

By Way of Prayer



Meditations on St. Teresa of Jesus'

"The Way Of Perfection"

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Introduction

By Way of Prayer is a series of meditations on **St. Teresa of Jesus'** spiritual classic **The Way Of Perfection**.

These meditations are meant to provide a structure for prayerful reflection to accompany the meditative reading of *The Way Of Perfection*. Each meditation opens with a passage from scripture to tune the heart to the Lord's presence. Next, a poem stirs the soul with verse inspired by St Teresa of Jesus' teaching in the chapter(s). Then the salient quotes from the chapter are provided to summarize St Teresa of Jesus' teaching. A concluding prayer is then provided to close the meditation.

May you find the wisdom and practical guidance provided by St Teresa of Jesus stirring your soul to follow Him, by way of prayer, with a determined determination.

First Meditation (Chapters 1,3)

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

The Light Must Shine

So many souls in dire need
So many hearts, lost and impure;
In countless ways, by word and deed,
The Lord's disdained -- who can endure?

The light must shine against the night;
Love must be shown, and hope restored;
By faith, our hearts will be set right --
To honor Him -- our life and Lord!

May Christ call forth pure souls to lead,
His church to stand against the night;
May prayers and fasting intercede,
That they may guide with heaven's light.

To live the counsels carefully,
To serve Him as a faithful friend,
To persevere here prayerfully --
All else is means unto this end.

To pray for Mother Church and souls;
And serve Him well – our foremost goals.

May the flame of holy determination burn in our hearts and
propel us to serve Him with all our might.

Second Meditation (Chapter 2)

“And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’”
(Matthew 5:2-3)

Poor Hearts

The poor in heart trust Providence,
Without concern for want or need;
The nature of self-reliance,
Is to yearn with a wanton greed.

The poor in heart cling to nothing,
Except the Hand that provides all;
Attachments bind the will like string,
Curbing the response to His call.

The poor in heart seek the low place,
Cultivating humility;
Honor and pride suffocate grace,
And engender hostility.

The poor in heart know true freedom,
As children of a loving God,
Who longs to grant them His kingdom --
Their hearts are filled with joy and laud.

In following the Gospel’s call,
The poor in heart inherit all.

May the poverty of our King inspire us to give up what we
cling to and to follow Him in holy freedom.

Third Meditation (Chapter 4)

“Do to others as you would have them do to you...Be merciful, just as (also) your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven... A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I command?” (Luke 6:31,36-37,45-46)

Snares

The Father loves His little ones
With all His love – no one’s favored;
And we, as His daughters and sons,
Must do the same – like Christ our Lord.

Favors of friends, like bartered trade,
Turn love into a marketplace;
Excessive attachments degrade
The freedom to respond to grace.

The passions, in friendships, distort
The spirit with sensual load,
And, out of carelessness, contort
Virtues from which this love once flowed.

His love, when channeled properly,
Reaches the heart, pure and intact;
The soul responds accordingly,
And love’s shored up where it once lacked.

To serve Him well, love must be free
To flow out continuously.

May Our Lord teach us the path of true friendship with Him
and with one another.

Fourth Meditation (Chapter 5)

“Instead, associate with a religious man, who you are sure keeps the commandments; Who is like-minded with yourself and will feel for you if you fall. Then, too, heed your own heart's counsel; for what have you that you can depend on more? A man's conscience can tell him his situation better than seven watchmen in a lofty tower. Most important of all, pray to God to set your feet in the path of truth.” (Sirach 37:12-15)

Searing Truth

The light of Truth cannot shine through
The stained recesses of the heart;
And distorted perceptions skew,
What little light Truth does impart.

The bearer of a conscience clear,
With heart which has nothing to hide,
Submits humbly to rays that sear --
Only with Truth can Love abide.

At times, Truth's light is refracted,
Through hearts He sends to guide our way;
The humble heart's not distracted,
But soaks in all they have to say.

All truths must be tested with care,
Against the Truth that is His Word;
No learned soul can be aware,
Of ev'ry truth which has been heard.

The light of Truth, when received right,
Clears hearts of all that blurs their sight.

May the Spirit of Truth enlighten us and encourage us to be
lifelong disciples of learning His ways.

Fifth Meditation (Chapter 6-7)

“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

Pure Love

Pure Love looks to her neighbor’s soul:
Encouraged by the least good found,
Not judging what’s out of control --
Knowing with sin, grace may abound.

Pure love leads, with example clear,
In contrast to each fault perceived;
Knowing that love draws others near;
And actions, not words, are believed.

Pure love dwells with humility:
Receives love as the Father’s gift;
Knowing that she is not worthy,
And love repaid creates a rift.

Pure love flows from Spirit at source,
Through her heart with compassion’s pull,
To souls encountered on its course –
The reservoir is always full.

Love lives to help each soul find Love;
To beg grace for them from above.

May the Lord of Love most pure pour out an abundance of
His essence into the reservoirs of our hearts.

Sixth Meditation (Chapter 8-11)

“Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8)

Treasures

The heart, by nature, tends to cling;
To what it treasures and holds dear;
Desires drive its yearn for things,
With envy, greed, pride, lust, and fear.

The Holy One is crowded out,
By all the treasures the heart hordes;
And He’s not heard above the shout
Of its desires and their lords.

Detachment is the discipline
To let go of and give away,
The heart’s treasures with abandon,
And to forget self, come what may.

In letting go of all that binds,
Freedom is gained; order’s restored.
The tyranny of self rescinds --
The heart beats only for the Lord.

All that we clutch will see its end;
Leave all for the Lord – our dearest Friend.

May the Lord grant us the grace and discipline to let go of all
that is not of Him, and to cling to Him come what may.

Seventh Meditation (Chapter 12-14)

“He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.” (Luke 1:51-52)

Fighting Pestilence

The pestilence of prestige sought:
Unjust offense at honors lost,
From false perceptions pride has wrought,
Props up the heart – but at what cost?

The heart lowered from honor’s throne,
Must lift its downcast eyes to see
The cross of Christ, whose corpse has shown,
The King of kings’ humility.

The humble heart accepts its place:
Its faults and sins ever in mind,
It knows all good is wrought by grace,
And to the poor, the Lord is kind.

The humble soul, in her combat,
Employs some lowly tasks to fight
Her pride and the temptations that
Distort her sense of what is right.

Her pride faces futility,
With weapons of humility.

May the Lord, in His mercy, cast us down from our hearts' thrones of honor and guide us in the ways of humility.

Eighth Meditation (Chapter 15,16)

“The chief priests accused him of many things. Again Pilate questioned him, ‘Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of.’ Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.” (Mark 15:3-5)

Surrender

The humble heart does not protest
Accusations, false though they be;
In silence, she secures her rest,
Trusting His Love will set her free.

The humble heart's indifferent
Before both punishment and praise;
She's weak and He's omnipotent --
Only to Him, her eyes she'll raise.

The humble heart surrenders all
Unto her King, with confidence
And holy daring, at His call,
Relying on His providence.

The King treasures the humble heart;
He surrenders Himself in kind,
To dwell with her and not depart --
Love lived in truth yields ties that bind.

To Him, pure hearts surrender:
Their King and strong defender.

May the King of humility be our strength and defend us in the midst of pride and persecution.

Ninth Meditation (Chapter 17-18)

“As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary (who) sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.’ The Lord said to her in reply, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.’” (Luke 10:38-42)

Martha And Mary

Martha prepares the Master’s meals,
In serving the hungry and poor;
Her sacrifice of self reveals,
Humility that will endure.

Martha accepts the call to serve,
As the role chose for her by grace.
His strength’s held for her in reserve;
He provides and prepares her place.

Mary listens at the Lord’s feet,
Forgetful of self and all things,
Not concerned with what they will eat --
All enthralled with the King of kings.

Mary’s called to be His presence
Of hope and faith in midst of pain
And doubt, and to share His essence –
His love by which He will sustain.

Martha and Mary share the bread,
With the Lord at their daily meal:
With strength for work and prayer, they're fed;
To pray and wash His feet, they kneel.

Prayer and service go hand-in-hand,
To serve the Lord as He has planned.

May we follow the Master's example in our prayer and service
to one another.

Tenth Meditation (Chapter 19-20.2)

“Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.’ ... Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.’” (John 4:10,13-15)

Living Waters

His living waters cleanse her heart
Of devil, flesh, and world snares.
For Him alone, she's held apart;
For to His love, nothing compares.

His living waters slake her thirst:
Enlarging her heart with each pour,
Enthralling her soul with each burst,
Leaving her heart thirsting for more.

His living waters fill her soul:
With understanding clear and pure,
Consolation to make her whole,
And strength to bear all and endure.

These waters are offered to all,
Each in proportion to their need;
From light trickle to waterfall,
He nourishes our growth from seed.

Love's living waters are outpoured
From th'Eternal Font -- our Lord.

May Lord invite us to His living waters to nourish our souls
along the journey of prayer.

Eleventh Meditation (Chapter 20.3-21,23)

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God. Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood... Endure your trials as ‘discipline’; God treats you as sons. For what ‘son’ is there whom his father does not discipline? ...So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”
(Hebrews 12:1-4,7,12-14)

Soldiers of Prayer

The loyal heart must persevere:
To cling to the Truth, come what may,
To know Church teaching and adhere,
To discern God's will and obey.

The loyal friend must persevere:
Adhering to the truth of love,
In spirit, to draw others near,
In union with the One above.

He gives courage to those who fear,
With strength to endure their trials;
He girds the will to persevere,
And shines light on all that beguiles.

He calls each foot soldier to pray:
With loyal heart and girded will,
To forge ahead through fright and fray,
With firm resolve, to take the hill.

The steadfast heart, humble and pure,
With unfailing hope, will endure.

May the Lord, our Commander-in-Chief, strengthen our hearts
and gird our wills so that we may persevere in the way of
prayer.

Twelfth Meditation (Chapter 22,25)

“Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity -- greedy,

dishonest, adulterous -- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18: 10-14)

The Beggar's King

She is a poor and frail creature –
A bold beggar before the King.
Why would Almighty and All Pure
Reach down to touch this dirty thing?

He is all perfect love and grace,
Compassion and humility;
He stoops to her of lowly place
Who begs from her fragility.

He graciously grants her to kneel
Before His holy court, to gaze
Upon the One, who draws her zeal,
With gratitude and joyful praise!

Her words, if needed, prop her heart;
Her focus is on Him alone.
She strives for silence on her part --
Her gaze riveted to His throne.

This awareness is mental prayer:
He lifts the beggar to an heir.

May the King lift us up to gaze upon His Majesty as we
behold our own frailty in the light of His purity.

Thirteenth Meditation (Chapter 24, 26)

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.” (Romans 8:26)

Her Prayer Partner

The Lord Jesus is a dear friend:
A companion in many ways;
A trusted guide who will defend;
A confidante with whom she prays.

As prayer begins, she calls to mind,
The One with whom she will converse.
Her focus, gentle and refined,
Allows distractions to disperse.

What words begin, her heart carries
Forth, with a fragrant uplifting.
This simple way keeps her at ease --
Free from anxiety's sifting.

Her heart listens, stilled at His feet;
He responds with wordless reply:
Her soul is filled with grace replete;
Her whole being breathes Spirit's sigh.

As prayer closes, she's at His side;
In love, these prayer partners abide.

May our Partner in Prayer teach us to pray deeply and fully
from the heart.

Fourteenth Meditation (Chapter 27,28)

“But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” (Matthew 6:6)

Hermitage

In a secluded hermitage,
Fashioned of simple clay and stone,
Dwells One of Royal Parentage,
With all His court, upon His throne.

The owner of the property,
Herself of lowly caste and poor,
With rev'ence and humility,
Awaits His calling at the door.

To enter through the passageway,
She must leave what she treasures most,
And clean the clinging clumps of clay,
To encounter her gracious Host.

The inner room is sanctified,
With His presence and purity;
With Him, all life and love abide --
Hidden in her obscurity.

Hid deep in her humble abode,
Dwells the Heavenly mother lode.

May the King draw us to Himself, and grant us the grace to be
recollected with Him within.

Fifteenth Meditation (Chapter 29)

*“When I think of you upon my bed, through the night watches
I will recall that you indeed are my help, and in the shadow of
your wings I shout for joy. My soul clings fast to you; your
right hand upholds me.”* (Psalm 63:7-9)

Recall

Recall the One whose countenance,
Enthralls the simplest of hearts;
Whose merciful omnipotence,
Conquers all that our sin imparts.

Recall that all things are passing,
Like flowers that wither and fade;
Only One is everlasting --
The One by whom all things were made.

Recall that He is very near;
That He awaits to hear your voice;
That to withdraw from Him in fear,
Is to leave Him alone by choice.

Recall the wayward senses in,
To rest in silence at His feet;
That recollection may begin,
And spirit with His Spirit meet.

The heart that often draws within,
Finds His presence and peace therein.

May the One who dwells within guide us in the practice of
recollecting ourselves into His presence.

Sixteenth Meditation (Chapter 30,31)

“Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’ But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat of which you do not know.’ So the disciples said to one another, ‘Has any one brought him food?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.’” (John 4:31-34)

Wills United

Her senses surrendered and stilled,
He draws her into His presence;
With tranquil delight, she is filled
And nurtured with His sweet essence.

Love captivates and holds the will;
The intellect, though free, remains,
Knowing by faith, He will fulfill
What is fitting – for His will reigns.

With humble gratitude and praise,
She seeks refuge in solitude
And silence, where her soul can gaze
And dwell in His beatitude.

Forth from this prayer, she bids His call.
With a redoubled strength to serve,
She strives to live His will in all,
With nothing held back in reserve.

Her affection for Him is praise;
United to His will and ways.

May the Master captivate our hearts and unite our will with
His so that His will may be done in our lives.

Seventeenth Meditation (Chapter 32)

“After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, ‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done.’ (And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.)”
(Luke 22:41-44)

Your Will Be Done

She lets go of her selfish ways,
In imitation of the Son;
With true self-surrender she prays:
“Not my will but Your will be done.”

She clings to hope with confidence,
Abandoning selfish concerns;
She puts her trust in providence --
The Father's will is all she yearns.

In trials, only one way's sure --
Embrace the cross and persevere.
She strives, with His strength, to endure
And do His will – He is drawn near.

Love is the heart of sacrifice;
To love Him is to do His will.
Only His strength and grace suffice
In this struggle from self uphill.

In striving to serve Him as Lord,
He gives Himself as the reward.

May the Lord strengthen us and grant us true zeal for His will
to be done in our lives.

Eighteenth Meditation (Chapter 33-35)

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day... I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world... Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.’” (John 6:35,44,51,56-57)

Living Bread

She yearns for Him with famished zeal;
His love draws her unceasingly:
His power sure; His presence real,
Yet hidden in humility.

He is the Bread of heaven sent:
To fill the hunger of the soul;
To cleanse and cure in his descent
Into the heart -- to make it whole.

His body is the sustenance;
His blood the sacrifice outpoured;
His soul, and His divine essence,
Unite the soul unto its Lord.

She receives Him with reverence,
And lingers, looking deep inside,
To savor His divine essence,
As love with Beloved abide.

She cherishes His presence held;
In communion, their spirits meld.

May the Bread of Life satisfy the deepest hunger of our souls
and draw us to Himself in life eternal.

Nineteenth Meditation (Chapter 36)

“But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as (also) your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.” (Luke 6:35-37)

Forgiven

The flow of Mercy’s healing grace,
Is dammed up by the hardened heart,
Whose debts the Father can’t efface,
Until judgements and grudges part.

The judgements of offense taken,
And grudges of injustice held,
Leave the heart cold and forsaken,
With wounds that infection have swelled.

The truth of self and one’s own sins,
Break the heart with reality;
In repentance, healing begins –
The first fruits of humility.

Forgiveness yields peace and freedom,
Restores love for God and neighbor,
Prepares her heart for the Kingdom --
That His will may be done in her.

Her prayer for mercy draws His grace;
With trials, He prepares her place.

May the healing power of Mercy flow through us as we strive to forgive one another from the heart.

Twentieth Meditation (Chapter 38-39)

“Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”
(1 Corinthians 10:12-13)

Deliverance

The temptations of false virtue,
Bewitch the well-intentioned heart;
Self-satisfaction is a clue,
Perfection’s not reached at the start.

Virtues are granted and withdrawn --
Borrowed treasures that aren’t possessed:
At times, held firm; at others, gone –
Faithful servants strive without rest.

The false virtues, rooted in vice,
Lacking the Lord’s presence and peace,
Beguile the soul and entice
It to loose heart – good works decrease.

She seeks shelter in poverty:
Clinging to truth simple and pure;
Distrusting her own piety --
Knowing only His mercy’s sure.

Deliverance from temptation --
The humble heart’s vindication.

May the Lord deliver us from the subtle temptations that ensnare our souls, enlighten our paths with His truth, and secure each of our steps with true poverty of spirit.

Twenty-First Meditation (Chapter 40-41)

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you invoke as Father him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile... Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart.” (1 Peter 1:14-17,22)

Diligence

Love for Him consumes her whole heart;
He is the core of her being.
She loves with His love for her part --
Other affections are fleeting.

She keeps vigil over her heart,
With a determined diligence;
To stop the sins before they start,
Lest she hurt Him through negligence.

This diligence to not offend
Him urges caution, not constraint;
Love liberates all, in the end –
A bound-up heart makes love fall faint.

Love’s fire cannot be contained;
Out of itself, the flames must leap
To those in need -- its not restrained --
In Truth, its peace and joy run deep.

His fire leaps up to consume
From hearts espoused to the Bridegroom.

May love for the Bridegroom consume our hearts totally and
may He grant us the grace of diligence so that we may be
faithful in serving Him.

Twenty-Second Meditation (Chapter 37, 42)

“And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:7-11)

The Perfect Prayer

Save us, Lord, from the evil one;
Let not his temptations misguide.
Not my will, Lord, but Yours be done.
Each day, your Bread of Life provide.

Forgive us, Lord, in Your mercy;
Help us to forgive from the heart.
May the fullness of Your love be,
The kingdom’s reign which You impart.

All praise and honor be to You,
Our King of heaven here on earth.
You create Your children anew;
Abba! Father, of our re-birth.

Your kingdom's power and glory,
Reign now and through eternity.

May our Father always hear us as we pray the Master's words
in union with His Spirit. Amen.

References

Scripture quotations are adapted from several Catholic editions

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