

It Is Not Difficult to Be a Saint

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

Holiness is not a specialty for professionals. The command "You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2) is addressed to the whole people of God, Jesus deepens it into a perfection of love that does not stop at friends (Matthew 5:43-48), and St. Paul states it without fine print: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Holiness begins as God's gift and grows by our consent. The same God who wills your sanctification gives his Holy Spirit to accomplish it (1 Thessalonians 4:8; Philippians 2:13). Its growth is embodied in love and concrete conduct; St. Paul turns explicitly to brotherly love in the next breath (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10).

The Church says this to everyone: all the baptized "are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (CCC 2013), a path that tends toward real union with Christ (CCC 2014). This study walks that path with two sure guides, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

St. John opens his first great work with a grief, not a technique. He teaches, in substance, that many souls remain at the beginnings of the spiritual life not because God withholds anything, but because they do not understand the road, or lack guides, or shrink back when God begins to lead them beyond what is comfortable. God, he insists, desires to bring souls on to deep union with himself. The tragedy he writes to prevent is not ambition; it is settling.

Summarized from the prologue to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa tells her sisters that those who set out on the road of prayer must travel it with what she calls "a very determined determination": a resolve to keep going and never stop until they reach the end, come what may, whatever the labor, whoever complains, whether they reach the end or die on the road. She is not describing grim willpower; she is describing what a person does when they actually believe the destination is real.

The Way of Perfection, ch. 21.

ST. JOHN PAUL II

Writing to the whole Church at the close of the Jubilee year 2000, St. John Paul II asked that all pastoral planning be set "in the perspective of holiness," and called holiness "the high standard of ordinary Christian living." Not the heroic exception to ordinary life: the standard of it. He learned that conviction young, and from a layman, as this study will tell.

Novo Millennio Ineunte 30-31.

MY GUESS (SEALED UNTIL SESSION 6)

Before next week, write your honest answer to this question, fold this sheet closed, and bring it back every week. We will open it together at Session 6.

When God feels absent in your prayer, what do you think is actually happening?

Write here: _____

Live It This Week

- Pray five minutes a day this week, at the same time each day if you can. No method required yet: just show up, read the memory verse slowly, and tell God honestly that you want what he wants for you.
- Once this week, when someone irritates you, silently pray for them by name before you respond. That is Matthew 5:44 in street clothes.
- Write your sealed guess on the Take-Home sheet tonight, fold it, and bring it back every week.

MEMORY VERSE · 1 THESSALONIANS 4:3

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification."

Before next session: Read Mark 10:17-31 slowly once this week. Notice what Jesus asks the rich man to give up, and how the man feels about it.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2013, 2014, 2015.

Sell What You Have

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

Before Jesus asked the rich man for everything, Mark tells us he looked at him and loved him (Mark 10:21). Every call to let go in this study stands under that gaze. The man's tragedy was not his wealth but his grip: "he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions" (10:22).

The call to leave is the oldest covenant pattern: Abram left country, kindred, and father's house on nothing but a promise (Genesis 12:1-4), and St. Paul gladly counted his whole resume as loss "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8). Leaving precedes receiving; the exchange always favors us.

St. John of the Cross's *nada* is this Gospel logic applied to the heart: not contempt for God's good creation, but the freeing of desire from every tether, "for all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). A bird tied by a thread is as grounded as one tied by a chain; God wants us to fly.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

In his counsels for beginners, St. John teaches, in substance: to come to possess all, desire to possess nothing; to come to be all, desire to be nothing; to come to the knowledge of all, desire to know nothing. And he explains the stakes with his image of the tethered bird: whether the cord is a chain or a thread, the bird is equally unable to fly until it is cut. He is not despising the world. He is refusing to let anything smaller than God own a heart made for God.

The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book I, ch. 13, summarized; the bird image is from Ascent I, ch. 11.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa devotes early chapters of The Way of Perfection to detachment, and teaches, in substance, that detachment from created things, embraced for God, carries its own reward: the soul that stops grasping finds a freedom and dominion it never had while it clung. She is blunt that half-measures fail; her Life tells the cost of her own years of trying them. But she is equally clear about the direction of the exchange: we let go of lesser goods not to have less, but because God intends to give more.

Summarized from The Way of Perfection, chs. 8-10, on detachment; the personal testimony is from her Life.

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

As a small child, offered a basket of ribbons and pretty materials for dressing dolls by her sister and told to choose, Thérèse answered, "I choose all," and took the whole basket. Looking back, she saw her spiritual life in that moment: she would refuse God nothing, and so refuse herself the game of half-gifts. Detachment and "I choose all" are the same movement seen from two sides: empty hands are how you carry everything God wants to give.

Story of a Soul, Manuscript A.

Live It This Week

· Keep the five minutes of daily prayer. This week, begin each time by opening your hands, palms up, for a slow breath: a bodily word for "I am not grasping."

- Choose one small, real detachment for the week (one comfort, one purchase, one scroll session) and give it up quietly, telling no one but God. Attach it to a prayer for one person.
- Reread Philippians 3:7-11 once mid-week and mark the verbs Paul uses for what he gained.

MEMORY VERSE · PHILIPPIANS 3:8

"Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

Before next session: Read Matthew 6:5-6 and John 14:23. Notice where Jesus says prayer happens, and who he promises will be there.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2544, 2545, 2547.

The Inner Room

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

The Bible is the story of God closing the distance: glory on the mountain, glory filling the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38), glory filling the temple, and then the promise carried all the way in: "we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23). St. Paul says it of the whole community and of each member's body: "you are God's temple and... God's Spirit dwells in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16; cf. 6:19).

St. Teresa pictured this as a castle of clear crystal with many rooms and the King at the center, and grieved that so many of us live in our own outer courtyard. The door into the castle is prayer and reflection, and Jesus himself commands the practical version: go into your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father in secret (Matthew 6:6).

Christian interiority is not self-exploration; it is hospitality. The Trinity wills to take up residence in every soul that loves him and keeps his word (John 14:23), and prayer is going home to meet him.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Commenting on the soul's opening cry ("Where have you hidden?"), St. John answers with the Gospel's own secret: the Word, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is hidden in essence and presence in the innermost being of the soul. His counsel follows, in substance: since your Beloved is the treasure hidden in the field of your own heart, forget everything else, enter into deepest recollection, and seek him there. You do not have to go find God; you have to stop leaving.

The Spiritual Canticle, commentary on stanza 1.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa asks her readers to consider the soul as a castle made of a single diamond or very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in heaven there are many dwelling places, with the King in the innermost chamber of all. The sorrow of her book is that many souls stay in the outer courtyard among the reptiles, never entering their own castle. And the door by which one enters, she says without ceremony, is prayer and reflection.

The Interior Castle, First Dwelling Places, ch. 1, summarized.

ST. ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

A young Carmelite of Dijon, St. Elizabeth made Teresa's doctrine a single prayer: "O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you, unmovable and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity," asking that nothing trouble her peace or make her leave God, "my unchanging God, but may each minute carry me further into the depths of your mystery," and begging: "Give peace to my soul; make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest." The Church liked this prayer well enough to put it in the Catechism.

Prayer "O my God, Trinity whom I adore" (1904), as quoted in CCC 260.

Live It This Week

· Extend daily prayer to ten minutes, in the same physical place each day. Begin each time with one slow line: "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are here; I am here."

- Set up your inner room: one chair or corner, a Bible, no phone. Make it cost you thirty seconds of preparation, not ten minutes of hunting.
- Once this week, pray St. Elizabeth of the Trinity's line slowly: "Give peace to my soul; make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest."

MEMORY VERSE · JOHN 14:23

"If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

Before next session: Read Exodus 33:7-11 and Luke 5:15-16. Watch what God and Moses do in the tent, and what Jesus keeps slipping away to do.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 260, 2563, 2691.

Friendship with God

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

The boldest biblical image of what prayer can become is friendship: "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11). It was habitual, an appointment kept. Jesus lived the same pattern: even as the crowds grew, he kept withdrawing: "But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed" (Luke 5:16), and it was watching him pray that made the disciples ask, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

St. Teresa's definition, adopted by the Catechism: "Contemplative prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us" (CCC 2709). She struggled in prayer for years; the definition was forged by perseverance, not ease. One makes time; one does not find it (CCC 2710).

A simple daily method for the week: settle the body; read a short Scripture slowly; speak to Christ honestly, friend to friend; listen without hurry; end with one resolution and one thanks. Fifteen minutes, same time, same place.

Voices of the Church

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

"Contemplative prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us." Every word is load-bearing: sharing (it is mutual), friends (it is personal), frequently (it is habitual), alone (it makes space for him), and the ground of it all: we know he loves us. Teresa also testifies in the same book that she struggled in prayer for years; the definition was forged in perseverance, not in ease.

The Life, ch. 8, as quoted in CCC 2709.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Among his collected maxims, St. John teaches that the Father spoke one Word, which was his Son, and this Word he speaks always in eternal silence, and in silence it must be heard by the soul. Prayer, for John, therefore leans toward listening: a simple, loving attentiveness to the God who has already said everything in Christ. Words in prayer are good servants; their work is to bring us to the Word.

Sayings of Light and Love (the numbering of the maxims varies by edition).

VENERABLE JAN TYRANOWSKI

The Krakow tailor our study keeps hinting at built his hidden life exactly here. After his conversion in 1935 he adopted a demanding daily rule: morning meditation and Mass, the Rosary at a fixed time, spiritual reading, and regular examination of conscience, hours of interior prayer fitted around a workbench. He was no priest and no scholar; he was a layman who kept the appointment. Everything God later did through him grew out of that fidelity. Late in this study, his story continues.

From St. John Paul II's memoir *Gift and Mystery* and the documentation of his cause for canonization (opened 1997; declared Venerable, 2017).

Live It This Week

· Keep a daily fifteen-minute appointment of mental prayer using the method: settle, read a short passage slowly, speak honestly as friend to friend, listen without hurry, end with one resolution and one thanks.

- Use Luke 5:1-11 as your reading early in the week and Psalm 62:5-8 later; let the memory verse be your settling line each day.
- When you miss a day (someone will), do not negotiate or catch up; just keep the next appointment. Friendship survives missed coffee.

MEMORY VERSE · EXODUS 33:11

"Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."

Before next session: Read Deuteronomy 8:1-5 and Matthew 4:1-4. Notice who leads Israel into the wilderness, and who leads Jesus there.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2709, 2710, 2711, 2712, 2699.

Into the Desert

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

In Scripture the wilderness is where God leads those he loves: "the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart" (Deuteronomy 8:2), "as a man disciplines his son" (8:5). He even courts in the desert: "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her" (Hosea 2:14). And the Spirit led Jesus himself into the desert (Matthew 4:1), where he answered the tempter from Deuteronomy: "Man shall not live by bread alone" (4:4).

St. John of the Cross gives three signs that dryness in prayer can be God's work, weaning us from sweetness to feed us more directly: no satisfaction in God or in creatures; an anxious, loving care toward God; and a quiet drawing to remain with him when ordinary meditation fails (The Dark Night I.9). The Church holds both honest possibilities: dryness can be "the moment of sheer faith," and it can be rocky soil calling for conversion (CCC 2731).

Dryness is not the same as depression; darkness that floods all of life deserves a doctor as well as a confessor, and the two helps do not compete. In every case the counsel of St. Teresa stands: never leave prayer. God was never absent in her dry years, and he is not absent in yours.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

John gives three signs that dryness in prayer is God at work and not the soul's fault: the soul finds satisfaction neither in God nor in creatures; it turns toward God with anxious care, fearing it is failing him; and it can no longer meditate as before, yet is inclined to remain alone in loving attentiveness. Where all three meet, he teaches, God has begun to feed the soul directly, without the sweetness of sense: the dryness is not abandonment but weaning, the beginning of stronger food.

The Dark Night, Book I, ch. 9.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa testifies that for many years her own prayer was a battlefield of distraction and dryness; she sometimes dreaded the hour of prayer more than any penance, and for a time she abandoned mental prayer altogether, a decision she afterward counted among her worst. Her counsel from the far side is blunt and kind at once, in substance: never leave prayer, whatever it feels like; carry the cross of dryness without forcing consolations; God was at work in the dry years and repaid the fidelity, and he was never absent in them.

Summarized from The Life, chs. 8 and 11.

ST. TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS (EDITH STEIN)

A brilliant Jewish philosopher and an atheist in her youth, Edith Stein picked up St. Teresa's autobiography one evening at a friend's house and read it through the night; by the account preserved in that first biography, she closed it saying, in substance: this is the truth. She entered the Church, then Carmel, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, and spent her last years writing her unfinished Science of the Cross on St. John's doctrine before dying at Auschwitz in 1942. The desert doctrine of Carmel was not theory to her; she carried it into the darkest night of her century and found it held.

Her final, unfinished work was The Science of the Cross, a study of St. John of the Cross (1941-42); the reading story is from the first biography of her, written by her prioress, Teresia Renata Posselt.

Live It This Week

- Keep the fifteen-minute appointment every day this week even if (especially if) it feels like sand. Fidelity is the whole assignment.
- On one dry day, pray Psalm 63:1-8 slowly and mean the first verse as your own.
- Bring Take-Home 1, sealed, without fail next week. If you lost it, rewrite your original answer this week and seal it.

MEMORY VERSE · HOSEA 2:14

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her."

Before next session: Read Psalm 22 in one sitting, start to finish. Bring your sealed Take-Home 1 sheet: we open it together next session.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2729, 2731, 2015.

The Dark Night

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

Scripture prays from inside the darkness: Job cannot find God in any direction, yet confesses "he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:8-10). Psalm 88, the one psalm that ends without a dawn, is still prayer, still addressed to "O LORD, my God." God himself supplies words for the season when we have none.

On the cross, in real darkness, Jesus prayed the first line of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:33-34). Prayed whole, that psalm runs from abandonment to "he has not hid his face from him, but has heard" (22:24). Our cry, prayed in him, sits inside the same trajectory; the Church calls desolation "the moment of sheer faith clinging faithfully to Jesus in his agony" (CCC 2731).

St. John of the Cross defines the dark night not as God's absence but as an inflow of God into the soul: light so near and so strong that unready eyes suffer it as darkness (The Dark Night II.5). In the night he describes, perception and presence are not the same thing. Whatever else is happening in the dark, God breaking his promise is not.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Of the deeper night John writes that this dark night is an inflow of God into the soul, which purges it of its ignorances and imperfections; the very light of God, received by a soul not yet pure, is suffered as darkness, the way eyes long used to the dark are blinded by the sun, an image John himself borrows from the philosophers. The pain, he insists, comes not from God's distance but from his unaccustomed nearness. What feels like losing God is, in the souls God is purifying, God arriving too brightly to be seen.

The Dark Night, Book II, ch. 5.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa describes, in the sixth dwelling places, the severe interior and exterior trials by which God prepares a soul for full union: misunderstanding from good people, illness, and worst of all, an interior darkness in which the soul can find no comfort in anything and feels banished from God, while (she notes shrewdly) never actually leaving him. For such nights the little prayer long attributed to her, found in her breviary after her death, has steadied centuries of Christians, in substance: let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things are passing; God never changes; patience obtains all things; whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices.

Summarized from The Interior Castle, Sixth Dwelling Places; the short prayer is from a paper found in her breviary after her death, by long tradition her own.

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

In the last eighteen months of her short life, Thérèse, the saint of confidence, entered what she called a night in which the very thought of heaven, once her joy, became a wall. She wrote that she sat, as it were, at a table of sinners, eating the bread of doubt with those who do not believe, and offering her darkness for them. She died at twenty-four with her faith intact and her feelings of faith gone, proving in miniature what this session teaches: the night attacks the felt certainties in order to lay bare the naked, willing yes.

Story of a Soul, Manuscript C.

Live It This Week

- Keep the daily fifteen minutes without exception this week. On one day, pray Psalm 22 whole, slowly, in Jesus's company.
- Memorize the memory verse and say it each night before sleep this week.
- Write one sentence at week's end: what I now believe is happening when God feels absent. Keep it with your old sealed guess.

MEMORY VERSE · PSALM 34:18

"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit."

Before next session: Read John 4:1-30 (the woman at the well). Notice who is thirsty at the start, and who is thirsty by the end.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2731, 164-165, 603.

Living Water

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

At Jacob's well the order of thirst is the Gospel in miniature: Jesus asks first ("Give me a drink," John 4:7), because "God thirsts that we may thirst for him" (CCC 2560). Prayer is the encounter of his thirst with ours, and it ends with the woman leaving her water jar behind (4:28): she came to haul and went home announcing. If St. Teresa's rain comes to mind, the analogy is ours, and it fits.

The water has a history: it broke from the struck rock in the desert (Exodus 17:6; "the Rock was Christ," 1 Corinthians 10:4), the prophets promised it as the poured-out Spirit (Isaiah 44:3), Ezekiel saw it deepen from ankles to swimming depth (47:1-5), and Jesus cried the fulfillment at the feast: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37), which John glosses plainly: "this he said about the Spirit" (7:39).

St. Teresa maps one gift arriving in increasing fullness: the soul is a garden watered four ways, by hauled buckets, by water wheel, by a running stream, by rain, moving always from our labor toward God's fuller gift, with grace enabling every stage. No caste system: God cherishes the haulers, no method produces the rain, and the gardener's work is faithful presence, consent, and the ordinary tending of virtue. And St. John of the Cross, from a prison cell: the spring flows and runs, although it is night.

Voices of the Church

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa compares the soul to a garden the Lord delights to walk in, and prayer to watering it four ways: hauling from a well by hand; turning a water wheel with its buckets; channeling a running stream; and receiving drenching rain from heaven. The first asks the most of our labor and the last is pure gift, though grace enables every water from the first bucket up; the movement between them is the story of a praying life: God gradually taking over the watering. Her counsel to the haulers is tender, in substance: your labor pleases the Lord of the garden, and the rain is his to send when he will.

The Life; the garden and four waters begin in ch. 11.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Imprisoned in Toledo, John composed a poem on the eternal spring: "For I know well the spring that flows and runs, although it is night." Stanza by stanza he confesses what he knows of that hidden fountain, its origin in the Father, its stream in the Son, its living water offered to every creature, and each stanza ends on the same refrain: although it is night. It is Session 6 and Session 7 in a single line: the water never stopped flowing; it was only dark.

From his poem "Song of the soul that rejoices in knowing God through faith," often called The Fountain: "For I know well the spring that flows and runs, although it is night."

ST. JOHN PAUL II

Calling the whole Church to depth at the start of the new millennium, St. John Paul II wrote that our Christian communities must become genuine schools of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening, and ardent devotion, "until the heart truly falls in love": a Christianity distinguished, he said, in the art of prayer. It is the charter for everything this study has practiced since Session 4, written for every parish and every dry land.

Novo Millennio Ineunte 32-33.

Live It This Week

- Each day this week, open your fifteen minutes with one line prayed slowly: "Lord, you thirst for me; I am here. Give me the living water." Then read John 4 across the week, a few verses a day.
- Once this week, drink a glass of water slowly and deliberately as a bodily prayer of thirst for the Holy Spirit. Let the body preach to the soul.
- Identify your current water (bucket, wheel, stream, rain) in one written sentence, without shame, and thank God for exactly that delivery.

MEMORY VERSE · JOHN 7:37

"If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink."

Before next session: Read Song of Songs 2:8-17 and 3:1-4, and John 20:11-18.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2560, 2561, 694.

The Song

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

The Song of Songs is in the Bible on purpose. The literal sense comes first (CCC 116), and most readers today receive that sense as real love poetry, sung inside a Scripture where marriage was already the master image of the covenant: "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isaiah 62:5). Jesus claims the role himself (Mark 2:19), Paul names the great mystery (Ephesians 5:31-32), and the Bible ends at a wedding (Revelation 19:7).

Its center is a mutual belonging that echoes the covenant formula in the key of love: "My beloved is mine and I am his" (Song 2:16), and its seeking scene ("I sought him... I found him whom my soul loves," 3:1-4) maps the praying life: longing, search, watchmen who cannot help, and finding. John's Easter morning can be heard in this same grammar: a garden before dawn, a weeping seeker, "Whom do you seek?", and recognition at her own name (John 20:15-16).

St. John of the Cross rework the Song into The Spiritual Canticle ("Where have you hidden, Beloved?") and, by the testimony of those present, asked for the Song on his deathbed; St. Teresa taught her sisters to take the bride's words boldly on their own lips. In this biblical tradition of prayer, the deepest name for a soul before God is not employee, defendant, or fan. It is beloved.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

John's masterpiece opens with the bride's cry, in an adapted rendering: *Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me moaning? You fled like the stag after wounding me; I went out calling you, and you were gone.* By the account of his early biographers, composed largely from memory of the Song of Songs in his Toledo cell, the Canticle then walks the whole road this study has walked: search, night, encounter, espousal, union. For John, the Song is not decoration on the spiritual life; it is its most exact grammar: the soul before God is first of all a beloved who has been wounded into seeking.

The Spiritual Canticle, stanza 1.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa wrote a small book of meditations on verses of the Song (a bold act for a woman in her century; an early confessor ordered one version burned, and she serenely wrote on). In it she teaches, in substance, that the Lord is not offended when a soul takes the bride's words on its own lips; he inspired them for that use. She lingers on the bride's security in the Beloved's affection and urges her sisters to ask boldly for the deep peace of his friendship. Where others blushed at the Song, Teresa saw the prayer book of holy audacity.

Summarized from her Meditations on the Song of Songs.

ST. JOHN PAUL II

In his catecheses on human love, St. John Paul II taught, in substance, that spousal love is stamped into the body and its meaning from the beginning, and that the Song of Songs stands in the canon as human eros bearing witness, in its truth, to the covenant: the language of self-gift. Marriage speaks of Christ and the Church (he loved to expound Ephesians 5), and consecrated virginity speaks of the same wedding by another road. Marriage and consecrated virginity alike, he taught, speak the one language of definitive self-gift to Love who gave himself first.

Summarized from his catecheses on human love (the Theology of the Body) and *Mulieris Dignitatem*.

Live It This Week

- Pray your chosen Song line as a repeated aspiration each day this week (at red lights, in queues, before sleep), alongside the fifteen-minute appointment.
- Read John 20:1-18 once mid-week, slowly, placing yourself in the garden. Let him say your name at verse 16.
- If you are married: pray once this week in thanksgiving for your spouse as a living sign of this mystery (Ephesians 5:31-32). If you are not: pray Isaiah 62:5 over your own life and state of life.

MEMORY VERSE · SONG OF SONGS 2:16

"My beloved is mine and I am his."

Before next session: Read John 15:1-11. Count how many times Jesus says the word "abide."

Catechism references for this session: CCC 116, 128-130, 796, 1612-1617.

Abide: Betrothal and Union

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

Union with God is Jesus's own image for discipleship itself: "Abide in me, and I in you... I am the vine, you are the branches... apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). The connection is organic, one life-sap in stock and branch: the old vine of Israel failed of fruit (Psalm 80; Isaiah 5), and Jesus is the true vine who finally yields it, with us made branches in him (the grafting image is St. Paul's, from the olive tree of Romans 11).

The New Testament does not blush at the result: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20); we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). The Fathers made it the purpose of Christmas itself: the Son of God became man so that we might become God (CCC 460, quoting St. Athanasius), and the Church calls us all to this union (CCC 2014), though its extraordinary graces are given only to some.

The Carmelites give the grammar that keeps it Christian: God by participation, never by nature; the log in the fire remains wood; Teresa's rain falling into a river becomes one water without the creature being erased. And the sign she most trusts is not delight but the desire and strength to serve: sap you cannot see, fruit you can.

Voices of the Church

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Of the spiritual marriage Teresa writes that the union is like rain falling from the sky into a river or a stream: it becomes one water, and none can divide or separate the water of the river from that which fell from heaven; or like a little stream entering the sea, or light entering a room through two windows and becoming one light. The soul remains itself, yet lives no longer alone: as St. Paul said, she notes, for me to live is Christ. And the sign she most trusts, drawn out in ch. 4, is not delight but the desire and strength to serve.

The Interior Castle, Seventh Dwelling Places, chs. 2 and 4.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

John teaches, in substance, that in the union of likeness the soul, purified of every attachment and transformed by love, becomes God by participation: it remains a creature by nature, yet all its operations, knowing, loving, willing, are so taken up into God that it appears more divine than human. His careful word is participation: the log in the fire is transformed into flame without ceasing to be wood; the window filled with sunlight becomes light without ceasing to be glass. Nature is never erased; it is set ablaze. The whole road of nada exists for this: emptied hands can be filled with God.

Summarized from his teaching on union; the window and sunlight image is in The Ascent of Mount Carmel II.5, the log in the fire in The Dark Night II.10, and God by participation is his language in The Spiritual Cantic and The Living Flame of Love.

ST. ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

Elizabeth found her vocation in a phrase of St. Paul: to be the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:12), and signed her last letters with it as a new name, Laudem Gloriam. Union, as she lived it, was not exotic: it meant letting the indwelling Trinity of Session 3 have the whole house, every thought and hour becoming a yes. Dying at twenty-six, her last words, as her community recorded them, were that she was going to light, to love, to life; and in her letters she had promised to spend her heaven drawing souls into the same interior union she had found in an ordinary Carmel of Dijon.

From her letters and last retreat notes; her last words are given as her community recorded them; the

name is from Ephesians 1 (see also her 1904 prayer in Session 3).

Live It This Week

- Pray Galatians 2:20 from memory each morning this week, and once before a specific hard obedience you named tonight.
- Read John 15:1-11 on three separate days; each time, choose the verse to carry into that day.
- Receive the Eucharist this week with union intention: CCC 2014 ties the mystical life to the sacraments; go to the source and say only, "Abide in me, and I in you."

MEMORY VERSE · GALATIANS 2:20

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

Before next session: Read Acts 2:1-4 and Song of Songs 8:6-7.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 460, 2014, 795.

The Living Flame

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

God introduces himself in fire: the unconsumed bush (Exodus 3:2), Sinai in smoke (19:18), fire falling on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:38). At Pentecost tongues as of fire divide and rest "on each one of them" (Acts 2:3-11): the mountain's fire becomes personal, and the Spirit-given speech carries the message into every language. Pentecost's fire immediately bears outward fruit.

The doctrine under the image is Romans 5:5: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Already poured, already given in baptism: the Spirit's indwelling love is the true endowment of every baptized life kept in grace, and the transforming depths St. John describes are that same gift brought, by God's free hand, to full flame. The command that follows is simply "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The evidence of real fire is not phenomena but charity: tongues without love are noise (1 Corinthians 13:1), and "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16).

Our water thread ends here, in the reading this study has proposed from the Church's own symbols: the desert gave water, the water was the Spirit, and the Song joins the images: love's "flashes are flashes of fire... Many waters cannot quench love" (Song 8:6-7). St. John of the Cross names the flame outright: it is the Holy Spirit, the same fire that once made the green log smoke and weep (the nights) now setting it alight. The water was always on its way to flame.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

"O living flame of love that tenderly wounds my soul in its deepest center!" In his commentary John says plainly that this flame of love is the Spirit of its Bridegroom, the Holy Spirit, whom the soul feels within itself as a fire that burns and flares, bathing the soul in glory. And he explains the whole journey in one image: the same fire that first made the log smoke, blacken, and weep out its moisture (the nights of Sessions 5 and 6) at last sets it aflame, so that the wood does what fire does. The darkness and the flame were always one love at two stages of its work.

The Living Flame of Love, stanza 1 and his commentary on it.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa describes the famous grace called the transverberation: she saw, in vision, an angel with a small golden dart tipped as if with fire, which he plunged repeatedly into her heart, leaving her wholly on fire with great love of God; the pain was severe, she says, and so was the sweetness, and she could not wish to be rid of it. She is careful, in this chapter and in her later counsels on such favors, to insist, in substance, that they are God's to give, prove nothing by themselves, and matter for the love and humility they leave behind. The wound she prized was the love.

The Life, ch. 29.

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

Searching Scripture for her place in the Church, Thérèse found it in 1 Corinthians 12-13: since the Church is a body, it must have a heart, and that heart must be burning with love. "In the heart of the Church, my mother, I shall be love," she wrote, and so, she said, she would be everything. A cloistered woman not known for extraordinary phenomena (though her writings record their own quiet graces), dead at twenty-four, she is proof of tonight's test: the fire's evidence is charity. The Church, agreeing, put her sentence in the Catechism and made her a Doctor of the Church.

Story of a Soul, Manuscript B; quoted in CCC 826.

Live It This Week

- Memorize Romans 5:5 and pray it each morning with one added word: today. "Poured into my heart... given to me: today let it burn."
- Do the one concrete act of charity you named at Q4, and tell no one except God.
- Pray to the Holy Spirit directly each day this week (many Catholics rarely do): Come, Holy Spirit, kindle in me the fire of your love.

MEMORY VERSE · ROMANS 5:5

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Before next session: Read Luke 10:38-42. Come ready to speak for either sister.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 696, 733-735, 2011.

Martha and Mary Together

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

Jesus's word to Martha targets anxiety, not service: "you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful" (Luke 10:41-42). Mary's portion, the disciple's place at his feet, is the center that nourishes and directs all serving, for "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). And the pattern of the whole Bible is contemplation overflowing into mission: Elijah meets God in the still small voice and is immediately told "Go, return on your way" (1 Kings 19:12, 15); the Twelve are appointed first "to be with him," then "to be sent out" (Mark 3:14).

St. Teresa teaches it from the summit of the Interior Castle: Martha and Mary must join together; the purpose of the deepest union is the birth always of good works. Prayer and Christian life are inseparable (CCC 2745). St. John of the Cross gives mission its field manual: where there is no love, put love, and you will draw out love.

And the study's hidden thread stands revealed: Venerable Jan Tyranowski, a Krakow tailor who believed a sermon (it is not difficult to become a saint), kept a hidden rule of prayer, and in an occupied city formed young men in Living Rosary groups, placing St. John of the Cross into the hands of young Karol Wojtyla, the future St. John Paul II, who never forgot the beauty of a soul opened up by grace. A sermon, a tailor, a rosary circle, a pope, and this study in your hands. Hidden prayer moves history. Keep the appointment.

Voices of the Church

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

At the summit of the castle Teresa answers the suspicion that mystics float away from the world: believe me, she tells her sisters in substance, Martha and Mary must join together to show hospitality to the Lord; this is the purpose of the spiritual marriage: that from it good works may be born, always good works. The soul most united to God is the most useful, and her own life witnessed to it: as her Foundations and her letters record, the years of her deepest prayer were the years of foundations, journeys, lawsuits, and administration. Fix your eyes on the Crucified, she says, and everything will seem small to you; he did not give us these desires to waste them.

The Interior Castle, Seventh Dwelling Places, ch. 4, summarized.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

In a letter written in the last year of his life, John gave a persecuted friend the sentence that summarizes Carmelite mission: where there is no love, put love, and you will draw out love. It is, we might say, contemplation's field manual: the contemplative does not wait to find love in the parish, the family, the shop, the occupied city; having received the living flame, he puts love in, and God kindles what love puts there. Everything this study has practiced exists to make a person capable of that sentence.

From his letter to Maria de la Encarnacion, 6 July 1591.

VENERABLE JAN TYRANOWSKI

A shy Krakow tailor who believed a sermon (it is not difficult to become a saint), built a hidden rule of prayer, and, when the Nazis emptied his parish of priests, was handed its young men. His method was the interior life itself: Living Rosary groups of fifteen, leaders formed one soul at a time, meetings held quietly under an occupation that punished such gatherings. He put St. John of the Cross into the hands of a young worker named Karol Wojtyla, who as St. John Paul II wrote of him with lifelong gratitude, remembering in Gift and Mystery the beauty of a soul opened up by grace. The tailor died in March 1947, four months after Karol Wojtyla was ordained a priest; nearly all the rest of the harvest he never saw. You are reading

the Carmelite doctors in a parish study tonight partly because Martha and Mary joined together in a tailor's shop.

The historical record of his apostolate, and St. John Paul II's memoir *Gift and Mystery*; declared Venerable in 2017.

Live It This Week

- Keep the daily fifteen minutes (Mary), and complete one deliberate, costly act of service (Martha) before next session; let the prayer choose the act.
- Pray John's sentence into one loveless place in your week: where there is no love, put love. Report to God, not to the group.
- Bring all your Take-Home sheets next week, including the opened Session 1 guess, for the final session's look back.

MEMORY VERSE · LUKE 10:42

"One thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

Before next session: Read 1 Corinthians 13 and John 21:15-19. Bring every Take-Home sheet from the study, including your opened Session 1 guess.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2745, 863, 2013.

Judged on Love

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

The final exam was posted from the beginning: love God with all your heart, soul, and might (Deuteronomy 6:5), and your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). St. Paul renders the verdict on everything else: tongues, prophecy, knowledge, even mountain-moving faith and martyrdom, "but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). And the Catechism describes our meeting with Christ at death in St. John of the Cross's words: at the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love (CCC 1022).

Watch how the Judge examines: at a charcoal breakfast (John 21:9), three questions long heard as answering Peter's three denials (John 18:15-27), "Do you love me?", and every confession answered not with probation but with commission: feed my sheep; follow me (John 21:15-19). He asks for love, absorbs our failures into the asking, and entrusts us with what he loves. Judged on love means judged on Tuesdays: the hungry fed, the sick visited, "you did it to me" (Matthew 25:35-40). And even the love is grace, "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5).

So the study ends where St. John Paul II ended the Jubilee: *Duc in altum*, put out into the deep (Luke 5:4). Deep calls to deep: the depths of God have been calling to yours for twelve weeks, and the appointment does not end tonight. Keep the fifteen minutes for life; the door of the castle stays open. And when he asks you Peter's question, answer with Peter's answer: Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

The saying the Church chose to describe our meeting with Christ at death: at the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love. In its home among his maxims, the counsel continues in substance: learn to love as God desires to be loved, and leave your own way of acting. It is the entire Carmelite doctrine in a sentence: everything, the nada, the nights, the flame, was only ever about learning to love; and the God who will examine us on love is the same who spent our whole life teaching us the subject and supplying the answers.

Sayings of Light and Love, as quoted in CCC 1022.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa's last counsels in the Interior Castle are startlingly practical: the Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our works as at the love with which they are done; do what lies in your power, and fix your eyes on the Crucified, and everything will seem small to you. She dismantles every excuse of littleness: if love is the measure, then no life is too small for greatness, and the sisters' hidden duties, done with great love, weigh more than famous deeds done without it. The judgment on love is, in her hands, the most democratic doctrine in the Church.

The Interior Castle, Seventh Dwelling Places, ch. 4, summarized.

ST. JOHN PAUL II

Closing the Great Jubilee, St. John Paul II gave the Church her sailing orders in Christ's words to Peter: *Duc in altum*, put out into the deep (Luke 5:4). Remembering that word, he said, we are called to trust the Lord's promise and lower the nets. The apprentice of the Krakow tailor, formed on St. John of the Cross, ended his letter not with a program but with a Person to be contemplated and a deep to be dared. For a study named Deep Calls to Deep, it is the destined last word: the depths of God that have been calling to our depths now send us out upon the deep.

Novo Millennio Ineunte 1 and 58, on Luke 5:4.

Live It This Week

- Keep the fifteen minutes for life. It was never a twelve-week program; it was the door of the castle, and it stays open.
- Do one of Matthew 25's six mercies this week, in person, and let it be your closing act of the study.
- Choose your next step tonight (adoration hour, the next study, Story of a Soul or Teresa's Life) and tell one person in this group, who is allowed to ask you about it.

MEMORY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

"So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Before next session: Read 1 Corinthians 13 once more this week, slowly. Then: one of Matthew 25's mercies, in person, and the appointment kept, every day, for the rest of your life.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1022, 1826-1829, 1821.