

Carmelite Spirituality

First Considerations:

False self-----*True Self*

Conventional self-----*Ultimate Self*

Teresa's Interior Castle

1. *First Dwelling Place*: Confronting ourselves with real self-knowledge *unto* humility, sorrow, and determination.
2. *Second Dwelling Place*: One prays regularly and cultivates the virtue of effort and attaining new habits (be firm and gentle with yourself).
3. *Third Dwelling Place*: Commitment to a holy lifestyle. Aridity in prayer can be usually countered with ardent desire, prayer, and loving service to others.
4. *Fourth Dwelling Place*: One moves **from** "mental prayer" where prayer is mediated through sermons, music, nature, and spiritual meditations **to** the *prayer of recollection* where the soul is silent before God. This can lead to the *prayer of quiet* whereby the soul experiences God moving the soul quite directly. God is enlarging the heart.
5. *Fifth Dwelling Place*: God addresses the soul quite directly and the prayers of *recollection* and *quiet* are regular. Here one can move to the *prayer of union*, a profound experience of God that overwhelms the soul in love.
6. *Sixth Dwelling Place*: Falling in love with God on a profoundly deep level. Here the soul might experience great raptures from God, but also great trials. Dryness in prayer and a sense of abandonment is typical as God is purifying the soul of inordinate attachments.
7. *Seventh Dwelling Place*: Mystical union whereby the soul perpetually experiences God's presence in the soul's operations. There are no more raptures as union with God is now the norm.

John of the Cross and the Dark Nights

1. *Active Night of the Senses* for *Beginners* (zealous and moderately advanced): This aligns relatively well with Teresa's third dwelling place. The defect is seeking satisfaction in prayer, where one is attached to both themselves (conventional and false selves) and their experiences. Here the challenge is to let go of one's *spiritual greed* by taking on ascetical practices that temper one's attachments. Prayer here is *mental prayer*.
2. *Passive Night of the Senses*: This is God's work. Here one finds dryness in mental prayer but also a deep longing for God and a solicitude to God. The soul wants to be with God in simple loving awareness without particular mental/conceptual considerations. This stage lasts typically for many years as the soul becomes increasingly liberated. One comes to a knowledge of God's indwelling that can even flare up into intense experiences (aligned to Teresa's fourth and fifth dwelling places).
3. *Active Night of the Spirit*: One must dispose the soul entirely to God in order to progress. Here detachment is less on being free from physical attachments and more on *spiritual*

attachments, that is, self-identity and with a naked disinterest in spiritual consolations or images of God. One cultivates a kind of self-emptiness and an openness to the mystery of God. One practices faith, hope, and love, in a different way: now faith is an open trust into divine mystery, hope is an openness to that which is outside of any conceptual expectation, and love will seek the Beloved without any self-interest. One has been given a deep love for Him who dwells within, and one simply practices attending to God in love.

4. *Passive Night of the Spirit*: Here God takes over and purges and illuminates the soul most directly. This is the work of God on the soul. Now the very virtues of faith, hope, and love that the soul cultivated in the *active night of the spirit* become infused supernaturally. This is the most intense and difficult period, often called the *dark night of the soul*, and the soul often feels abandoned by God. One loses all moorings and props, and one's attachments get ripped out at the roots.
5. *Union*: This is *spiritual marriage* and corresponds to Teresa's *seventh dwelling place*. This also represents the "divinization" of the soul where the soul lives the divine life with God by his grace.