

Letting go of control and learning surrender characterizes the fourth dwelling place.

It is about learning how to be at peace with God's initiative. We begin a process of conditioning to receive the unique inflow of God that is contemplative prayer. God purifies our images and understanding of God and of ourselves and draws the person into an inner stillness. A person in this place may have a very active mind during prayer but also recognizes a deeper desire for God and some experience of the inflow of His Love, clarity, presence, and active working.

- We learn, often through dryness in prayer, what it is to love beyond the lure of feeling and even thought. The Divine within continually invites a deeper love and a deeper surrender. We learn that life cannot be controlled. We encounter the "otherness" of God, we learn not to take God for granted, and not to squeeze God into our too narrow concepts.
- We become receptive to God's illumination. To leave feelings unnamed results in disquietude, which in turn allows distractions to control the mind. (Remember distractions are one way the feelings make themselves known.)
- By naming, we allow God to shed light on our inner darkness. Discover what is under the feeling: a belief, a hurt, a grief, an attitude, or desire. Example: under our anger is a persistent urge to control a person or situation, or unresolved resentment over past hurts or losses ungrieved or over-sensitivity to criticism, attachments, addictions causing problems in relationships or health, or in our work.

Under every persistent distraction there exists both a feeling to be named and a deeper issue to be confronted and exposed for God's healing and transformation. A quiet mind helps us to be aware of what is going on in the body, in our feelings, in the heart, and in the world around us. A peaceful heart is a welcoming environment wherein God's silence loves to dwell. P.47

Keeping the will fixed on that which is God's Will leads the soul into loving surrender of self-love and self-will. This self-possession gained is not the end of the journey and is easily tainted with self-love and self-will. It can leave us with a superficial self-understanding if based solely on achievements or rankings. These need to be transformed through repeated acts of surrender to the loving invitation of God's indwelling Spirit.

Distractions serve as invitations to a depth of self-knowledge that takes us beyond superficial self-knowledge, a depth needed for such surrender. To be in touch with what is deep within helps us to identify stirrings of self-love, subtle movements toward selfishness, and whatever else contaminates total being for God.

The self-possession gained in the first three dwellings through growth in the practice of prayer and in efforts toward Christian living (virtue) .

Self-maintenance-	in the use of one's talents and in achieving goals that we set for ourselves.
Self-affirming-	as we learn to make decision and to undertake commitments that give direction to our life
Self-justifying-	we learn to be less affected by what others think of us, standing secure in the values we hold in the midst of opposing values.

Be attentive to recurring distractions, feelings triggered by thoughts, imaginings, attitudes, or the body giving a voice to them through our emotions – ponder to find their meaning, invitation to conversion and transformation. Identify shifts in emotions. Strong emotions bind the mind – rational thoughts around the triggered emotions take over. Remedy is to stop and consider prayerfully.

Some of these distractions will be named: worry over health, attachment to one's will, illusions about things of the world, lack of fortitude in suffering, difficulty looking at our own faults and leaving aside those of others. – which the growth of these is ultimately God's work in us as we move out of them.

- They need to be listened to and dealt with – God inviting to deeper conversion of heart and a less self-centered love in our relationship with God and others.

Excerpts from *Distractions in Prayer: Blessing or Curse?* By Sr. Vilma Seelaus

- This might feel like backsliding as it comes in a more mature phase of our journey (I thought I had dealt with this already) but God is integrating growth from past into new growth.
- These insights can be listened to with greater intellectual honesty, and we relate to them with deeper love, greater inner freedom, and greater sensitivity before God to all that displeases God. The pain of seeing self so imperfect offers occasion for deepened humility and surrender to God's merciful love vs. self-righteous denial and blindness.

How do we deal with the distractions in this dwelling?

Recognize our misery – what is disturbing our prayer – this naming often results in at least the beginnings of inner quiet. Simply identify feelings such as anger, hurt, anxiety and restlessness, without analyzing the feelings, without judging ourselves for having such feelings, but simple recognizing they are there by naming them, is important to letting the quiet of God find its way into our exterior levels. When the heart is quiet, we can be more. We desire to rest from the thousand trials there are in the world and that the Lord wants to prepare us for tranquility and that within ourselves lies the obstacle to it – this truth is very painful and almost unbearable. In the process of surrender, our relationship to the rest of reality changes. In human relationships, we begin to let persons be. Less need to control the lives of others or take responsibility for their problems or try to fix them. Because from our center, where God is, we begin to see the self and others through the eyes of God, his light illuminates our understanding.

Prayer Exercise

Have you lost your peace? Mind busy with many thoughts? Cyclical inner monologue? Replaying conversations over and over?

1. Recover peace by sitting quietly in prayer,
2. Truthfully try to name what I am feeling,
 - a. I ask God to let me see which of my potential self-destructive tendencies are at work agitating my mind, and overflowing into emotional reactions in my body?
 - b. As I name those emotions, they help to accurately name what is going on and the underlying thoughts.
 - c. I ask God to let me see beyond those thoughts and feeling to whatever in myself cries for a deeper surrender. Discover what is under the feeling: a belief, a hurt, a grief, an attitude, or desire.
 - i. Residue of early life experiences being triggered? Surrender the hidden issues of your life story to God and embrace it as an ongoing part of own inner transformation
 - ii. Situation not going well? Surrender your need to control God who is in control
3. Receive his indwelling presence, a new thought, a feeling, an inspiration
4. Follow his lead and respond, relax your intensity, surrender, put it into context
5. As you relax in willing surrender, new perspectives tend to open up, more sides of the situation are seen, critical mind gentles into more compassionate understanding. Turning back to God in full surrender will find again a graced acceptance of my own spiritual poverty as well as that of others and insights into the positive dimension of this present trial toward spiritual transformation. Lightens the grip of attachments and leads to inner peace.
6. Surrender to God what is not of God.