Hineni, Adonai

Crumbs of a worm

A mystical itinerary for the formation and salvation of souls

ADLE

The way of the soul is to empty itself of self so that God may dwell in it.
The Beatitudes teach us that only a humble, unpossessive heart can receive the Kingdom.
This self-emptying is fulfilled on the Cross, where love gives itself without reserve.
There the soul learns that to lose oneself for God is to find true life.
Walking with God is not a moment but a state:
living in his presence, loving from within him, suffering with him,
being in the world without belonging to it.
Mary Most Holy shows us this way in silence and faithfulness,
at the foot of the Cross.
Victory belongs to the living God,
in the soul that acts anointed by the Holy Spirit.

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The Cross is not what Christ endures. It is what Christ offers out of love.

English edition of the Spanish original, published by Eccekenoo with the author's permission. Standard prayers appear in their established English form; everything else is rendered from the meaning of the Spanish. Scripture follows the author's citations, with psalms numbered as in most English Bibles.

Prologue

> *For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens to the end and will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.*
>
> Habakkuk 2:3

Saint Thomas Aquinas reminds us: "When man does not seek his happiness in God, he seeks it in lesser goods, which can never satisfy an infinite desire."

When we lose sight of God, we lose our bearings. The result is a person who is anxious, empty, impulsive and consuming. Only God, the infinite Good, can fill the human heart. And whatever is not born of prayer, even when it speaks of God, ends up copying the world.

The person always ready for the will of God:

> "Here I am!
> Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

> *Better to limp along the way than to run off it.*
>
> Saint Augustine

> *Abandon yourself entirely to the will of God, for he takes more care of you than you do yourself.*
>
> Padre Pio

> "Most high, glorious God,
> enlighten the darkness of my heart
> and give me right faith, certain hope
> and perfect charity,
> sense and knowledge, Lord,
> that I may carry out your holy and true command."
> (Prayer before the Crucifix of San Damiano)

> *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*
>
> Psalm 37:5

> *With works of love I will thank you, Lord.*

Introduction to prayer

The anointing of the indwelling

To receive a spiritual retreat fruitfully before Lent, the heart must be prepared with humility and docility to the Holy Spirit. Go first to confession, to return to the state of grace, for there the soul is restored and reconciled with God. Take part in Holy Mass with faith, receive Holy Communion, and persevere in Eucharistic adoration, where the Lord speaks to the silence of the heart.

The grace of his Divine Mercy works in a holy order: first comes forgiveness, which frees the soul from the weight of sin; then healing springs up, restoring the wounds within; and at last it culminates in the anointing of his presence, where the soul is strengthened, enlightened and renewed by the love of God.

> *He heals the broken-hearted.*
> Psalm 147:3

So sacramental grace disposes us to receive the fullness of his action.

Hail Mary most pure, pray for us sinners. +

Holding back and keeping silence fills the soul and leads it within; there one listens to God and learns to win the great battles.

> "At the end of the road there is no method,
> no experience, no word.
> Only God."

Prayers

Opening prayers

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit, O Lord,
and renew the face of the earth.

I abandon myself without reserve to your divine workings, and I wish always to be docile to your holy inspirations. O Holy Spirit, deign to form me with Mary and in Mary, after the model of your beloved Jesus.

Glory to the Father, the Creator; glory to the Son, the Redeemer; glory to the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. Amen.

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Jesus autem tacebat

When, my Jesus, shall I learn to be silent,
to speak little with people
and to speak much with you?
O Jesus Christ, who in your divine Passion kept silence, humble and patient,
give me the holy virtue of your adorable silence!

Virgin Mary, Mother of Carmel,
lead me by the hand into the silence of your Heart;
teach me to listen to God and to be fed from his Fountain of Love.

My Mother, take my hand: together with Saint John and all the priests who will give the Holy Eucharist today, plunge us into your Immaculate Heart, so that you may lead us through the holy wound of your Son Jesus Christ, through his most secret Heart, to unite us with the Communion of Saints.

Prayer to Saint Michael

Saint 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 host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Dear Saint Joseph, Saint Teresa, Saint John of the Cross, Saint Thérèse, Saint Elizabeth,
Saint Edith and Saint Mary of Jesus,
ora pro nobis. Amen.

Offering of the day to Mary

Most Holy Mother, I offer you this day of retreat:
my thoughts, words and deeds.
Unite it to your immaculate heart
and obtain for me the grace I need;
teach me to live it with humility and love,
guide us with your light and place us
in the divine bosom of your beloved Son Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Guardian angel

Angel of my keeping, sweet companion,
do not leave me, by night or by day,
until you place me in the arms of Jesus, Joseph and Mary.
With your wings I sign myself and embrace the cross,
and in my heart I carry the sweetest Jesus.
Amen.

Place in my heart Christ crucified: his silence, his obedience, his total self-giving.

> *I have been crucified with Christ.*
> Galatians 2:19

Jesus Christ, I present my crosses to you: in my sufferings, my weariness, my inner trials and every silence that weighs on me, I unite them to your Cross, for the glory of the Father.

"Father, I accept all that you permit in me; I trust in you." Amen.

> *Everything that comes from God is love, even when it crucifies us.*
> Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity

Spiritual communion

It is of the greatest importance to make a spiritual communion seven times a day. Choose the hours you wish, taking care that it is the first thing in the day, with thanksgiving to God, and the last before sleeping, with a prayer asking God's forgiveness for our faults.

I confess (act of contrition)

My God, I repent with all my heart
of all my sins,
and I am sorry for having committed them,
because I have deserved your punishments,
and above all because I have offended you,
who are so good and so worthy of being loved.
I firmly resolve, with your grace,
to sin no more and to avoid the occasions of sin. Amen.

Spiritual communion

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

O Jesus, I turn to you in the tabernacle, where you live hidden for love of me. I love you, O my God, but I cannot now receive you sacramentally in Holy Communion. Come nevertheless into my heart and visit me

with your grace. Come spiritually into my heart and purify me. Sanctify me, and make my heart like your own. Heart of Jesus, I trust in you. Amen.

> Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all you have given me,
> for what you give me now, and for what, in your wisdom, you deny me.
> All is grace. All is for your glory.
> Amen.

"My Jesus, I place in your hands all that I have not done well; find the way to put it right yourself." Amen.

We beseech you, almighty God, that we who in our affliction trust in your mercy may find in your protection a defence against all adversity. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

> *My God, grant me the grace that you know I need.*

The Holy Rosary (Sorrowful Mysteries)

Five mysteries. For each mystery: one Our Father, ten Hail Marys and one Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. Jesus Carries the Cross
5. The Crucifixion

Closing prayer

> Lord,
> I have no strength to seek you,
> but I do not run away.
> I do not offer you my pain;
> I offer you my faithfulness.
> With Mary, I remain
> wherever you place me.
> Amen.

Prayer to the Most Holy Trinity with Christ crucified

Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity, "O my God, Trinity whom I adore":

> O my God, Trinity whom I adore,
> help me to forget myself entirely
> so as to settle in you,
> still and peaceful,
> as if my soul were already in eternity.
> Let nothing trouble my peace
> or draw me out of you,
> O my Unchanging One,
> but let each minute carry me further
> into the depths of your Mystery.
> Give peace to my soul;
> make it your heaven,

your beloved dwelling
and the place of your rest.
May I never leave you alone there,
but be wholly present,
fully awake in my faith,
in adoration,
given over without reserve
to your creative action.

O my beloved Christ, crucified for love,
I would be a bride for your Heart;
I would cover you with glory,
love you... until I die of love.
But I feel my powerlessness,
and I ask you to clothe me with yourself,
to identify my soul
with every movement of your soul,
to immerse me, invade me, take my place,
so that my life may be nothing but a radiance of yours.
Come into me as Adorer,
as Restorer and as Saviour.

O eternal Word,
Word of my God,
I want to spend my life listening to you;
I want to be wholly teachable,
so as to learn everything from you.
And then, through every night,
every emptiness,
every powerlessness,
I want to keep my eyes on you always
and remain beneath your great light.

O consuming Fire, Spirit of love,
come down upon me,
so that in my soul there may be
as it were an incarnation of the Word,
and that I may be for him
an added humanity
in which he renews all his Mystery.
And you, O Father, bend down to your poor little creature;
cover her with your shadow
and see in her only the Beloved
in whom you are well pleased.

O my Three, my All, my Beatitude,
infinite solitude, immensity in which I lose myself,
I surrender myself to you as your prey.
Bury yourself in me,

that I may bury myself in you,
until I go to contemplate in your light
the abyss of your greatness.
Amen.

The soul that walks in love neither tires others nor grows tired.

Saint John of the Cross

Introduction: the mystical itinerary

The whole way is made with Mary, not as an added devotion, but as the inner form of the soul.

I. Walking in the truth

The truth that sets the praying soul free. Spiritual discernment is neither a psychological technique nor constant introspective analysis. In the Carmelite tradition it is, above all, living in the truth before God. God guides chiefly through faith, not through experiences. Here we do not learn to look for anything, but to recognize what is already happening. Mary, Mother of Carmel, is the living rule of all discernment: the greatest union, the greatest silence, the greatest humility.

II. Foundations of spiritual discernment

To discern is to remain in the truth. Discerning is not obsessively watching one's inner states; that excess of analysis, far from helping, destroys the simplicity of faith. No lying to oneself, no self-aggrandizement, no dramatizing. What comes from God simplifies the soul and makes it plainer, humbler, more at peace.

The basic criterion: if an experience makes you more centered on yourself, it does not come from God.

Faith as the supreme criterion. "The more extraordinary the experiences, the greater their danger." Faith is the only means proportionate to union with God. Sensible, intellectual or affective experiences are not necessary, not even for the great mystics. The Carmelite golden rule: whatever does not increase naked faith is not central.

Humility and obedience. Humility is not one virtue among others: it is the ground of discernment. A humble soul does not think itself special, accepts correction and does not make its experiences absolute. Obedience (to the Church, to a prudent guide) is protection, not a limit. Where obedience is refused there is deception, however fervent it may be.

III. Discerning the movements within

Consolation and desolation. Not every consolation comes from God; not every desolation is the absence of God. God consoles in order to draw us; then he withdraws the consolation to purify love. The Carmelite criterion: look at the long-term fruits, which are humility, charity and faithfulness.

True peace and false peace. The peace of God is deep, stable and humble. False peace is euphoric, self-satisfied and fragile. If a "peace" makes you feel superior, enlightened or set apart from others, it is not from God.

Dryness, negligence and night. Dryness can have three causes:

1. A lack of spiritual care.
2. A trial permitted by God.
3. Passive purification (the night).

The key criterion: where there is faithfulness and a sincere desire for God, it is not negligence.

IV. Extraordinary experiences

Visions and locutions. Saint Teresa teaches it clearly: we must not lean on them, even when they are true. The right attitude is not to seek them, not to talk about them, and not to build the spiritual life on them. God is not offended by prudence.

Spiritual deception. In praying souls the enemy rarely pushes towards gross sin. He prefers spiritual vanity, a false mission and isolation. The warning sign: believing oneself chosen, indispensable or deeper than others.

The spiritual self. The ego can disguise itself as sacrifice, as zeal, as rigour, even as apparent humility. Discernment requires accepting a hard truth: in prayer, too, the self tries to survive.

V. Discernment in the contemplative life

Real progress. True spiritual progress is measured by greater patience, greater charity and greater simplicity, not by the intensity of experiences.

The night as criterion. The night is the great discerner. Everything false falls away; only what is essential remains. Whoever accepts the night without dramatizing is on the true road.

Obedience and accompaniment. Carmel was never individualistic. Obedience is a protecting grace. God does not contradict himself between conscience and the Church.

VI. Discerning the cross

The cross sought and the cross received. Not every cross is God's will. Seeking suffering for its own sake can be pride in disguise. The authentic cross is not chosen; it is received, and it is offered.

The fruit of suffering. Suffering united to Christ opens the heart, makes us more compassionate and does not harden us. If pain shuts you in, it needs discernment.

VII. Mary, the final criterion

Mary and silence. Mary does not analyse, does not explain, does not justify herself. She remains. That is the highest discernment.

Mary against every illusion: the greatest union, no self-importance at all. That is why Mary is the sure rule.

VIII. Discernment in practice

1. "I feel an intense peace when I pray." Does that peace make you humbler and more charitable? If not, it may be only sensible consolation.
2. "I have felt nothing for months." If you persevere and desire God, it is probably purification.
3. "I believe God speaks to me within." Do not act without obedience. Locutions are never urgent.
4. "I feel called to something great." God calls along the ordinary road, not through inner exaltation.
5. "I feel worse than before." The light reveals what was hidden before. It is not always a step back.
6. "I compare myself with others spiritually." That does not come from God. The Holy Spirit never breeds comparison.
7. "I want more prayer, more penance." Is it born of love or of perfectionism? Always seek counsel.
8. "I feel an aversion to the Church." A clear sign of spiritual deception.

To walk in the truth is to walk in the night, held up by God alone.

The great retreat: introduction

The inner life with Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel, for little souls who seek God in truth and silence.

The spiritual path: initiation and purification; a stable contemplative life; discernment and spiritual maturity.

The whole way is made with Mary, not as an added devotion, but as the inner form of the soul.

I. When God takes the initiative

Contemplation is not produced; it is received. When the soul has been purified enough, God himself becomes the only agent. These pages accompany that delicate moment: when doing more gets in the way, when understanding no longer helps, when only loving remains.

II. Silence as a dwelling place

Silence is not absence. Contemplative silence is not a psychological void but a dense presence. Saint John of the Cross teaches that God communicates himself in darkness because he exceeds every concept.

Ceasing to interfere. The greatest obstacle to contemplation is excessive inner activity. Pure faith takes the place of control.

III. Naked faith

The night as grace. The night is not a step back but a hidden advance. God strips the soul of its supports in order to unite himself to it directly.

Remaining without understanding. Authentic contemplation surpasses all understanding. Here faith acts without sensible or intellectual support.

IV. The little soul in contemplation

Resting in God. In contemplation, effort gives way to loving rest. We do not progress by doing more, but by abandoning ourselves more.

Trust without evidence. Contemplative trust needs no proof. It rests on Love alone.

V. The indwelling of the Trinity

Living from within. Mature contemplation becomes a habitual state. The soul lives from its centre, not from dispersion.

Silent praise. The whole of life becomes an inner liturgy. One no longer prays: one is prayer.

VI. Union and the Cross

Crucified love. The highest union with God takes place in total self-giving, even in suffering.

Existing for God. In transforming union the soul no longer lives for itself. The whole of existence becomes a gift.

VII. With Mary: the definitive form of the contemplative soul

Mary does not teach; she forms. Mary does not guide from outside. She shapes the contemplative soul from within: silence, faith, self-giving, faithfulness.

Mysticism with Mary in the deep night: "remaining when everything disappears"

No visible fruits are sought. Progress is not examined. Penance is not intensified. Practices are not multiplied. Less is more.

Remaining at the Cross with Mary

A way of oblation, naked faith and silent love. Its essential conditions: do not seek sufferings; make no rash promises; live in obedience and with accompaniment; accept God's rhythm.

> *The soul that walks in love neither tires others nor grows tired.*
>
> Saint John of the Cross

Retreat: the mysticism of the Cross beside Mary

For little souls in the deep night: remaining when everything disappears.

Stage I · When God seems absent (days 1 to 11)

Day 1 · God has not gone away

Truth: God acts in hiding.

Gesture: Sit in silence for five to ten minutes.

Mary: She believed without seeing.

I DID NOT CHOOSE MYSELF: I WAS CHOSEN (SAINT MARY OF JESUS)

Light: The authentic cross is not born of a choice of the will, but of a yes to God. Mary did not choose to suffer: she chose to love.

Meditation: Recognize the crosses you did not choose. That is where this way begins.

Practice: Do not explain your cross to anyone today. Present it to Mary alone.

Fruit: Trusting acceptance.

Personal notes

Day 2 · It is not a punishment

Truth: The night is not rejection.

Gesture: Repeat slowly: "I believe."

Mary: She trusted without an explanation.

GOD DOES NOT MISTAKE THE SOUL (SAINT THÉRÈSE)

Light: Merciful Love knows whom to purify deeply.

Meditation: God did not ask you for strength; he asked you for trust.

Practice: Repeat: "All that you permit is love."

Fruit: A child's trust.

Personal notes

Day 3 · I do not have to feel

Truth: Love is not measured by feelings.

Gesture: Stay, even if you do not want to.

Mary: She stayed.

THE CROSS IS NOT A PUNISHMENT (SAINT MARY OF JESUS)

Light: God does not punish with the cross: he unites through the cross.

Meditation: Look at the cross without fear and without interpreting it.

Practice: Today, avoid asking yourself "why?".

Fruit: Humble peace.

Personal notes

Day 4 · God works without my knowing

Truth: Grace acts in what is unseen.

Gesture: Do not analyse today.

Mary: She kept all things in her heart.

OFFERING ONESELF TO LOVE, NOT TO PAIN (SAINT THÉRÈSE)

Light: The safe oblation is to Love, not to suffering.

Meditation: Hand over your inner process without conditions.

Practice: Give up controlling your spiritual path.

Fruit: True abandonment.

Personal notes

Day 5 · My faith is enough

Truth: One act of faith is worth more than a thousand emotions.

Gesture: "Jesus, I trust."

Mary: She believed against all evidence.

MARY KEEPS ALL THINGS IN HER HEART

Light: Mary's silence is the first language of the offered soul.

Meditation: Stay with Mary without saying anything.

Practice: One slow, attentive Hail Mary.

Fruit: Inner silence.

Personal notes

Day 6 · I am not failing

Truth: Dryness is not unfaithfulness.

Gesture: Do the ordinary things.

Mary: She was faithful in small things.

MY WEAKNESS IS THE PLACE (THÉRÈSE)

Light: God works more in powerlessness than in strength.

Meditation: Accept that you cannot hold yourself up.

Practice: Do not fight your frailty today.

Fruit: Trusting humility.

Personal notes

Day 7 · I can rest

Truth: God holds me up even when I do not feel it.

Gesture: Sleep, eat, look after your body.

Mary: A caring mother.

REMAINING WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING (SYNTHESIS)

Light: Mature faith begins when we stop understanding.

Meditation: Say only: "Here I am."

Practice: A brief prayer, without words.

Fruit: The beginning of naked faith.

Personal notes

Day 8 · Not understanding is normal

Truth: Not understanding what God is doing does not mean he is not acting.

Gesture: Accept not understanding today. Do not look for meaning.

Mary: She accepted paths she could not explain.

THE CROSS IS A SHARING (EDITH STEIN AND MARY)

Light: The cross truly unites us to the sacrifice of Christ.

Meditation: Unite your suffering to Christ's, without emotion.

Practice: Offer up one concrete difficulty.

Fruit: A redemptive meaning.

Personal notes

Day 9 · Not feeling is not loving less

Truth: True love remains when feeling fades.

Gesture: Stay a moment without looking for comfort.

Mary: She loved without signs or guarantees.

HISTORY, TOO, IS A CROSS (EDITH STEIN AND MARY)

Light: God acts within collective tragedies.

Meditation: Offer your cross for the Church.

Practice: Pray for those who suffer unjustly.

Fruit: Charity for the Church.

Personal notes

Day 10 · Remaining is already prayer

Truth: When you can do nothing, simply being there is enough.

Gesture: Sit in silence for a few minutes, without words.

Mary: She knew how to be present without intervening.

MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS (EDITH STEIN AND MARY)

Light: She neither flees nor consoles: she remains.

Meditation: Stand beside her.

Practice: A long silence.

Fruit: Steadfast faithfulness.

Personal notes

Day 11 · God knows where you are

Truth: You do not need to make yourself visible to God: he sees you.

Gesture: Say just once: "I am here."

Mary: She was seen in hiddenness.

WHEN EVERYTHING GOES DARK (EDITH STEIN AND MARY)

Light: The night is purification, not abandonment.

Meditation: Accept not feeling God.

Practice: Pray even when you do not want to.

Fruit: Perseverance.

Personal notes

Stage II · When the self comes undone (days 12 to 22)

Here we enter the deepest poverty. It is not explained; it is crossed.

Day 12 · I am not useless

Truth: My worth does not depend on what I feel or produce.

Gesture: Do a simple task without judging yourself.

Mary: She was small and fruitful.

I DID NOT CHOOSE THIS PATH (EDITH STEIN AND MARY)

Light: Authenticity is proved here.

Meditation: Accept that you did not choose.

Practice: Do not resist inwardly.

Fruit: Surrender.

Personal notes

Day 13 · I have not been abandoned

Truth: Felt absence is not real abandonment.

Gesture: Repeat gently: "I am not alone."

Mary: She never let go of the promise.

REMAINING IS VICTORY

Light: The offered soul does not triumph: it remains.

Meditation: Stay with God.

Practice: Nothing extraordinary today.

Fruit: Inner stability.

Personal notes

Day 14 · My poverty does not frighten God

Truth: God does not draw back from nothingness; he chooses it.

Gesture: Do not hide your weakness today.

Mary: God looked upon her lowliness.

MY LIFE NO LONGER BELONGS TO ME (EDITH STEIN AND MARY)

Light: Oblation sets us free.

Meditation: Hand over your future.

Practice: An inner act of total self-giving.

Fruit: Deep freedom.

Personal notes

Day 15 · I do not have to hold myself up

Truth: I do not stay on my feet by my own strength.

Gesture: Rest deliberately for a few minutes.

Mary: She let God hold her.

GOD DWELLS IN ME (SAINT ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY)

Light: The cross is lived from within.

Meditation: God is in you.

Practice: Brief acts of awareness.

Fruit: Recollection.

Personal notes

Day 16 · My silence is not empty

Truth: Deep silence can be communion.

Gesture: Remain before God without words.

Mary: She kept all things in her heart.

SUFFERING WITHOUT NOISE (SAINT ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY)

Light: Silence makes fruitful.

Meditation: Do not explain your pain.

Practice: Keep inner silence.

Fruit: Depth.

Personal notes

Day 17 · I am not asked for results

Truth: God does not expect visible fruit in the night.

Gesture: Today, give up measuring your spiritual life.

Mary: She waited without seeing.

BEING PRAISE ON THE CROSS (SAINT ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY)

Light: A life offered becomes praise.

Meditation: Offer everything without words.

Practice: Thanksgiving.

Fruit: A Eucharistic life.

Personal notes

Day 18 · My frailty is a place of grace

Truth: God acts where I cannot.

Gesture: Accept one concrete limitation today.

Mary: God did great things in her.

THE INNER CROSS (SAINT ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY)

Light: Not all suffering is visible.

Meditation: Present your inner cross.

Practice: Accept being misunderstood.

Fruit: Inner truth.

Personal notes

Day 19 · Not everything depends on me

Truth: God's work does not rest on my control.

Gesture: Let go of one concrete worry.

Mary: She entrusted the future to God.

GOD IS ENOUGH (SAINT ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY)

Light: When everything is lacking, he remains.

Meditation: Rest in God.

Practice: Do not look for comfort.

Fruit: Stable peace.

Personal notes

Day 20 · I can lean on others

Truth: Accepting help is not a lack of faith.

Gesture: Seek out a simple human contact.

Mary: She lived in company.

MATURE SILENCE (SAINT ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY)

Light: Here one no longer asks.

Meditation: Remain.

Practice: Prayer without words.

Fruit: Simple contemplation.

Personal notes

Day 21 · My nothingness is not failure

Truth: Losing myself is not losing God.

Gesture: Do not try to "get yourself back".

Mary: She accepted not understanding herself completely.

BEING A DWELLING PLACE ON THE CROSS (SAINT ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY)

Light: The soul becomes a space for God.

Meditation: Dwell within yourself.

Practice: Acts of presence.

Fruit: Conscious indwelling.

Personal notes

Day 22 · God dwells in this emptiness

Truth: Where I can no longer reach, God begins.

Gesture: Remain without asking for anything.

Mary: She was a silent dwelling.

LOVING WITHOUT FEELING (THÉRÈSE)

Shared fruit: Pure love.

Personal notes

Stage III · Pure love and final self-giving (days 23 to 26)

Day 23 · I have not lost my way

Truth to hold on to: Even if I do not recognize myself, I have not left the path. The night is not going astray; it is a hidden passage.

Smallest gesture: Breathe slowly for one minute and say just once: "Here I am."

Mary: Mary remained without understanding. She knows how to hold the soul when it no longer recognizes itself.

LOVING WITHOUT FEELING (THÉRÈSE)

Shared fruit: Pure love.

Personal notes

Day 24 · God does not demand that I feel

Truth: God measures love not by intensity but by faithfulness.

Gesture: Do not force yourself to "pray well" today. It is enough not to run away.

Mary: She loved in silence, without consolation.

LOVING WITHOUT FEELING (THÉRÈSE)

Shared fruit: Pure love.

Personal notes

Day 25 · My nothingness is not rejection

Truth to hold on to: Even if I do not recognize myself, I have not left the path. The night is not going astray; it is a hidden passage.

Smallest gesture: Breathe slowly for one minute and say just once: "Here I am."

Mary: Mary remained without understanding. She knows how to hold the soul when it no longer recognizes itself.

LOVING WITHOUT FEELING (THÉRÈSE)

Shared fruit: Pure love.

Personal notes

Day 26 · God acts without warning

Truth: Grace works where it is not perceived.

Gesture: Do not review your inner state today.

Mary: She believed before understanding.

A CROSS OFFERED FOR THE CHURCH (EDITH STEIN)

Shared fruit: Redemptive charity.

Personal notes

Stage IV · Abiding in the will of God (days 27 to 30)

Day 27 · To remain is to love

Truth: When I can do nothing, remaining is already pure love.

Gesture: Stay a few minutes in silence, expecting nothing.

Mary: At the foot of the cross she did nothing... and gave everything.

A CROSS OFFERED FOR THE CHURCH (EDITH STEIN)

Shared fruit: Redemptive charity.

Personal notes

Day 28 · I do not have to defend myself

Truth: I do not need to justify my path or my night.

Gesture: Today, give up explaining yourself.

Mary: She defended herself before no one.

TOTAL SILENCE (SAINT ELIZABETH)

Shared fruit: Silent union.

Personal notes

Day 29 · God holds me even if I do not feel it

Truth: Not feeling God does not mean not being held by him.

Gesture: Look after something small in your life (food, rest).

Mary: A mother who holds without words.

TOTAL SILENCE (SAINT ELIZABETH)

Shared fruit: Silent union.

Personal notes

Day 30 · Not everything has to be understood

Truth: Understanding is not a condition for loving.

Gesture: Today, accept understanding nothing.

Mary: She walked by naked faith.

TOTAL SILENCE (SAINT ELIZABETH)

Shared fruit: Silent union.

Personal notes

Stage V · The divine will: God alone is enough (days 31 to 33)

Day 31 · My naked faith is enough

Truth: A single act of faith in the night is worth more than a thousand emotions.

Gesture: Say slowly: "I believe, even though I do not feel."

Mary: Blessed is she who believed.

MARY, THE FORM OF THE SOUL

Shared fruit: Marian faithfulness.

Personal notes

Day 32 · I am not alone

Truth: The night is not lived in solitude: Mary is there.

Gesture: Picture your hand in hers, without words.

Mary: A faithful presence, never intrusive.

MARY, THE FORM OF THE SOUL

Shared fruit: Marian faithfulness.

Personal notes

Day 33 · I remain

Final truth: I do not have to arrive anywhere. Remaining is the union possible today.

Gesture: Live the ordinary without spiritual demands.

MARY REMAINS WITH YOU, AND THAT IS ENOUGH

Final light: No words, no promises: only faithfulness.

Practice: Live the ordinary with love offered.

Fruit: A silent, stable union.

Personal notes

God does not ask you to understand. He asks you not to let go of his hand.

Conclusion of the retreat: in your image

The spiritual path.

1. The original call: to be the image of God

The soul was created for communion with God, not for the world.

> *By overcoming the passions, the soul becomes transparent to the divine light and enters into communion with God.*
>
> Abba Anthony the Great

Purity of heart is not optional: it is the beginning of the way.

2. Purity of heart and the vision of God

> *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
>
> Matthew 5:8

Purity is reached by grace, through the inner struggle and the humble acceptance of the cross. Pain that is offered stops being an obstacle and becomes a place of encounter.

3. Entering the life of the Trinity

> *The inner life of the Triune God, into which the soul is brought by grace and raised to a communion of love.*
>
> Saint John of the Cross

> *My heaven is to live in the bosom of the Trinity.*
>
> Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity

Heaven begins already when the soul lives from God and in God.

4. The Cross: a necessary passage

The spiritual path passes through Calvary. In Christ, human pain is purified, transfigured and made fruitful.

> *What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, God has prepared.*
>
> cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9

The Cross is the true Tree of Life.

5. Faithfulness in the night

True prayer does not run away when there is no consolation.

> *Apart from me you can do nothing.*
>
> John 15:5

To walk without sensible light is to walk in pure faith. Transformation happens when the soul remains, not when it understands.

6. Authentic prayer and adoration

Adoration does not seek a selfish peace, but offers its own poverty: "to stay, without resolving, without understanding, without fleeing; simply to stay before God." Dryness does not invalidate prayer: it purifies it, and faithfulness is worth more than feeling.

7. Mary on the way

> *One glance of hers is enough to leave the soul wounded with love.*

Spiritual Canticle, stanza 31

> *Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.*
> Luke 2:19

Mother Mary does not take the place of God; she reflects his gaze and leads to Christ. To consecrate oneself to her is to walk in silence, humility and docility.

8. The sacramental life

> *At that moment the most holy Sacrament was instituted, with Christ really and truly present; and each Mass is the same Supper made sacramentally present.*

In the Eucharist the soul does not build itself; it receives itself and lets itself be transformed. Communion is real union with Christ.

9. Spiritual combat

> *To lose heart after a fall is a stratagem of the enemy.*

Grace is always ready to help.

> *Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.*
> Matthew 26:41

Vigilance, sobriety and temperance guard the heart.

10. True victory

> *This is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith.*
> 1 John 5:4

> *There is no union without inner victory.*
> Saint John of the Cross

The victor is not the one the world calls strong, but the soul that perseveres in grace.

11. Spiritual childhood and the Epiphany

> *What was visible in our Redeemer has passed over into the sacraments.*
> Saint Leo the Great

The Child Jesus is our silent fountain of grace, the door through which the Holy Spirit enters.

> *They departed by another way.*
> Matthew 2:12

That is real conversion: once God allows us to receive the grace of his Spirit, we do not go back the same way.

12. Detachment from the world

> *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*
> cf. 1 John 2:15

Comfort, approval and pride darken the inner gaze. "Lord, open my eyes": a return to what is essential.

13. Love, the final end

> *If nothing else were said of God but that God is Love, nothing more would need to be said.*
> Saint Augustine

> *In God, to be and to love are not different things.*
>
> De Trinitate

The soul enters the life of the Trinity by loving with charity.

> *The smallest increase of grace is greater than all the natural good of the universe.*
>
> Saint Thomas Aquinas

Rule of life

This Rule does not seek outward perfection but inner faithfulness. It asks for nothing extraordinary, only to remain.

To live for the glory of God, seeking communion with the Most Holy Trinity, letting myself be transformed by grace into a living image of Christ.

> *My heaven is to live in the bosom of the Trinity.*
> Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity

I do not live to feel, to understand or to control, but to remain faithful.

> *Apart from me you can do nothing.*
> John 15:5

I accept to walk in faith, in dryness, in trust.

a. Morning prayer

- I offer the day to the Most Holy Trinity.
- I say from the heart: "Here I am, Lord."
- I ask to live only in his will.

b. Adoration and silent prayer

- To remain before God even when I feel nothing.
- Not to seek consolation, but to offer my inner poverty.
- The rule: stay, do not run away.

> *Adoration does not consist in seeking peace, but in staying with the Lord.*

c. Brief prayers through the day

- "Jesus, I trust in you."
- "You take care of it, Lord."
- "Hail Mary most pure."

The sacramental life

- Holy Mass at the centre of the week (daily, if possible).
- Communion received with the intention of inner transformation.
- Living every Mass as the Last Supper itself: "each Mass is the same Supper made sacramentally present."
- Frequent confession, without fear or scruples.

The daily cross

- I accept contradictions, pain and limits without running away or complaining inwardly.
- I offer suffering for Holy Church, for priests, and in reparation for the sins that wound the Heart of God.

> *There is no union without inner victory.*
> Saint John of the Cross

Spiritual combat

- I do not lose heart after a fall.

- I reject impatience, anxiety and self-judgement.
- If I fall, I get up, I trust, I carry on.

> *To lose heart after a fall is a stratagem of the enemy.*

Vigilance and sobriety

- I guard my senses, thoughts and words.
- I reject excessive comfort, the search for approval and spiritual pride.

Every day: "Lord, open my eyes."

Mother Mary always in my life

- I consecrate myself to the Virgin Mary every day.
- I let myself be formed by her silence, her humility and her faithfulness, always running to her Sorrowful Heart in times of trial.

> *Mary kept all these things in her heart.*
> Luke 2:19

Fraternal love

- I love God by loving my brothers and sisters in concrete ways.
- I do not seek to be understood; I serve without seeking the spotlight.
- I forgive quickly.

> *If nothing else were said of God but that God is Love, nothing more would need to be said.*
> Saint Augustine

The spirit of childhood

- I walk as a little one, trust as a little one and love as a little one.
- I do not rely on my own strength, and I trust more the less I understand.

> *They departed by another way.*
> Matthew 2:12

Each day I renew my conversion.

Daily examen (brief)

Each night I ask myself:

1. Was I faithful today?
2. Did I run away from the cross, or stay?
3. Did I trust, or did I try to control?
4. Did I love in concrete ways?

I end with an act of abandonment and a Hail Mary.

Constant prayer

To live in prayer is to live in God. Whoever does not pray is left exposed to their own passions and inner disorders. Prayer guards the soul, orders it and keeps it watchful in temptation (cf. Matthew 26:41; Saint Teresa of Jesus). Let no day pass without entering the "inner temple" where God dwells (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16).

Guarding the heart

Lack of faith in the power of the Lord breeds fear. Cowardly silence in the face of evil strengthens the enemy. Christ says: "Do not be afraid; it is I." Guard the faith, speak when the truth demands it, and trust in Christ in every trial.

Accepting one's own frailty

God permits weakness in order to uproot vanity and give birth to humility. Only when we see what we are without him do we understand that his grace is enough (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9). Embrace your own limitations as a place of encounter with grace.

The way of humility

First degree: never to commit a mortal sin for anything created, not even to save one's life. "Lord, you are God and I am not."

Second degree: not to prefer riches to poverty, honour to dishonour, or a long life to a short one, provided God's will is done and deliberate sin avoided.

Third degree: to choose poverty, reproach and contempt with Christ crucified, so as to become more like him. "I have been crucified with Christ."

In short: first, do not offend God; second, do not prefer yourself; third, become like Christ crucified.

Emptying oneself of the world

For God to fill everything, the soul must empty itself of all that is not him. Silence, detachment and a gaze fixed on the Holy Face open the soul to the divine indwelling. Renounce whatever separates you from God, to live always in his Presence.

The contemplative life in everyday things

God speaks in creation, in the breeze, in the sea, in silence and in the purifying fire of prayer. Grace orders the powers of the soul and leads them to peace. Recognize God in everything, and let his grace transform you.

Final hope

I live looking towards eternity. Nothing in this life is absolute. Everything is a road.

> *The smallest increase of grace is greater than all the natural good of the universe.*
>
> Saint Thomas Aquinas

To live for God alone, until there is no other desire in the heart than to remain in his Presence, now and for ever. God alone is enough.

> *God does not ask you to understand. He asks you not to let go of his hand.*

Holy Week meditations I: the seven thorns for climbing to the Cross

1. Divine love appears as folly

This is the first wound: natural reason is overwhelmed. The soul discovers that the love of God does not answer to human proportion. The Cross reveals a love that does not defend itself, does not calculate, does not hold itself back.

> *For the word of the cross… is folly.*
> 1 Corinthians 1:18

Here mysticism begins: when the soul agrees to love beyond common sense, entering into the wisdom of God.

2. Truth demands renunciation

The second thorn pierces one's own will. Truth is not possessed without loss. Every attachment, even a legitimate one, must be surrendered so that the Truth may reign without rivals.

> *Strip yourself of yourself and you will find the naked Truth.*
> a traditional saying of the Fathers

It is the thorn of detachment: dying to what is not God, so as to belong to him alone.

3. The soul abandons itself like a child

With self-sufficiency wounded, the soul learns spiritual childhood. It no longer struggles; it gives itself. The Cross becomes a refuge, not a threat.

> *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*
> Luke 23:46

This thorn purifies fear and gives birth to a child's trust. Authentic mysticism begins when the soul stops defending itself.

4. Grace teaches us to love

Here the thorn touches the heart: the soul recognizes that it does not know how to love. All true love is a gift received, not a virtue manufactured.

> *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.*
> Romans 5:5

It is the purification of imperfect love. God loves in the soul and with the soul. Love is no longer born of the self, but of grace.

5. The gaze of God sanctifies

This thorn wounds not with pain but with light. The soul discovers that it is not sanctified by acting, but by being looked upon by God.

> *Look to him, and be radiant.*
> Psalm 34:5

Holiness shows itself as a relationship, not a performance. It is enough to remain beneath that transforming gaze.

6. Heaven opens

Here the Cross becomes a door. Time grows thin; the eternal breaks in. It is not an escape from the world, but a foretaste of the Kingdom.

> *He saw the heavens opened.*
> Acts 7:56

This is the thorn of infused contemplation: God communicates himself without words, and the soul understands without concepts.

7. The soul enters God's eternal rest

The last thorn no longer bleeds: it rests. Suffering does not disappear, but it loses its weight. Everything is made one in the divine will.

> *We shall enter his rest.*
> Hebrews 4:10

Here the Cross ceases to be only an instrument of death and shows itself as the tree of life. The soul no longer seeks experiences, only to remain.

Holy Week meditations II: the seven thorns and the seven last words of Christ

First word · Divine love appears as folly

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

Luke 23:34

Here the supreme folly of divine love is revealed: to forgive in the very act of being crucified. The world does not understand a love that answers evil not with immediate justice, but with mercy.

Second word · Truth demands renunciation

Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.

Luke 23:43

The good thief gives up every defence, every excuse, every appearance. He confesses only the truth of his misery… and receives the Kingdom.

Third word · The soul abandons itself like a child

Woman, behold your son… Behold your mother.

John 19:26–27

Here Christ gives up everything, even his bonds. Abandonment is not loneliness, but a deeper sonship.

Fourth word · Grace teaches us to love

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Matthew 27:46

The night of the spirit purifies self-interested love. To love is not to feel, but to remain faithful, held up by grace.

Fifth word · The gaze of God sanctifies

I thirst.

John 19:28

Christ thirsts for the soul. God desires us before we desire him.

Sixth word · Heaven opens

It is finished.

John 19:30

The work of Redemption is complete. Nothing is left to conquer; there is only receiving.

Seventh word · The soul enters God's eternal rest

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

Luke 23:46

The Cross becomes rest. The soul gives itself fully to the will of the Father.

Holy Week meditations III: a contemplative Way of the Cross

The Cross before the Cross, and the silence after the Cross.

After each station: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

1. Jesus is condemned to death. We contemplate you, Christ, eternal Silence before the judgement of the world. "He opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).
2. Jesus takes up his Cross. The Son receives the Cross as a mission. Mary carries it in her heart.
3. Jesus falls for the first time. Fallen Christ, raise up our inner falls.
4. Jesus meets his Mother. "And a sword will pierce your own soul" (Luke 2:35).
5. Simon of Cyrene helps to carry the Cross. Make us Cyreneans for the suffering of others.
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. The face of God is imprinted on humble love.
7. Jesus falls for the second time. When we fall, do not let us lose hope.
8. Jesus consoles the women. The Cross enlarges the heart.
9. Jesus falls for the third time. Father, in our deepest nights, be our strength.
10. Jesus is stripped of his garments. Strip us of everything that is not you.
11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross. The Cross becomes an altar.
12. Jesus dies on the Cross. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46).
13. Mary receives her Son; the Church is born. Eternal Father, receive our journey united to that of your Son. Amen.
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb. Fruitful silence. Trusting hope.

A small flame can set a whole forest on fire.

Dedication

Hail Mary most pure, conceived without sin, full of grace.

I want to begin by thanking God and giving him all glory and all honour, for taking up this miserable worm and immersing it in the grace of his mercy; for giving me life and my eternal consecration to Mother Mary on the day of the Annunciation, when so many times she has sheltered me in God's divine bosom and keeping.

My love to Mother Mary and to dear Father Saint Joseph, because they have stood beside me in the battles and taught me the humble heart, holy obedience and divine silence.

I dedicate this work to my Father in heaven and to my mother on earth, for giving me the grace of life, for always instilling the love of God in my life, for believing in me when it was most needed, and for offering me to God at my birth, opening the gates of heaven to me.

With all my heart I thank God for my wife and children, who are and always will be part of this grace that God brought into my life and surroundings as a blessing.

I want to thank my beloved guardian angel, my inseparable companion in the work and in intercession, and my unconditional support; the whole heavenly court, which has never stopped interceding for this miserable sinner and his conversion; and the archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, who have been a special part of my journey.

To my spiritual godparents, Saint John the Apostle and Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus. To my beloved spiritual fathers, Saint Peter, Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI, living seeds and examples of the true grace of loving God and the Blessed Virgin. To my Carmelite saints, with whom I have identified; to all the apostles, because one by one they taught me the way and the footsteps in which they followed Jesus; and to all the other saints, who have always been present in the different stages of my growth.

To my dearly loved spiritual guides: Father Guillermo, Father Ricardo, Brother Francisco, Father Bonifacio, María de la Eucaristía, Father Justo, Father Carmelo, Archbishop Gonzalo, and so many others who, with their counsel, helped me to welcome what God had laid out in his plan. To all my brothers and sisters in Christ and Mary who have passed through my life and who are still present. And, how could I forget, to my little prayer group: the little souls, faithful companions on the way.

> Thank you, my God.
> This is yours and it is for you.
> You sowed it and you made it bear fruit;
> you, who are my only treasure.
> My eyes dream of seeing you,
> and my ears of hearing your call.
> Hineni, Adonai.
> Adle

The Cross is no longer climbed with pain alone, but with transfigured love.

Mystical union between the Trinity, Mary and the soul

The Father gives the Cross as a redeeming mission.
The Son receives it freely.
The Mother carries it in her heart. She does not flee, she does not protest.
She remains.

After the Crucifixion
the Son gives up his spirit,
the Father keeps silence,
the Mother believes without seeing.

This manner of prayer is rightly so called, or better, what God does in it, for he now takes on the office of the gardener and wants the soul to rest, its will only consenting to the favours it enjoys. It must offer itself to whatever true Wisdom wishes to do in it, and it needs a steady courage, for the joy is so great that at times it seems the soul is a hair's breadth from leaving this body; and what a happy death that would be. Let it leave itself entirely in the arms of the Lord: if he wishes to take it to heaven, let it go; if to hell, it does not grieve, so long as it goes with its Good; if he wishes its life to end altogether, so be it; if he wishes it to live a thousand years, so be it too. Let His Majesty treat it as his own; the soul no longer belongs to itself, it has been given wholly to the Lord. Let it cast all care aside.

Saint Teresa of Jesus, on the third degree of prayer (Life, 17)