

BRINGING THE CARMELITE SAINTS ALIVE

NINETEENTH EDITION 2025 (THIS MONTH I PRESENTED ST. TERESA LIVE)



IN THIS MONTH OF OCTOBER, WE WILL BE HIGHLIGHTING ST. TERESA OF JESUS (AVILA) WHOSE FEAST DAY IS OCTOBER 15TH



“THE FIRST THING THAT SOULS MUST DO IF THEY EMBARK ON THE PATH OF HOLINESS IS REALLY TO WANT TO BE SAINTS. WHATEVER MAY COME, WHATEVER MAY HAPPEN TO THEM, HOWEVER HARD THEY MAY HAVE TO LABOR, WHOEVER

MAY COMPLAIN OF THEM, WHETHER THEY REACH THEIR GOAL OR DIE ON THE ROAD.”

St. Teresa beautifully describes her experience with the four different degrees of prayer as four different ways of watering a garden. St. Teresa envisions the soul of one who desires to love and serve God as a garden-God has done the work of planting good seed, and it is up to us to diligently tend and water these plants in the garden of our soul.

The FIRST way is to draw a bucket of water from a well and carry it around the garden. This first degree of prayer takes a great deal of effort, sometimes with very little apparent return. As we are beginning to grow in the life of prayer, we must work hard to establish the habit of prayer, to ignore distractions, and to remain faithful in the battle of prayer.

“What will the gardener do here? He will rejoice and be consoled and consider it the greatest favor to be able to work in the garden of so great an Emperor! He doesn’t fear that the labor is being wasted. He is serving a good Master whose eyes are upon him.”
St. Teresa of Jesus, The Book of Her Life

The SECOND way is to get water from the well by turning a windlass or waterwheel and to distribute the water through aqueducts. This degree of prayer also requires effort on our part, but not as much as the first. Teresa says this degree of prayer is a gift from God, not something the soul gains by its own efforts. But we must put in the work first before we are ready to receive the gift: “God gives only to the extent that we efficaciously desire, that is, not merely wish something to happen but take concrete means to fit ourselves to receive it.” (Father Thomas Dubay, S.M., Fire Within)

The THIRD way is a stream that waters the garden. This degree of prayer is even more clearly God’s gift than the second degree. We must still work to direct the water through irrigation channels from the stream to all parts of the garden, but “The Lord so desires to help the gardener here that He Himself becomes practically the gardener and the one who does everything” (St. Teresa of Jesus. Life) No longer do we labor arduously to keep our mind focused on prayer-our intellect, will and memory are completely focused on God, but by his work and not ours.

Finally, Teresa describes the FOURTH degree of prayer in terms of rain falling on the garden to water it. This FOURTH degree of prayer is purely a gift from God-the soul can do nothing to make it happen, only wait and receive it. This prayer is not complex or laborious, but rather the simple silence of contemplation: “a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love” poured into our hearts by God.

Throughout St. Teresa’s image of prayer, we find that it is God alone who supplies the water. He asks us to work diligently in tending our garden, and He leads us along the way of prayer supplying new and more abundant water according to the measure of our desire and preparation. Surely, we would all love to leave off toiling to draw up water from the well and simply enjoy the gently rain of infused contemplation, but St. Teresa tells us that we cannot rest at the feet of Jesus with Mary until we have been willing to work with Martha.

This work will surely be rewarded. Whether we toil at the well for a few drops of water or are flooded with rain, the garden of the soul tended faithfully in prayer will yield an abundant harvest of virtue.

OUR CARMELITE MISSION

MAY WE EMBRACE MARY’S PURITY OF HEART (PURITAS CORDIAS), AS SHE HELPS US TO PONDER THE LAW OF THE LORD DAY AND NIGHT ASSISTING US TO BE CONTEMPLATIVES AND TEACHING US TO LISTEN. AS WE WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR FATHER AND LEADER ST. ELIJAH; WITH HIS FLAMING ZEAL AND COURAGE WHICH ALLOWED HIM TO COMBAT THE EVILS OF HIS DAY. MAY WE PRAY THAT HIS PROPHETIC SPIRIT BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CARMELITE LIFE.”

MAY OUR LADY’S MANTLE WRAP YOU ALL WITH HER PRECIOUS LOVE. ALL THROUGH THE IMMACULATE & SORROWFUL HEART & TEARS OF MARY, ALL THROUGH THE PURE AND CHASTE HEART OF ST. JOSEPH, ALL IN UNION WITH THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

YOUR SISTER IN CARMEL,

LINDA



