven). So, I will call this place a second heaven.

Souls In Mortal Sin

The soul is not in the dark because she has an interior light. Certainly the soul without grace is in darkness. However, this defect does not come from the Sun of Justice (who still abides within) but from the soul's incapacity to receive this light. I saw how unhappy these souls are. They are bound hand and foot and are unable

to do anything to win merit. They are blind and dumb. We were once like that. Have pity on them so the Lord can show mercy.

True Almsgiving — Praying For Souls in Mortal Sin

The best form of almsgiving is praying for those in mortal sin. Imagine a Christian tied to a post. The food needed for strength is right beside him. However, even though he is about to die (both in body and soul) he cannot take the food because he is too weary. It would be extremely cruel for you not give him to eat, or to loosen his chains by your prayers? Always remember these souls when you pray.

Now to return to those souls who have done penance and are in grace. No soul is insignificant. Within each, God has His Mansion.

Divine Marriage

When God grants the favor of Divine Marriage He brings the soul into His own Mansion. This is not like before when He granted raptures to the soul or gave her the Prayer of Union when the soul is affected only in her higher part and does not enter into her very center.

In the Prayer of Union, the Lord unites the soul to Himself. He makes the soul blind and dumb (as St. Paul at his conversion), unable to sense how she is enjoying this favor. The soul can delight only in her nearness to God. United to Him, the soul understands nothing. The faculties are all lost.

In this seventh Mansion, all is different. God removes the scales from the soul's eyes so it can see and understand this favor. It enters this Mansion by an intellectual vision by which the Trinity reveals Itself in all three Persons.

The Three Divine Persons

The spirit is enkindled and illumined by a cloud of the greatest brightness. The soul sees the three Persons individually, yet realizes that the three Persons are one Substance, one Power, one Knowledge and one God alone. What all Catholics hold y faith the soul grasps by sight. Yet, she sees nothing by the eyes of her body or of her soul because this is not a vision of the imagination.

The Three Divine Persons speak to the soul and explain the words of Jesus, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (Jn.14:23).

What a difference between believing these words and realizing that they are true. The soul feels that the three Divine Persons have never left her. She perceives quite clearly that they are in the most interior place of her soul. The soul, not being learned, cannot explain this but she feels this Divine companionship within herself.

God's Companionship

The person continues to possess her senses. She is not completely absorbed. She is more alert than ever to the service of God, and when unoccupied, she rests in this happy companionship.

Unless she fails, God will always assure her of His presence. She knows God will not leave her and, having granted this favor, He will not let her lose it. Yet, she walks even more carefully, not wanting to displease Him.

God's presence is not always fully experienced. This fullness is granted on the first or on subsequent occasions. The soul could not possibly experience this all the time. Still, she is aware of God's companionship.

A Comparison

I will use a comparison. Suppose the soul is in a bright room with others. If suddenly the lights go out, the soul cannot see these others, yet she is aware of their presence. When the light returns she sees them again. The soul does not determine when she has this light. This depends on the Lord. Yet, the soul knows that He never goes away even when she cannot see Him. He makes her understand this clearly.

Results of Companionship

By this wonderful companionship, the Divine Majesty prepares the soul for more. She is helped to move forward. She loses the fear that accompanied her other favors. When I had numerous trials and business concerns, my soul's essential part never left that dwelling place. I even felt that my soul was divided. I complained as Martha did of Mary that she was enjoying the quiet while I, left with trials and occupations, could not join her.

Soul and Spirit

Of course, my soul was not really divided. However, this is a common experience that there is a kind of difference between soul and spirit. The perceptible division is subtle and experienced according to the different joys which souls have. The soul itself also seems to be different from her faculties. It is presumptuous for me to try to explain these interior things.

CHAPTER 7.2 **SPIRITUAL BETROTHAL AND SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE**

*Topic: The difference between spiritual union
and spiritual marriage.*

I'll describe the Divine and Spiritual Marriage which can never be perfectly fulfilled while the soul is still on earth, (because she can withdraw and lose the blessing).

In the first vision given to the soul, God shows the soul His sacred humanity. In this way, she knows what is happening and Who is bestowing the gift. In later visions, the gift comes in a different way.

Teresa's Experiences

My first experience came after Holy Communion. The Lord revealed Himself in the beauty and majesty of His resurrection. He said I should accept His affairs as my own and He would accept my affairs as His own.

On other occasions, the Lord had revealed Himself to me in similar ways, but this experience left me confused and dismayed for three reasons. First, the vision had such force. Second, the words were unique. Third, I saw this vision in the interior of my soul where I had never seen a vision before.

Spiritual Betrothal

Please understand. There is the greatest difference between the visions of the other Mansions and the visions of this seventh Mansion. There is also a difference between Spiritual Betrothal and Spiritual Marriage, just as there is a difference between the engaged and the married. I use this comparison with marriage but please remember that this spiritual betrothal has nothing to do with the body. Spiritual Marriage has even less connection with the body for it takes place in the soul's deepest center where God dwells. The soul does not need a door to enter.

All the previous visions took place through the senses and the faculties. This vision of the Lord's Humanity takes place in the same faculties. Spiritual Marriage is very different. The Lord appears in the soul's center by an intellectual vision as he did to the apostles when He said, "Peace be with you" (Jn.20:19-21).

The soul so delights in this instantaneous communication that it is difficult to compare this secret and sublime favor with anything. The Lord manifests His heavenly glory in a more sublime manner than in any other vision or spiritual consolation. The soul's spirit is made one with God Who wants to show the soul the extent of His love. He has united Himself to her in such a way that the two cannot be separated.

The Difference Between Betrothal and Marriage

In the Spiritual Betrothal the two are frequently separated. Even though there is a union, each can be separated and remain by themselves. The favor of Spiritual Betrothal passes quickly and the soul is deprived of the Lord's companionship. In Spiritual Marriage, the soul always remains in its center with God.

Spiritual Betrothal is like a wick where the wax and the flame are joined but can be separated and become two again. Spiritual Marriage is like rain falling into a spring. After the rain, heaven's water cannot possibly be separated from the spring's water. A streamlet which enters the ocean also cannot be separated. Sunlight enters a room from many windows but inside becomes one.

St. Paul wrote, "Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1Cor.6:17). Perhaps he refers to this Spiritual Marriage. He also wrote, "For me to live in Christ and to die is gain" (Phil.1:21). Certainly, the little butterfly dies because Christ is her life.

With time, the effects of Spiritual Marriage make this evident. The soul, by her secret aspirations, knows that God has given her life. These aspirations are so vehement that the soul cannot doubt what they teach, even though she cannot describe these overwhelming experiences.

Plunged Into the Experience

This feeling comes from delectable words which the soul is forced to utter like, "Oh, life and sustenance that sustains me". Milk flows from the divine breasts and gives solace to all the soul's faculties. This tiny stream is swallowed up by a mighty river from which a streamlet is released to sustain those faculties which serve the Bridegroom and the Bride.

Just as someone plunged into water knows something has happened, so the soul knows that this stream has some origin and that someone in the soul's center is sending forth these arrows. She also knows that light is coming to the interior faculties. The soul neither moves nor loses its peace. The Lord, who gave peace to the Apostles sustains the soul in peace.

Peace

The Lord's greeting "Peace be with you" is more than mere words. They are inner acts which produce effects on souls ready to be joined with the Uncreated Spirit in this heavenly union. When we empty ourselves for love of God, He fills us with Himself. Jesus prayed that the apostles "may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us" (Jn.17:21). "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word" (Jn.17:20). We are included in that prayer.

O God, the favored soul understands that these words are true. If it were not for our fault, we also could understand. We do not prepare. We do not abandon the obstacles to this light. We do not see ourselves in this mirror where our image is engraved.

The Question of Spiritual Safety

When the Lord brings the soul into this seventh Mansion (the soul's center), she seems not to be subject to any inner movements which ruin her peace. Perhaps, I am giving the impression that the soul is sure of her salvation.

At this point, the soul can still backslide and lose its salvation. My words, "the soul seems to be in safety" mean "as long as God holds the soul in His hands and she does not offend Him."

The Soul's Desires

Even after years in this state, the soul does not consider herself safe. She has even greater misgivings and greater care not to sin. The soul desires to serve God and she is distressed by seeing how little she accomplishes and how great are her obligations. Because of this, the soul delights in harder penances. Her real penance is when due to health reasons, she can perform no penance. Her distress happens because her soul is planted in heavenly waters and brings forth many new desires.

The Soul's Center

This "center" of our soul (also called "spirit") is difficult to describe. The soul at her center is at peace. Her faculties, senses and passions are not always at peace. How can the soul be at peace but its faculties are not? I will give some comparisons.

A king might be at war in his kingdom but he remains at peace in his castle. So, there are poisonous creatures and many disturbances in the other Mansions but these cannot enter the seventh Mansion. Also, no one can enter and force the soul to leave. Temptations do not disturb the soul because the passions have been vanquished and cannot enter here. Another comparison. Our body might be in pain but our head could be sound. These comparisons make me smile but I know no other. What I have said is the truth.

CHAPTER 7.3 **THE EFFECTS OF SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE**

Topic: The great change within the soul

The little butterfly is now dead and Christ lives within. Her life is totally different from the effects of this prayer.

1. Her self-forgetfulness is complete. It seems that the soul no longer exists. She seeks only God's honor and forgets that heaven or glory await her. God's words have taken effect. "You take care of My interests and I will take care of yours". She lives in a state of forgetfulness. She desires to exist only to advance God's glory (for which she would die).
2. She doesn't neglect to eat or sleep or perform her duties. Concerning exterior matters, she does all she can for God and grieves that what she accomplishes is as nothing.
3. Her great desire to suffer is free from any distress. Whatever God wills is best, whether she is to suffer or not to suffer.

4. When persecuted, the soul has an interior joy. Indeed, she has a special love for her enemies and would help them in their pain. She prays for them and wants God to give her enemies these same favors so they, too, would not offend Him.

A Change in Desires

The following surprises me the most. The soul used to suffer because of her desire to die and enjoy God. Now she desires to live, so she can serve and help souls. She wants to live for many years and to suffer great trials so God is praised. This is true even if she knew she would immediately go to heaven. She postpones this so she can help the Crucified One save souls.

At times, she forgets this and does desire heaven, especially when she sees how little she accomplishes. Then, she turns inside and remembers that she has God within. She again offers her life as a costly oblation. She no more fears death than she fears a gentle rapture. God has replaced her desires (so filled with torment) with greater desires to serve Him.

In short, she no longer desires consolations because now Jesus lives within. His life was continual suffering and she now desires the same.

A New Detachment

The soul is detached. She seeks to be either alone or working for the good of another soul. She has no aridities or interior trials, only a tender love that wants to praise God.

When the soul is negligent, God awakens her by a gentle impulse which does not come from thought, memory or from the soul's own power. This happens frequently. It is like a flame which always goes upward (not downward). These impulses come up from the soul's center and awaken her faculties.

From these gentle yet penetrating touches, all her trials are easily endured. If nothing else, the soul gains the realization of God begging her to dwell with Him. The soul could endure all trials if they led to these penetrating touches.

Responding to God's Letters

Sisters, you have already experienced this because the Lord begins these touches in the Prayer of Union. They are like letters sent from the seventh Mansion, written in a way which you alone can understand.

You must always answer. Even if you are busy with external work, you must respond immediately to this secret favor. If He gives you this in public, your reply can be interior. Saying with St. Paul, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). He will show you because now is the acceptable time. Remember His gentle touch prepares us to fulfill future commands.

The Great Difference

The difference between this Mansion and the others is clear. The soul hardly experiences any aridity or interior disturbance. She is always in tranquility. She has no fears that the devil is counterfeiting this gift. The favors certainly come from God because her senses and faculties are not involved.

God has revealed Himself and has taken the soul to a place where the devil will not enter. The soul needs only a total committal to God because the favors are independent from her acts.

The Lord teaches and blesses the soul without disturbance. Like Solomon, God has built his temple. God and the soul have a fruitful union in deepest silence. The understanding need not stir for the Lord calms the soul. Now and then He allows her to see what is happening through a little chink in the wall. Her faculties are in a daze and do not work.

Few Raptures or Fears

Only occasionally does the soul have raptures and these do not have the same transports or flights of the spirit. Also, these raptures are rare and hardly ever in public. They are also not occasioned (as they were before) by devotional images or music. Almost nothing is heard.

The butterfly is no longer easily frightened because she has found rest. She has seen so much of the Mansion that she is no longer alone. She enjoys His companionship. I do not really know why, but when the Lord brings souls into this Mansion they lose their great weakness (which was such a trial). He has equipped the soul and is anxious to make a public revelation of His inner workings.

The Kiss

Whenever the soul approaches Him God bestows these affects. He also bestows that kiss which the bride sought. To this wounded deer are given waters in abundance and delights in God's dwelling place (Rev.21:3). Like Noah's dove, the soul has found the olive branch, a sign of firm ground amidst the storms.

Oh Jesus, in how many places Scripture describes this peace. Please inspire Christians to seek it. Do not take this peace away from those to whom you have given it until they find peace without end. War can always break out if the soul withdraws from God.

As the soul receives these favors, she grows more fearful that she will lose these blessings. She has seen her own wickedness compared to God's greatness. Her sins seem so serious that she feels like the Publican and dares not lift her head (Lk.18:13). She wants to reach heaven quickly and yet she wants to live longer to serve God, trusting all to His mercy. The favors leave her overwhelmed like a ship that would sink from its weighty cargo.

Sisters, I assure you, the soul does not lack crosses but she is not deprived of peace. The few storms pass quickly. Fair weather returns and the Lord's presence causes her to forget everything.

CHAPTER 7.4 MARTHA AND MARY

Topic: Work Amid Repose

In explaining these favors, I have used the word "habitually" not "continually" because these effects are not present all the time. Sometimes the Lord leaves the soul alone to her own nature. Then all the poisonous things gather to take revenge because for so long they had no power over her.

This trial lasts just a short time (a day or so) and shows the soul how strong she has become because of what her Divine Companion is doing. The Spouse gives her great determination to be faithful to her good resolutions.

Imperfections

These resolutions increase and the soul doesn't move from her resolve. When the Lord permits her to break her resolve, He wants the soul to be humble and to realize what a great favor she is receiving. Although the soul has vehement desires for perfection, she still has many imperfections and even sins. These are not intentional and are venial sins. The soul is free of mortal sins, although still able to commit them.

Grief Over Lost Souls

The soul is distressed at so many souls being lost. She is not among them. She is fearful as she recalls how favored Solomon was. She remembers David's words, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord" (Ps. 102:1). May God always protect us from sin. This is our greatest security.

I will speak more so you do not think that the Lord grants these favors for the soul's pleasure. That would be a great error. He bestows these gifts so the soul imitates His Son. He strengthens the soul's weakness so she can bear Jesus' sufferings.

Trials of the Saints

Those closest to Christ had the greatest trials. Consider Mary and the apostles. How did St. Paul bear such trials? He did so through the effects of his contemplation. Paul didn't shut himself up to enjoy his visions. He worked day and night to earn his living and to preach the gospel.

I am fond of the story of Christ telling Peter to return to Rome to be crucified. When Peter received this favor he went straight to his death. The Lord did him another favor in providing someone to kill him

Children of the Spiritual Marriage

Sisters, do not think about rest, or honors, or esteem. If the Lord takes up His abode within your soul, you will forget yourself and think of ways to please Him. This is the purpose of Spiritual Marriage whose children are good works and good works alone.

These works are a good sign because we can make many resolutions and be too weak to carry them out. When God sees the soul's fears, He sends her trials. These do much good because she realizes that she has lost her fears and can offer herself to Him.

Resolutions With Deeds

Full progress comes only when the soul's deeds match her resolutions. Only little by little can the soul subdue her own will. Reflect carefully on this. Fix your eyes on the Crucified. Let nothing else have any importance. If Jesus suffered for you, how can you please Him by words alone? People become really spiritual when they are slaves of God and branded with His cross. He can then do the soul a great favor by using her as His slave.

Need For Resolve

Without this resolve, the soul makes no progress. Humility is the whole foundation of the edifice and a tall building needs a strong foundation. Therefore, seek to be a slave of God. Seek to be the least of all, the one who serves all your companions. If so, your castle will not fall.

Need For Virtues

Do not build your foundation only on prayer but strive also for virtues. Otherwise you will only be dwarfs. I hope that nothing worse happens to you. Whoever fails to go forward must go backward. Love is never content to stay still.

I am not talking about beginners. Even advanced souls can rest only interiorly. They seek no outward repose. The very purpose of these aspirations from the soul's center is the good of those outside the castle and outside of this seventh Mansion.

What is the purpose of these messages sent from the soul's center? The soul is not to sleep but to fight harder to keep its faculties and its body working. Before, the soul did not understand her companionship with God that now gives her so much strength. Made one with the Strong, the soul appreciates the strength of the saints to suffer and die.

Helping Others

With this strength the soul helps everyone inside the castle, including her own body. The Spouse leads the soul to the wine cellar. She drinks wine and is strengthened. This strength flows everywhere just as earthly food digested in the stomach strengthens the whole body.

In this life, the soul experiences great distress. Having so much inner strength, she believes that what she accomplishes is very little. This is why the saints did such great penances, especially the glorious Magdalene. This is why our father Elijah hungered (1Kg.19:10), and Dominic and Francis had such zeal.

Mary and Martha

Sisters, we engage in prayer not for our enjoyment but to acquire strength for service. Let us not waste our time by walking an untrodden path. When they offered the Lord lodging, Martha and Mary had to work together. Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet, needed Martha to give Jesus something to eat. His food is souls which are brought to Him in every possible way.

You ask, "Did not Mary choose the better part? I say that she already did the work of Martha by washing *His feet*. Certainly for her to go through the streets, enter a strange house and put up with the uncharitable talk was great mortification. What a sight to see a woman change her life!

Her anointing of Jesus got the Pharisees to recall her past life. Mary's better part came only after trials and mortifications. Even in her later years she suffered because His absence was a terrible torment for her who had enjoyed this contemplation.

Helping Souls While In the Cloister

You also ask, "How can we lead souls to God when we are in a cloister, for we cannot preach? I have often answered this objection in writing. The devil places ambitious thoughts in our hearts so we desire the impossible and neglect the work at hand.

Pray for everyone but do not try to help everybody. Focus your work upon your companions to whom you have a greater obligation. It is a great thing to be a servant of all and to awaken each other's zeal. By doing what you can do, the Lord knows you would do much more. He will reward you as if you had won many souls.

You say, "We will be converting no one. Our sisters are already good". Remember, if they become better, their prayers have greater value for others. We cannot build towers without foundations. Do not begin to grow weary. Accomplish what you can in this short life, offering to the Lord whatever sacrifice we can. Christ will unite His merits to our work. May God give me the grace to do some of these things. Please don't forget this miserable creature in your prayers.

CONCLUSION

I began to write this with great reluctance. Now that it is finished, I believe my time has been well spent.

Because *you are* cloistered and have little time for recreation, I hope you delight in your Interior Castle. You can enter this castle without the superior's permission.

Remember, only the Lord admits you to the castle, so don't try to enter by your own strength. If you find resistance, make no effort to enter. He loves humility and if you feel unworthy of even the first three Mansions, He will admit you quickly to the fifth. Then you can go to these Mansions again and again until He brings you to the reserved Mansions. Then you must leave only at the order of the Prioress. When you are outside

(involved in good works) the doors will stay open. Having learned to enjoy this interior Castle, you will find rest in everything.

Many Apartments

Although I have spoken of only seven Mansions, each soul contains many more apartments with lovely fountains and delectable things. These will cause you to praise God who created you in His image.

I have tried to be of some use. As you read this, praise His Majesty. Beg Him to bless the Church, enlighten the Lutherans, pardon my sins, free me from purgatory, (where by God's mercy I might be when you read this, if it even gets published). All errors are my fault and I submit all to the judgment of the Church in which I hope always to live and to die.

Finished in 1577 in St. Joseph Convent in Avila. Glory to God. Amen.