



ST. JOSEPH
GUARDIAN OF THE HOLY FAMILY
PARISH

**Churches and Chapels
of Falmouth**
St. Anthony + St. Patrick
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
St. Thomas + St. Joseph

**The Interior Castle:
Learning How to Pray from Saint Teresa of Avila**

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Lecture 1: Introduction and Chapter 1

July 14, 2022

Opening Prayer (From St. Teresa of Avila)

Lord, grant that I may always allow myself
to be guided by You,
always follow Your plans,
and perfectly accomplish Your Holy Will.
Grant that in all things, great and small,
today and all the days of my life,
I may do whatever You require of me. Amen

Outline of this series:

1. July 14: Introduction and Chapter 1
2. July 21: Chapters 2 and 3
3. July 28: Chapters 4
4. August 4: Chapters 5 and 6
5. August 11: Chapter 7 and “Levels of Prayer” Summary

Objectives of this Lecture series:

1. To learn about prayer, particularly Contemplative Prayer.
2. To understand the nature of Mysticism with regards to the Catholic Church.
3. To assess our Spiritual Journey – where are we on the path?
4. To be introduced to various “Spiritualities,” particularly Carmelite.

Resources we will use:

1. The Interior Castle Online Text, trans. Fr. Benedict Zimmerman, O.C.D.
2. The Interior Castle Audiobook, Sacred Heart Publications
3. Fr. Blaise Czaja, C.P. Video Presentations on the Interior Castle
4. Optional Book: Interior Castle Explored, by Sr. Ruth Burrows O.C.D.

Note: Links to all these resources and more are posted to the St. Joseph Website:
www.falmouthcatholic.org/interior-castle

Parish Office

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St. Joseph, Guardian of the Holy Family Parish – Adult Faith Formation
Learning to Pray with St. Teresa of Avila

Who was Saint Teresa of Avila?

She was born Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada in the town of Avila, Spain on March 28, 1515. It was a time of turmoil and reform. Within her lifetime, events such as the Protestant reformation, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Council of Trent (the Counter Reformation) greatly influenced her vocation and writings. Her mother died when she was 14. As might be expected with other teenage girls, Teresa was taken in by boys, clothing, flirting, and being rebellious. This must have been challenging for her father because when she turned 16, her father enrolled her in a convent. For Teresa, this was easier than living with her strict father, so-much-so that when the time came for her to consider marriage, she chose the religious life (much to the opposition of her father!).

Teresa often felt that she was very prone to sin and avoided situations where temptations might overtake her. She felt that the Carmelites lost their discipline and so, together with Saint John of the Cross (her Spiritual Director), they established a reformed order of the Carmelites known as the Discalced Carmelites. For the rest of her life, she devoted herself to prayer, teaching her nuns about the various ways to pray, established 16 convents, and writing 4 books. She died on October 15, 1582, at the age of 67.

Why do we study her?

Saint Teresa of Avila was canonized in 1622 (40 years after her death) and in 1970 was declared a Doctor of the Church – one of only 4 women to be so named. Together with St. John of the Cross, St. Catherine of Genoa, and St. Francis de Sales, Teresa is one of the great mystics of her time. Her teachings on prayer represents a practical guide for those of us who desire to follow the methods of prayer as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church which was updated after the Second Vatican Council. Our spiritual journey should have a goal of union with God, however, not all of us will attain that in our earthly lifetime. By having a challenging goal such as that, we can be sure that we are praying in a manner most consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Of the 4 books that Teresa wrote, *The Interior Castle* (IC) (1588) is the most popular for what the spiritual journey looks like. “*The Way of Perfection*” (1566), also is an excellent guide to prayer and the spiritual life which she refers to in IC.

In my opinion, after you study the IC, your prayer life will improve and your relationship with God will become more intimate.

Overview of Chapter 1

Teresa states that she was inspired by God to describe the soul as like a castle made from diamond. This castle has many mansions, or rooms, and at the center of this castle would be the dwelling place of God. Her metaphor has a lot of support from scriptures: “In my father's house there are many dwelling places” (Jn 14:2); “Let us make mankind in our image, after our likeness” (Gen.1:26); “I found my delight in the human race” (Prov 8:31). The key for entering this castle is through prayer. To enter it is to establish a relationship with God. This requires trust in Jesus. We give attention to God through our prayer whether it be vocal or mental. Prayer must involve the mind. Simply reciting words without thought is not prayer.

The light which comes from the center where God dwells permeates all the rooms but becomes brighter as you approach the center. Satan also occupies many of the rooms and we must always be aware of the distractions from him. We must be aware, as Saint Paul describes, that we either live in the flesh, (worldly attachments) or we live in the spirit, (divine

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attachments). Sometimes this can be referred to as living as your false self as opposed to your true self. It is important to “know thyself” – because by knowing ourselves we can better appreciate who God is, in all his greatness, and thus practice humility.

VIDEO the first mansion – 14 minutes

Discussion questions:

1. Why does Teresa use the symbol of a castle?
2. Before entering the castle, where do we tend to place all our attention?
3. What good does it do to talk about God’s favors during times in our lives when we don't seem to receive them ourselves?
4. Was there a time in your life when Jesus invited you to enter a relationship with him? How does this experience parallel with Teresa’s description of entering the castle?

Close with the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.
Be our protection
against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly hosts,
by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan
and all evil spirits
who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.