

**ST. TERESA'S OWN WORDS : OR,
INSTRUCTIONS ON THE PRAYER OF
RECOLLECTION ; ARRANGED FROM CHAPTERS
28 AND 29 OF HER WAY OF PERFECTION FOR
THE USE OF THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF
MOUNT CARMEL, DARLINGTON**

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St. Teresa's own words : or, Instructions on the prayer of recollection ; arranged from Chapters 28 and 29 of her Way of perfection for the use of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Darlington by James Chadwick

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JAMES CHADWICK

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St. Teresa's Own Words:
Or, Instructions on
The Prayer of Recollection

Arranged from Chapters 28 and
29 of her *Way of Perfection* for
the use of the Sisters of Our
Lady of Mount Carmel,
Darlington, by

JAMES,
BISHOP OF HEXHAM & NEWCASTLE

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St. Teresa's Own Words.

I.

Nature and Definition of the Prayer of Recollection.

It is called the Prayer of Recollection because in it the soul *collects*, or gathers together, all her powers, and enters into her own interior with God.

I wish I knew how to describe to you this holy intercourse which, without disturbing in the least her perfect solitude, is carried on between the soul and her Divine Spouse and Companion, the Holy of Holies, and which takes place as often as ever she pleases to enter into this interior paradise in company with her God, and to shut the gate to all the world

6 St. Teresa's Own Words

besides. I say, as often as she pleases; for you must understand that this is not altogether a supernatural thing, but is quite within our own power, and we can do it whenever we chose; I mean, of course, with God's help, for without this we can do nothing at all, not so much as have a single good thought. For you must observe that this recollection is not a suspension of the powers of the soul, but only a shutting them up, as it were, within ourselves.

II.

The Truth or Foundation on which the Prayer of Recollection rests:

You know that God is everywhere (therefore He is in our interior.) Now it is clear that wherever the King is, there the Court is too; therefore, wherever God is, there is heaven; and you can readily believe that wherever this Divine Majesty is, all glory is with Him. Then consider

St. Teresa's Own Words 7

what St. Augustine says : that he "sought God in many places, and found Him at last within himself."

It is, then, of the utmost importance to bear this truth in mind, that our Lord is within us, and that we ought to strive to be there with him.

On a certain occasion, when I was assisting at the Divine Office with the rest of the Sisters, I became, on a sudden, thus recollected within myself : and here my own soul was presented before me, and it seemed to me to resemble a bright mirror, in which there was no darkness nor shadow, either behind or on either side, or above or below but all clear and resplendent ; and in the midst of it there appeared Christ our Lord, in the form under which I am accustomed to see Him. It seemed to me that His Image was shining forth from every part of my soul, as though reflected in the mirror ; and then, by a wonderful communication of love, which I know not how to describe, this same mirror of my soul seemed to be reproduced and again represented, in a

8 St. Teresa's Own Words

wondrous manner, within the Form of my Divine Redeemer.

[Again], on a certain occasion, it was shown to me that my soul was like a sponge in the midst of the ocean of the Divinity, and that it drank in this heavenly substance, so as, in a manner, to embrace within it the Three Divine Persons. But, at the same time, I was admonished that though I had the Divinity within my soul, yet I myself was much more contained in Him than He in me. Thus, whilst I beheld, as it were, hidden within me the Three Divine Persons, I saw that They, at the same time, communicated Themselves to all created things, without ceasing for an instant to abide in me.

On another occasion I was made to understand this truth with great clearness—that all things are seen in God, and that He contains everything within Himself. I do not know how to describe this ; but it has remained deeply impressed upon my mind, and is one of the greatest favours our Lord has ever granted me,

St. Teresa's Own Words 9

and one that has filled me, more than any other, with confusion at the remembrance of my sins. If it had pleased our Lord to let me see this before I had sinned, or if others, who offend Him, could only have seen it, I believe that neither they nor I would have ever had the boldness to commit sin. No words that I can use can convey any idea of this sublime truth. The only notion I can give of it is this : [I beheld the Divinity like a most brilliant diamond, far greater than the whole world, and containing everything within itself ; and in this diamond was reflected, as it were, everything that is done here below.] Wonderful it was, indeed, to behold in so short a time, within this glorious mirror, such a multitude of things assembled together ! But to see represented in this pure and unsullied brightness such foul abominations as my sins was a spectacle that fills me with the deepest sorrow whenever I call it to mind. In truth, when I reflect upon it, I know not how I can bear the thought ; and at the time when I beheld

10 St. Teresa's Own Words

it, I was so covered with confusion that I did not know which way to turn.

Now it seems to me that this vision may be of much profit to those who are practising this Prayer of Recollection, to teach them to consider our Lord in the interior of their own souls; for, to repeat what I have so often said before, this consideration fixes the attention far better, and is far more profitable, than to represent Him in any other way. If, instead of this, we direct our thoughts to God in heaven, or if, in fine, we turn to any spot beyond ourselves, we do but weary our minds and distract our souls, and, after all, lose much of the fruit of our labour.

[In another place,* the Saint says]: The soul of the just man is nothing less than a paradise, in which God finds His delight. And what sort of an abode must that be in which a King so powerful, so wise, so bright and stainless, so rich in every good, delights to dwell!

I can find nothing to which I can compare the great beauty and immense

* *Castle of the Soul*, chap. i.