

## 07. Teachers of Friendship: Teresa and John



I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. Jn 15:15



I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. Jn 10:10

William Barry SJ, A Friendship Like No Other: Experiencing God's Amazing Embrace.

I maintain that God - out of the abundance of divine relational life, not any need for us - desires humans into existence for the sake of friendship.

➤ To trust the experience of God as friend, we must move beyond our feelings of fear of God.

➤ an enduring tradition of identifying caritas (love or charity) with friendship and thus defining God as friendship

➤ 'for you, most excellent Theophilus' Lk 1:3 & Acts 1  
- beloved, lover or friend of God. (If you love God, it is written to you.)  
- Liz Carmichael, Friendship: Interpreting Christian Love, p40

➤ 12th century England, Aelred of the Cistercian Abbey of Rievaulx made a Christian version of Cicero's book on friendship

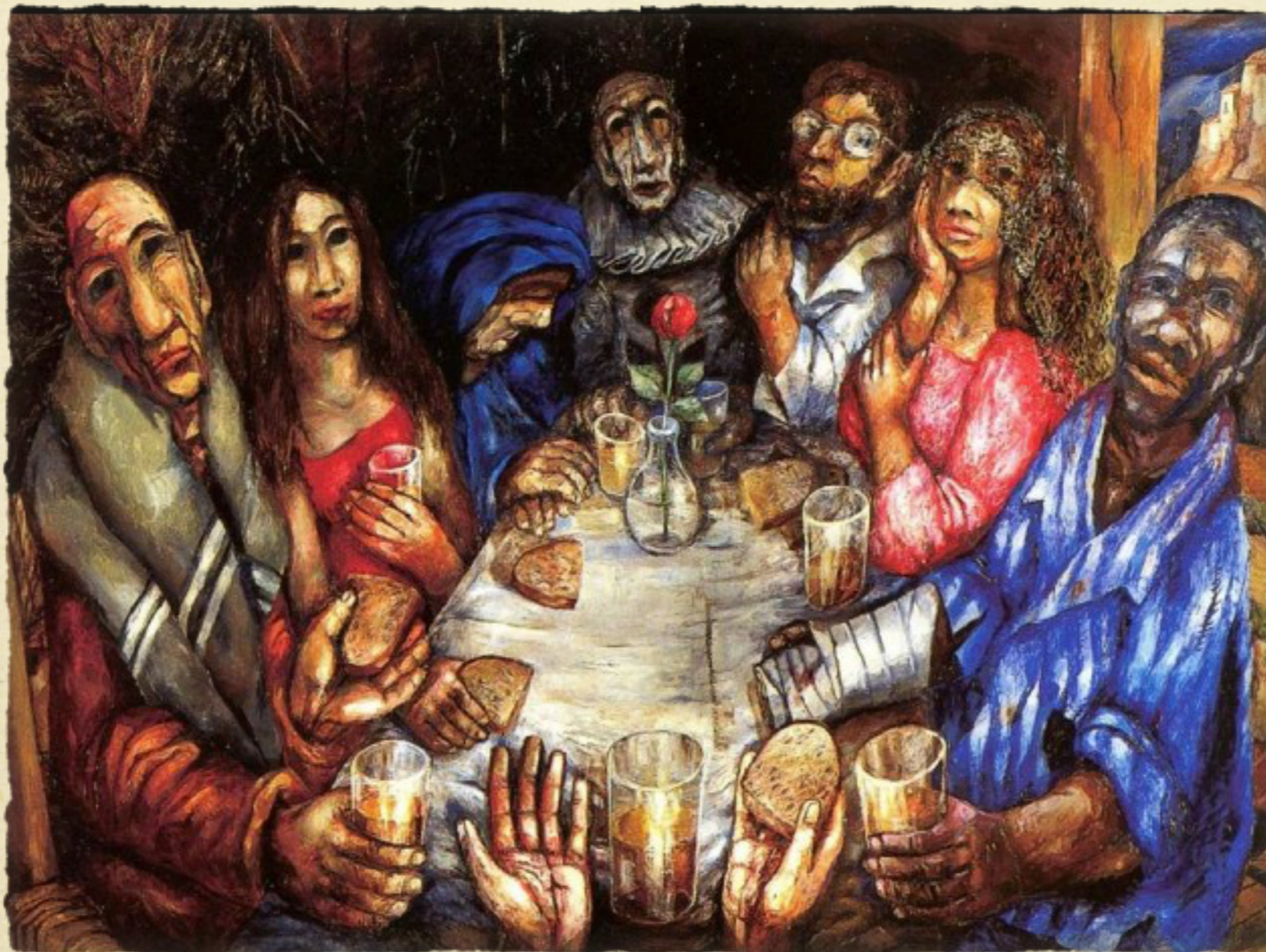
- developed his own variant of John's "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16)  
"Shall I say God is friendship?"

➤ Thomas Aquinas defined caritas as friendship with God  
"Deus caritas est." 1 Jn 4:8



➤ friendship with God leads to a wider and wider circle of friends as we realise that God's desire for friendship includes all people

...the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. Mt11:19



Sieger Koder

John of the Cross

1542-1591



Teresa of Jesus

1515-1582



TERESA of AVILA



JOHN of the CROSS



Doctors of the universal Church for what they have to say about contemplative prayer.

They speak of the deep things of God, a complete love immersion in God.

They address all who desire a serious prayer life and aspire to live the Gospel with a totality of self.

Their lives are stories of prayer, of joy; love stories that reach the height of holiness to which the gospel invites us all.

## *Teresa*

- born into wealth
- mother died in childbirth
- no formal theological education
- experienced the ecstasies about which she wrote



## *John*

- born in poverty
- widowed mother Teresa
- educated by the Jesuits
- ecstatic prayer experiences



## *Resemblances:*

- agree on the unity of the human person and the interdependence of the body and spirit
- insist on three prerequisites for Christian life:  
love for God and for one another, emotional detachment from people and created things, and true humility.
- The quality of prayer and the quality of life are mutually influential.
- disapproved of ostentatious asceticism and self-annihilation for its own sake



- Teresa is convinced that heaven will mean enjoying God, but it will also mean a continuation of human friendships and love.
  - Their teachings are nothing more or less than the Gospel. Their focus is Jesus.
  - described the observable path into communion with God, yet with no expectation that people would conform to the described stages.
  - wise counsellors who realized that God leads each person differently
  - In every case, God provides what is necessary for the journey.
- Mystics Visionaries and Prophets: A Historical Anthology of Women's Spiritual Writings, Shawn Madigan csj ed. pp247-249



# Friendship with Jesus

If Christ Jesus dwells in us as our friend and noble leader, then we can endure all things, for Christ helps and strengthens us and never abandons us. He is a true friend. Life 22

Enter within your heart  
and work in the presence of the  
Bridegroom,  
who is always present,  
loving you well.

Sayings of Light and Love, 90



## Friendship with others

Her writings and letters give us an impressive doctrine on close human relationships.



Thomas Dubay, SM, Fire Within: St Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross and the Gospel -  
on Prayer.

The transforming union is the mainspring of her tenderly warm human relationships. The Teresa in union with God is the same Teresa who is fiercely loyal and tender in human relationships.

Divine love produces human love. There is only one virtue of charity, and by it we love God, ourselves and neighbour. As we grow in loving God, the result of our deepening prayer, we must be growing in loving ourselves and our brothers and sisters. The various loves cannot be separated.

Those who say 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. 1 Jn 4:20, 21

These words have been fulfilled, for I have never again been able to tie myself to any friendship or to find consolation in or bear particular love for any other persons than those I understand love Him and strove to serve Him; nor is it in my power to do so, nor does it matter whether they are friends or relatives . If I'm not aware that the person seeks to love and serve God or to speak about prayer, it is a painful cross for me to deal with him. Life Ch 24:6



Teresa loved deeply. Yet she wasn't indiscriminate in her affection. She could be close only to those she called "spiritual persons." Foundations Ch 30

So immersed were her friendships in God she considered a friend's growing closer to God as a real proof of love for herself. "I beg your Reverence" she wrote to a priest, "that we may all be made for love of Him who for love of us was called mad. Since your Reverence says that you love me, prove it to me by preparing yourself so that God may grant you this favour." Life Ch16:6





Teresa had an extraordinary capacity to love on a human level. Speaking of her the Saint's love for Bishop Alvaro de Mendoza, who had given her constant support, Marcelle Auclair comments that "she gave him her affection till he died, as she alone knew how to give it - an affection that was the most reverent, most tender and most exacting in the world. p277

Teresa looked upon friendship as a source of mutual aid in our pilgrimage to the fatherland - a concept that nicely integrates our propensity toward human intimacy with our even deeper need for God. To four of her trusted friends she wrote:

I should like the five of us who at present love each other in Christ to make a kind of pact that since others in these times gather together in secret against His Majesty to prepare wicked deeds and heresies, we might seek to gather together some time to free each other from illusion and to speak about how we might mend our ways and please God more since no one knows himself as well as others who observe him if they do so with love and concern for his progress. I say we should gather in secret because this kind of talk is no longer in fashion. Even preachers are composing their sermons so as not to displease. Life 16:7 Dubay, pp273,274

Since I believe that my confessors stand so truly in the place of God, I think they are the ones for whom I feel the most benevolence. Since I am always very fond of those who guide my soul and since I felt secure, I showed them that I liked them. They, as God-fearing servants of the Lord, were afraid lest in any way I would become attached and bound to this love, even though in a holy way, and they showed me their displeasure.

This happened after I became so subject to obeying them, for before that I didn't experience this love. I laughed to myself to see how mistaken they were, although I didn't always express so clearly how little attached I was to anyone. But I assured them; and as they got to know me better they realised what I owed to the Lord, for these suspicions they had about me always came at the beginning of our acquaintance. Life ch 37;5

- to one of her favourite nuns “I assure you that I very much appreciate what you say about feeling lonely without me...Believe me, I have a great affection for you...You will not say I am not writing you plenty of letters. See that you write me plenty, too, for I love hearing from you.” Letter 99 to Maria de San Jose
- “I should like to go on and on - I don’t know how I can bear to go so far away from one to whom I owe so much and whom I love so dearly.” Letter 6 to Dona Luisa de la Cerda
- “May the Lord preserve you many years, and permit me to enjoy your friendship, for indeed I love you in the Lord.” Letter 24 to Don Alonso Ramirez
- “How much your letters cheer me...May God grant you to live until I die, and then I shall ask our Lord to take you quickly, so that I may not be parted from you in Heaven.” Letter 10



If I could, I would write to you so often that I should not let you sleep.  
Letter 308 to Maria de Jesus

I don't know why it is, but in spite of all the annoyance your Reverence causes me, I cannot help loving you dearly, and all my displeasure passes in a moment. Letter 307 Maria de San Jose

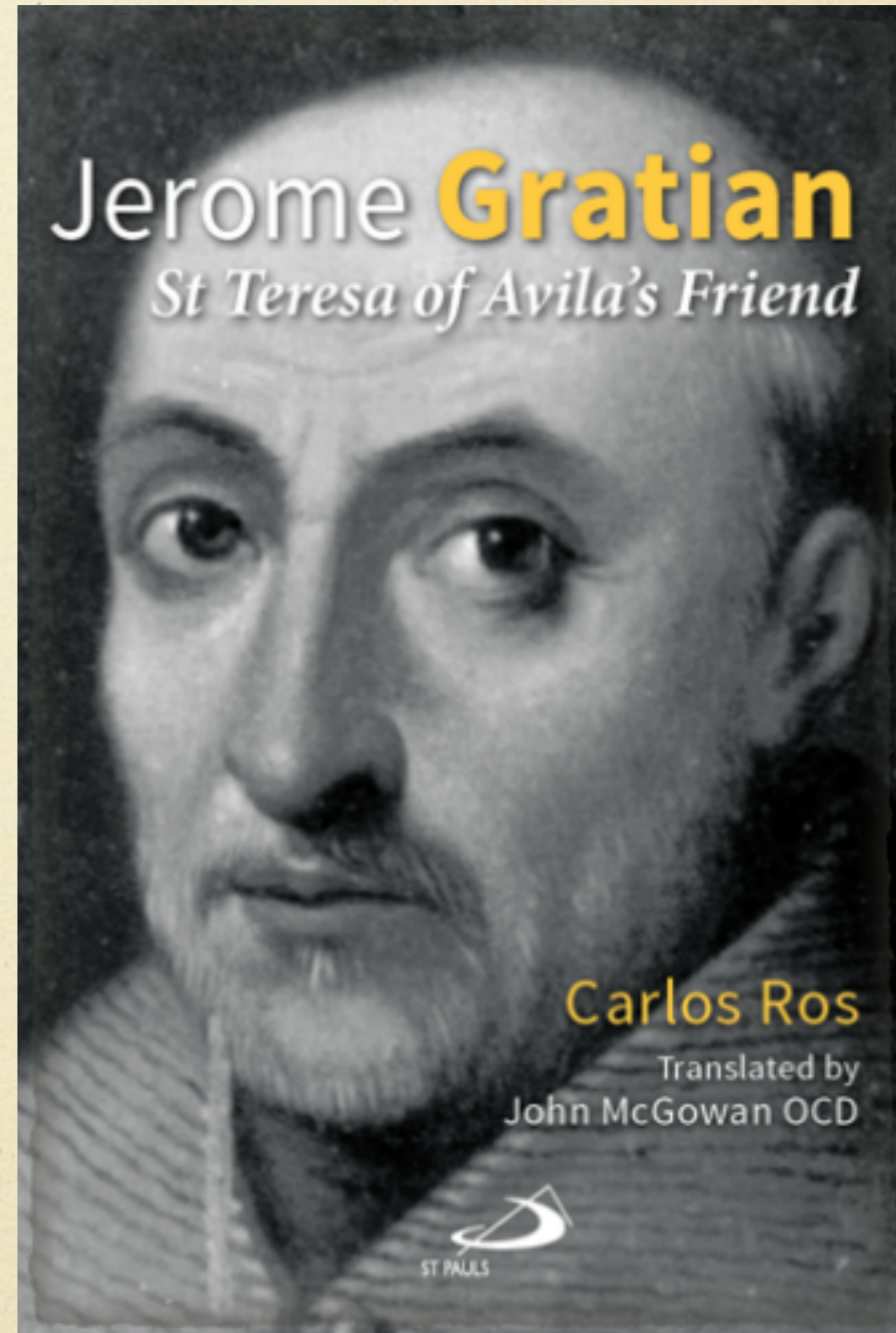
All the nuns were amazed to find how clever you are, and are very, very grateful to you, and so am I, for it is quite clear how much you love me from the way you give me pleasure in everything. I have known that all the time - and I can assure you that the love on my side is even greater, for I am amazed at my affection for you. You must not imagine I love anyone more than you, for not all the nuns appeal so much to my nature. Letter 233

O Jesus, how wonderful it is  
when two should understand  
each other! They never lack  
anything today and never grow  
weary of saying it.

Letter 146 to Gratian

You write like an angel. Oh how  
much lonelier my soul gets each  
day when I am so far from your  
Paternity.

Letter 278 to Gratian



I became afflicted in seeing I was without him, since I had no one to whom I could have recourse in this tribulation. It seemed to me I was living in great loneliness, and this loneliness increased when I saw that there was no one now but him who might give me comfort and that he had to be absent most of the time, which was a great torment to me.

Testimony 53, no 1

I have been wondering which of the two your Paternity loves better - Señora Dona Juana (Gratian's mother), who, I reflected, has a husband and her other children to love her, or poor Laurencia, who has no one else in the world but you, her Father. May it please God to preserve him to her. Amen

Letter III to Gratian

If anything could give me any pleasure, it would be to see Paul (her code name for Gratian). Be sure you do not fail to write to me - and a long letter, too - for you know what a comfort to me your letters are. Letters 146,305

I have the saintly Paul with me and no one can make me break my promise to that saint. Letter 239

The love I have for you in the Lord...produces a natural weakness in me and makes me very resentful that everybody should not realise what they owe to you, and how you have laboured, and I am unable to stand hearing a word against you. Letter 350 to Gratian.

And she revealed to one of her nuns that she loved her even more when she saw how she loved Gratian and was concerned about him. Letter 95 Brianda de San Jose

For many reasons it is permissible for me to feel great affection for you and to show it in the dealings we have together. But it is not permissible for all the other nuns to do so.

I say and do things which are allowable in me because of my age and because I know whom I am dealing with. Do me the kindness, as I have begged you, of not reading in public the letters I write you. Just as I should not like anyone to overhear my conversation with God or to disturb me when I am alone with Him, so it is with Paul. Letter 135

I am very anxious to know if you are well...For love of Our Lord, do try to write me soon...It will be very cruel of you if you fail to write; even if you cannot send me a long letter, just let me know how you are.....May his Majesty preserve you to me and give me enough patience to last me all this time I am having to endure without seeing your writing. Letter 95 to Brianda de San Jose

How can this woman, who found so much delight and fulfilment in her deep communion with unending Beauty, desire and experience comfort in mere human beings?

Even if gifted with contemplation, we still need and appreciate the understanding and caring of a spiritual director and spiritual friend. Of course, Jesus himself desired the companionship and support of his disciples in his agony. Teresa (we too) are in good company. p272



## Traits of Holy friendship

- Teresa's human love was theocentric because immersed in God, her friendships enjoyed the security of tenderness, patience, durability, and permanence.
  - A genuine friend experiences an intense longing that the other party be immersed in God. (ie the relationship is informed by the divine and the closeness is not a mere need satisfaction)
  - I've experienced this for some years: as soon as I see a person who greatly pleases me, with longings I sometimes cannot bear, I want to see him give himself totally to God. And though I desire that all serve God, the longings come with very great impulses in the case of these persons I like; so I beg the Lord very much on their behalf.
- Life Ch 34:7

➤ True friends correct each other, realising this gospel admonition is an act of love and nothing less. Mt 18:15

➤ Rebukes Gratian complaining that he had added too many obligations to the nun's keeping of their rule.

➤ Those whom I love I rebuke and chastise. Rev 3:19

➤ When I really love anyone, I am so anxious she should not go astray that I become unbearable....true friendship does not express itself in covering up things...bad though you are, I wish I had a few more like you...what silly things you said in that letter, just to get your own way. Letter 302 to Maria San Jose



To Maria San de Jose:

True friendship does not express itself in covering up things....God grant that you are telling the truth: I should be delighted if you were, but you are a fox, and I expect there is a subterfuge about it somewhere.

Contemplation brings about a sensitivity to beauty. So a reflective person sees far more beauty in a tulip than a superficial one sees. God put the fear of him into their hearts to show them the majesty of his works. Sir 17:7-8



As a person grows in prayer, they put on the mind of God more and more, and so they see others as “precious... God’s beloved...sacred temples.....transformed from one glory to another.

Is43:4 Rom 1:7 1 Cor 3:16-17 2 Cor 3:18

Teresa saw a spiritual friend  
as a way of having God and of  
possessing Him still more  
deeply.



When you make the acquaintance of any such person, sisters, the Mother Prioress should employ every possible effort to keep you in touch with them. Love such persons as much as you like, There can be very few of them, but none the less it is the Lord's will that their goodness should be known. When one of you is striving after perfection, she will at once be told that she has no need to know such people, that to is enough for her to have God. But to get to know God's friends is a very good way of "having" Him; as I have discovered by experiences, it is most helpful. Way ch 7

## Discerning genuine friendship

She taught us detachment from all things saying that those who were not detached from visible things could not enjoy the invisible ones nor would they reach high contemplation.. Even her affection for her superior or confessor she feared, striving not to be with them nor writing to them more than she need, for she was most careful to avoid her own pleasure. Depositions Ana of Jesus

➤ The love is rooted in deeper, permanent qualities rather than bodily beauty or natural qualities.

➤ The closeness among authentic friends is selfless “all that this soul wishes and desires is to see the soul it loves enriched with blessings from heaven Way Ch 7

➤ Genuine friends welcome being admonished if they stray or commit faults.

➤ their closeness is permanent

One digs to find eternally loveable beauty in the other and if one digs deeply gold will be found within the mine of the Beloved.

Way Ch 6

➤ authentic friendship can be known only by experiences



It was a great comfort for me to get your letter, not that it is anything new, for your letters rest me as much as other people's letters weary me. I assure you that, if you love me dearly, I for my part return your love, and like you to tell me of yours. How unmistakeable a trait of our nature is this wish for our love to be returned! Yet it cannot be wrong, for Our Lord wishes it too...Let us be like him even in a thing like this. Letter 385 to Maria San de Jose





NT takes for granted that Christians are to express their love visibly and tangibly. The father receives back the prodigal son with an embrace and a tender kiss. Jesus embraces children before he blesses them, He weeps at the tomb of Lazarus. The apostles admonish the faithful to greet one another with a holy kiss. Her concept of friendship was in total accord with what we find in the Scriptures.

He is a divine heavenly man.... You would never believe how lonely I feel without him... He is indeed the Father of my soul. Letter 261

People look upon him as a saint, which in my opinion he is and has been all his life. Letter 240





A soul enkindled with love is a gentle,  
meek, humble and patient soul.

Sayings of Light and Love, 27,28

The ultimate reason for everything  
is love Canticle 38.5

You yourself are his dwelling Canticle 1.7

IS God my primary concern?

Some put off by John's stark language of radical surrender, but when we make a choice for love, then renunciation follows naturally. (referred nuns to poetry when Ascent too harsh for them.)

Wayne Simsic, Seeking the Beloved, p27,28

- Transformation into the divine was apparent in his active caring for others.
- total love for God and people
- begged alms for the nuns at the Incarnation
- gave care to sick friars
- special love for the nuns at Beas 'my beloved daughters in Christ'
  - Mother Ana de Jesus
  - Let us rejoice, beloved, and let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty.

The power and tenacity of love is great,  
for love captures and binds God himself.

Canticle 32.1

We have the capacity to hold God close  
through love. Prayer forges the bond of  
relationship. Simsic, p28



The more you remember your friend, the more you remember  
the love of God and the greater your desire to love God.  
(The Dark Night 1.4.7)



Love is the soul's inclination, strength, and power for the soul in making its way to God, for love unites it with God. The more degrees of love it has, the more deeply it enters into God and centres itself in him" (Flame 1.13).

What invitations have you experienced to give yourself completely to another in friendship? to God's love?

Where in your life has God's love been most evident?

