

## **The Way of Perfection** (Ch: 10 – 18 Humility)

Ch 10: Virtue & Humility

Ch 11: *Christianity* the practice of mortifying the senses, Suffering

Ch 12: Perfection Verses Honour

Ch 13: *Christianity* the practice of mortifying the senses to attain true wisdom

Ch 14: Examination of conscience

Ch 15: No Excuses

Ch 16: Analogy of life and faith (chess)

Ch 17: Conscience

Ch 18: Encouragement to continue personal journeys

St Teresa of Avila, continues the guidance of the Nun's in chapters 10 to 18 , she uses the game of chess in an analogy of obtaining spiritual life for them. St Teresa is constantly warning of the loss of spiritual standards through their own self interest, human frailty, and the influence of others outside the convent who might want to join the order for the wrong reason.

Throughout these nine chapters St Teresa defines the difference between:

- How best to find God's love.
- The distractions that prevent us from achieving our love for God.
- Humility
- Contemplation & Meditation
- Obedience

St Teresa message for us today is as important as the one given to the nuns of her period, indeed in previous chapters she states her message is for all who are to follow her. She recognises that man desires a Society to live and feel comfortable in, with others so like minded, but she warns of the distractions that come with living in that society, whether they are secular order or laity. Catholic social teaching reflects this in that: the universal human community share responsibility for each other : Gaudium et Spec: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world' No's 26, 29, and 38.

St Teresa reminds us that our life should mirror the life of Jesus, and his journey to the cross 'The way'<sup>1</sup>.

In our own Journey through Carmel, we know what is wrong, therefore our sins are worse than those who do not know, even taking into account natural law and human law. Therefore to avoid these traps and trials we should avoid the distractions and temptations that cause them.

St Teresa points out that it is not good enough just to do the right thing, but if we have done the right thing but for a personal motive, this then is wrong, and our conscience will tell us this if we seek contemplative prayer and meditation correctly with no personal agenda but correct gain of God's grace.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Way of Perfection Page: 94 para 2

<sup>2</sup> Math 6:6

St Teresa states that finding ones own soul is a rare gift.

I believe St Teresa message to us for true humility is meaningful in that it encapsulates all the previous two paragraphs but much more, it reminds us of the words Jesus left for us, to love one another as he loved us. In living our own lives we must always be watchful to the needs of others.<sup>3</sup> Our own humility depends on our willingness to obey Gods laws and those we choose to lead us. This humility in turn depends on our willingness to perform all tasks given to us by God through our own conscience or by others.

St Teresa draws a wonderful analogy of soldiers doing their duty, the ordinary soldier in battle can take a rest, but the standard bearer must never leave his post in battle as he has the greater responsibility during battle as the rallying point for everyone. The standard bearer is our own conscience, it has a greater responsibility than all our other senses.

We are asked to conquer ourselves in little things to gain victories in great matters<sup>4</sup>, just as St Theresa of Lisieux managed during her own ministry on earth.<sup>5</sup> An example of this is that obedience in humility happened when St Therese was asked to make the sacrifice of staying a postulant in the convent at Lisieux and not proceeding further as a nun, this she instantly agreed to for the good of the convent, as her elder sisters were in the same convent, and it was felt that their collective opinion would have been too much of an influence on the daily order of the convent. St Theresa never refused any manual duty or penance, and even ate the food others refused to accept. She always put her own health before others, and would not let her own failing health deter her from her help of others, or the contemplative prayers or meditation she had trained herself in from the age of 12.



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<sup>3</sup> John 13: 34

<sup>4</sup> Page:84 Para 1

<sup>5</sup> 'Love proves itself by deeds, so how am I to show my love?. Great deeds are forbidden me. The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers and these flowers are every sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doing of the least actions of love. (The Story of a Soul)

St Theresa of Lisieux therefore followed the teachings of St Teresa of Avila in the daily use of prayer and contemplation to find humility, with the examination of conscience to find Gods love and the example we are asked to find in ourselves, and the love for each other, we are also reminded not to judge others by their actions or interpretations of these actions, as these actions might be that person's own personal callings by God.

We are reminded also that Gods ways are not our ways,<sup>6</sup>

God is Infinite: We are finite

God knows the end from the beginning, while we see just a short part of the now!

God knows the whys, while we try to grasp the wisdom

St Teresa of Avila states 'His majesty does not lead all souls in the same way, and perhaps she who thinks herself the least of all may be the highest in his eyes,' her words of warning are that:

In gaining contemplation we might loose the path Jesus has set for us if we fail others in their path to Jesus.

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<sup>6</sup> Lk 10: 38-42 & Is 55:89 & Jms 1: 2-5 & Philippians 4: 4-7