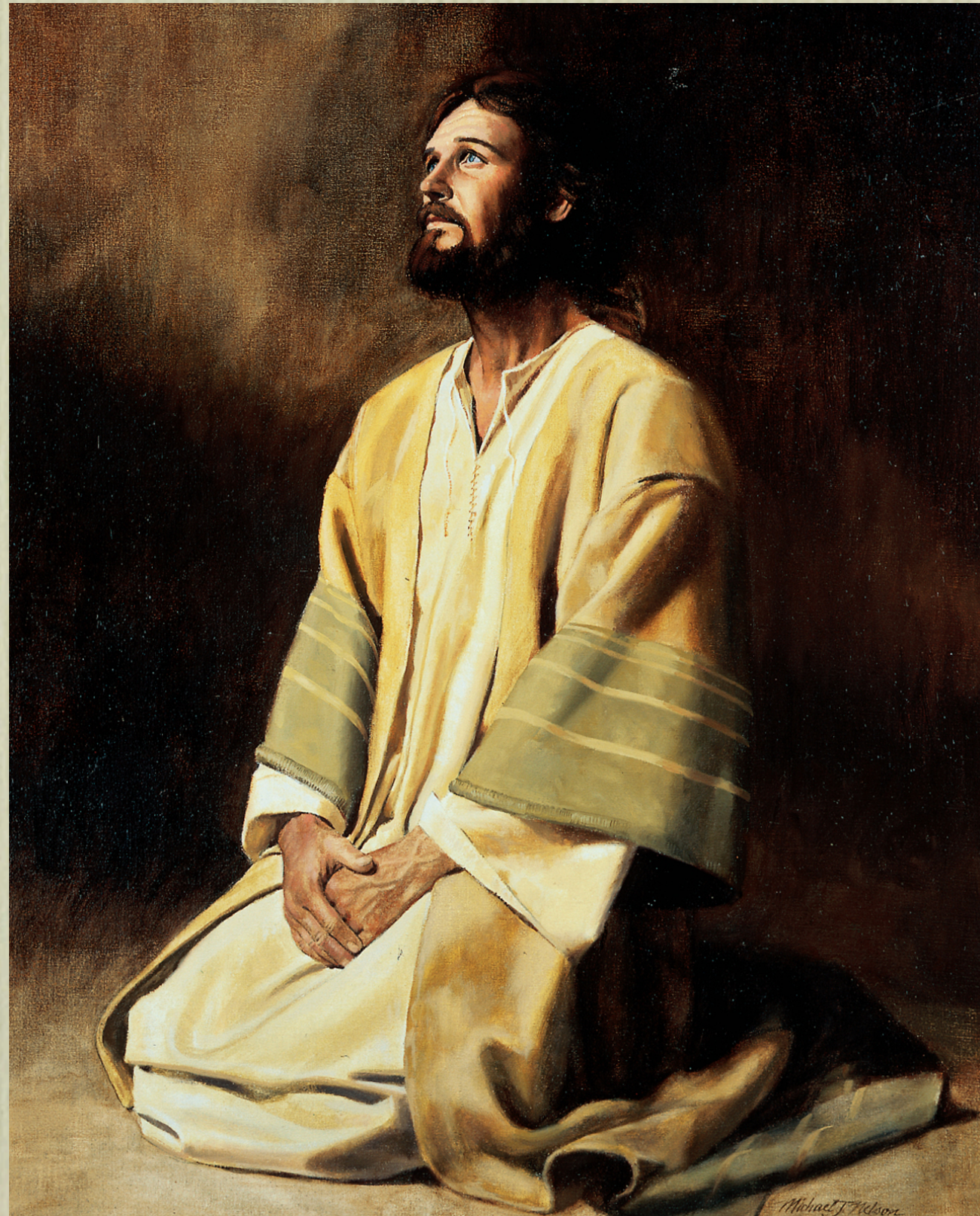


02. Meditation



Prayer

Prayer for Teresa is essentially something very simple.
She speaks of it as ‘an exercise of love’ (*Life* 7.12).

‘an intimate sharing between friends ... taking time frequently to be alone with God who we know loves us’ (*Life* 8.5).

‘The soul is a paradise where the Lord finds his delight’
(*Interior Castle* I.1.1).

‘In its centre very secret exchanges between God and the soul take place’ (*Interior Castle* I.1.3)

‘It is foolish to think that we will enter heaven without entering into ourselves, without coming to know ourselves’ (*Interior Castle* II.1.II).

The Initiative is God's (The Impact of God by Iain Matthew)

‘All the initiative belongs to the Other.’

‘What we find filling John's mind
is a God who is, supremely, active.’

‘*You* are piercing, repaying, slaying, giving life, waking, breathing;
you did seem oppressive, but it was *you* who seemed it;
you may tear the veil but it has to be *you*.

If ‘my’ soul gives radiance it is because *you* shine on it;
and if ‘I’ love, it is because *your* love awakens it.’

‘John's God anticipates, initiates, gives, transforms, like a flame
entering till it engages the deepest centre. John's universe is
drenched in a self-outpouring God.’

‘As we sound John’s experience at its most authentic, we find this to be the reality he knew: a God who is pressing in to give God’s self’ (page 26).

‘I am yours, and for you, and I am pleased to be as I am that I may be yours and give myself to you’ (Flame 3.6).

‘If you are seeking God, know that much more is God seeking you.’
(Flame 3.28).

‘God’s purpose is to make the soul great’ (Flame 2.3).

‘When the deep caverns of the soul are empty and pure, the thirst and hunger and sense of spiritual longing is more than can be borne ... The capacity of these caverns is deep, because that which they can hold is deep and infinite; and that is God’ (Flame 3.18, 22).

We must ‘set our eyes on Christ’ (*Interior Castle* I.2.II).

‘Look on Him and reflect’ (*Interior Castle* II.1.II)

‘Care only about moving quickly so as to see the Lord.’

(*Interior Castle* III.2.8).

Be with Jesus

‘It is well to reflect for a time ... but we must sometimes remain by his side with our minds hushed in silence. If we can, we should occupy ourselves in looking upon him who is looking at us; keep him company; talk with him; pray to him; humble ourselves before him; have our delight in him’ (*Life*, 13.22).

‘You need never withdraw from this loving communion ... Go within yourself even during your ordinary occupations. If you can recall the companionship which you have within your soul for as much as a moment it will help you greatly’ (*Way of Perfection* 29.5).

‘Do you think the Lord is silent? Even though we do not hear Him, he speaks to the heart when we beseech him from the heart’ (*Way of Perfection* 24.5).

Longing

‘God’s favours and visits are generally in accord with the intensity of the yearnings and ardours of love which precede them’ (Spiritual Canticle 13,2).

‘God does not give grace and love except according to the soul’s desire and love. The more the soul desires and loves, the more God gives’ (Spiritual Canticle 13,12).

‘Since the soul lives with that driving force of a fathomless desire for union with God, any delay whatsoever is burdensome and disturbing’ (Spiritual Canticle 17,1).

‘The waters of inward delights do not spring from the earth. One must open toward heaven the mouth of desire, empty of all else that might fill it: “Open wide your mouth that I might fill it”[Psalm 81:10]’ (Letter, 18th November 1586).

‘If only, on your silvered-over face, you would suddenly form they eyes
I so long for, which I bear sketched deep within my heart’ (SC, 12)

In commenting on these lines, John states that ‘it seems that
the Beloved is now always looking at the one he loves’ (SC 12.5).

Later in Stanza 32 he writes: ‘When you looked at me, your
eyes imprinted in me your grace, so ardently did you love me.’

‘God’s gaze is his love, and his love does things.

God’s gaze works four blessings in the soul:

it cleanses, makes beautiful, enriches and enlightens’ (Matthew page 28).

‘It is for you to look at him; he never takes his eyes off you’ (*Way of Perfection*, 26.3).

Prayer is essentially a welcoming of God’s mysterious presence.

We each have to find our own unique way of responding to God’s loving invitation to communion. We each have to find our own way of praying.

At the same time there are some general principles that can guide us in our response, and we can learn much from the teaching of those, like Teresa, who have journeyed in prayer and who have given expression to what they have learned along the way.

‘Where God is concerned, love is never idle, it is in continuous movement’ (Flame 1.8).

‘God presence is like a song that is new, always new, wrapped round with joy and love’ (Flame 2.36).

‘Permeating John’s reflections on prayer is an awareness of a self-communicating God, a God whose plan is to fill us with nothing less than himself.’

‘The Flame is a person, “the Spirit of your Bridegroom”, the Breath of Christ’

I. Reciting Prayers

‘If you are to recite the Our Father well, one thing is necessary: you must not leave the side of the Master who taught it to you’(*Way of Perfection* 24.5)

‘While you are repeating some vocal prayer, it is possible for the Lord to grant you perfect contemplation ... You are enkindled in love without understanding how. You know that you are rejoicing in the one you love, but you do not know how. You are well aware that this is not a joy which you can attain through understanding. You embrace it without understanding how, but you do understand that it is a blessing you are receiving ... This is perfect contemplation ... In contemplation we can do nothing. God does everything. The work is God’s alone and far transcends human nature’ (*Way of Perfection* 25).

2. Reflective Meditation

‘I spent over fourteen years without ever being able to meditate except while reading’ (*Way of Perfection* 17)

‘These souls work almost continually with the intellect, engaging in discursive thought and meditation.. And they do well because nothing further has been given to them, although it would be good if they engaged for a while in making acts of love, praising God, rejoicing in his goodness, that he is who he is, and in desiring God’s honour and glory. These acts should be made as far as possible, for they are great awakeners of the will. Such souls would be well advised when the Lord gives them these acts not to abandon them for the sake of finishing the usual meditation’ (*Interior Castle* IV.1.6).

‘Since I could not reflect discursively with the intellect, I strove to picture Christ within me, and it did me greater good - in my opinion - to picture him in those scenes where I saw him more alone. It seemed to me that being alone and afflicted, as someone in need, He had to accept me. I had many simple thoughts like these. The scene of his prayer in the garden, especially, was a comfort to me. I strove to be his companion there. If I could, I thought of the sweat and agony He had undergone in that place. I desired to wipe away the sweat He so painfully experienced, but I recall that I never dared to actually do it, since my sins appeared to me so serious. I remained with him as long as my thoughts allowed me to, for there were many distractions that tormented me’(*Life* 9:4).

‘I am not asking you now that you think about him, or that you draw out a lot of concepts, or make long and subtle reflections with your intellect. I am not asking you to do anything more than look at him. Who can keep you from turning the eyes of your soul towards the Lord? ... In the measure you desire him you will find him... He never takes his eyes off you’(*Way of Perfection* 26.3).

‘There is nothing to hinder you and your Spouse from remaining alone together, when you desire to enter within yourself, to shut the door behind you and to dwell in that Paradise with your God ... Remember this is not a supernatural state. It is something you can do if you resolve to do it’(*Way of Perfection* 29).

‘For a better understanding of this beginner’s stage,
it should be known that the practice of beginners is to meditate
and make acts and discursive reflection with the imagination.
Those in this state should be given matter for meditation
and discursive reflection, and they should by themselves
make interior acts and profit in spiritual things
from the delight and satisfaction of the senses.
For by being fed with the relish of spiritual things,
the appetite is torn away from sensual things
and weakened in regard to the things of the world’ (Flame 3.32).

John's advice to novices, quoted by Iain Matthew on page 143,
from José de Jesús Maria Quiroga, *Don que tuvo San Juan de la Cruz*,
printed in Ruiz (1968) pp. 511-512)

'The first thing is to summon up the mysteries of Jesus by imagining them. Be present to Jesus as he sits wearied at the well, hot, alone, waiting (John 4). 'Imagine', not in detail, but impressionistically, as entering, not observing.

Then ponder in your mind the mystery you have evoked. Jesus is there, weary, for me ... He demands no expiation; he wants to quench thirst with living water ... He allows me to be with him,

Third, attentiveness to God in loving stillness: this is where the fruit of the other activities is plucked, and where the door of the mind is opened to God's light. Attentive in love; desire him there; adore him there; be with him in faith.

Indwelling Trinity

1562 Experience of the Indwelling Trinity (Interior Castle VII.1.6-10)

‘Don’t try to hold me within yourself.
Try to hold yourself within me’ (Spiritual Testimonies 14).



John 1:18

‘No one has ever seen God. It is God’s only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made God known.’

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
And I will ask **the Father**, who will give you
another **Advocate**, to be **with you forever**. This is
the **Spirit** of truth, whom the world cannot receive,
because it neither sees him nor knows him.
You know him, because he abides with you.
The **Spirit** will be in you.

I will not leave you orphaned; **I am coming to you ...**

If you love me you will keep my word,
and **my Father** will love you, and **we will come to you
and make our home in you** (John 14:15-18, 23).

Jesus dwells in us.

He shares with us his prayer
his communion with God, his Spirit
his divinity

‘I live, no longer I, Christ lives in me’(Galatians 2:20).

‘All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord
as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into
the same image from one degree of glory to another; for
this comes from the Lord, the Spirit’(2Corinthians 3:18).

‘It seemed to me that, like a sponge all penetrated and
saturated with water, my soul was filled with the divinity,
and that it was truly enjoying, in some way, the presence of
the Three’ (*Relations* XI, June 1571).