

VADE-MECUM OF THE TERTIARIES
OF CARMEL

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CONTENTS

	Page
Summary of the Obligations of the Third Order	11
Study on the Vocation and Spirit of the Third Order of Carmel	14
Summary of the Method of Prayer and Table of the Different Acts of Prayer, according to the Venerable Father John of Jesus Mary, O. C. D. (†1615)	31
Bibliography for Carmelite Tertiaries	34
A Short and Simple way to Practise the Prayer of Faith and of the Simple Presence of God, by Bossuet	53

VADE-MECUM
OF THE
Tertiaries of Carmel

**Study on the Vocation and the
Spirit of the**

THIRD ORDER OF CARMEL

By **BROTHER PAUL OF THE CROSS, T.O.C.D.**

to which is added

**A Short and Simple Way to Practise the
Prayer of Faith and of the Simple
Presence of God**

By **BOSSUET**

**CARMELITE CONVENT
BOSTON**

NIHIL OBSTAT

PATRICK J. WATERS, *Ph.D.*

Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR

WILLIAM CARDINAL O'CONNELL

Archbishop of Boston

December 14, 1933.

Translator's Foreword

In presenting our English speaking Tertiaries with this Study on the vocation and spirit of the Third Order of Carmel, translated with the kind permission of the Author, it has been thought well to add Bossuet's little work on the Prayer of Simplicity, to which reference is made in these pages, and which might not otherwise be easily available.

The Bibliography, given at the end of the Study, is not a translation of the French edition, as many of the works mentioned therein have not yet appeared in English. The List, as we give it, includes only such works as have been already published in English.

The excellent periodical, "Le Carmel," published by the Discalced Carmelite Fathers of France, gives each month a list of French books of interest to Tertiaries of Carmel.

The TRANSLATOR.

Boston, April 9, 1932.

IMPRIMATUR.

Fr. Thomas Aquinas a SS. Sacramento
Provincialis Flandriæ
FF. Carmelitarum Discalceatorum
Gandiæ, 5 augusti 1924.

Fr. Joseph Maria a Jesu
Provincialis Galliæ
FF. Carmelitarum Discalceatorum
Rhedonis, 8 augusti 1924.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Brugis, 4 septembris 1924
Jos. Van der Meersch, Can.
Libr. Cens.

IMPRIMATUR

Brugis, 4 septembris 1924,
H. Van den Berghe,
Vic. gen.

This little work is by no means meant to take the place of the Manual of the Third Order. It aims but to realise what its title suggests, and to place in the hands of Tertiaries of Carmel, together with a summary of their obligations, a certain number of instructions which it will be difficult for them to find for themselves elsewhere.

May this humble booklet, which has been written during the quiet of a period of enforced rest, and under the guidance of the Fathers of the Order, in the beauty of Bruges, the City of Mary, help the "Brothers of our Lady" to serve her and her Divine Son better, by fervent prayer and penance.

THE AUTHOR.

Bruges, August 1, 1924.



O Lord my God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, supremely good and infinitely amiable, my beginning and end, in Whom I find my true happiness, I offer myself wholly to Thee this day and forever, and I direct to the honor and glory of Thy Divine Majesty all my thoughts, words and actions, uniting myself by love with all creatures who are pleasing to Thee in heaven and on earth, in order to consecrate myself to Thee with them as I do in all truth. O most loving Lord, I entreat Thy infinite wisdom and goodness to guide me in all that concerns Thy service, and to defend me against the enemies of my soul, that I may please Thee always and in all things, without the least offence. I also offer myself to thee, O Blessed Virgin Mary, august Queen of Heaven; I consecrate to thee all that I shall think, say, and do, during this day, with the particular desire of serving thee; and I implore thee, O kindest of Mothers, to direct and protect me in thy service and for thy glory.

Venerable John of Jesus Mary.

The Third, or Secular Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and of the Holy Mother Saint Teresa of Jesus is an association of persons who, though living in the world, desire to aim at Christian perfection in the way most suitable to their state of life, according to the spirit and under the direction of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, under the protection of the August Queen of Carmel, and in imitation of the many whose virtues have adorned her venerable Order.

The object of our Third Order, following the example of the friars and nuns of the Order is to give glory to God, to honor our Blessed Lady of Carmel, and to aid our holy Mother the Church by prayer.

*(Rule of the Third or Secular Order,
Chapter I.)*

Summary of the Obligations of the Third Order. Strict Obligations.

Daily.

—To wear the habit night and day, as laid down in Paragraph 13 of the Rule, and not to substitute in its stead a smaller scapular, without a serious reason nor without dispensation. (Nos. 13-14.)

—An indulgence of 500 days may be gained by kissing the holy scapular with devotion.

—Daily Mass, if possible. (No. 52.)

—Frequent Communion, at least once a week. (Nos. 54-56) ; and spiritual Communion, at least daily. (No. 57.)

—To recite the Divine Office, or the "Little Office of the Blessed Virgin," or twenty-five times the Pater and Ave, (Nos. 41 to 46), seven times for Matins and Lauds and three times for each of the other Canonical Hours, namely, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline.

—One half hour of mental prayers, a quarter of an hour in the morning and a quarter of an hour in the evening, or all at one time (Nos. 47-48), if possible.

—For priests, an hour, all at one time, or half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening.

—The exercise of the presence of God. (No. 51.)

—Spiritual reading. (No. 49.)

—Examination of conscience with act of contrition. (No. 50.)

—Visit to the Blessed Sacrament. (No. 62.)

—Observance of silence and avoidance of idleness. (Nos. 69 to 72.)

Weekly.

—Observance of the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Church, abstinence from meat on all Wednesdays of the year and on the Saturdays of Advent. (Nos. 64 to 68.)

—Those afflicted with weakness or infirmity (even though not serious), have a just reason for being dispensed from the fasting and abstinence from flesh meat prescribed by the Rule.

—Similar reasons are the inconvenience that would be entailed upon their household of providing special food; likewise, exceptional stress of work and other reasonable motives. (Nos. 64 to 68.)

—Nevertheless, Tertiaries should not dispense themselves, nor seek to be dispensed without grave and sufficient cause. In all cases, it is recommended that they substitute for the acts of penance from which they have been dispensed other little acts of penance willingly undertaken to supply for them.

Monthly.

—Once a month they will, if possible, set apart a day for recollection, even at home and while giving themselves to their ordinary duties. The first Friday of the month could very well be chosen for this retreat. (No. 60.)

—Attendance at the monthly meeting, as far as possible; (for those members who are not isolated).

Yearly.

—To conform exactly to the prescriptions of Chapter XIV concerning fast and abstinence.

—The Spiritual Exercises of a retreat, (No. 60.)

—The Novenas or Tridiums in preparation for the principal feasts of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, of our Holy Founders and Patrons, and of other Saints, "according to their devotion." (No. 62.)

—Renewal of profession on the 14th of September and on the feast of the Epiphany. (No. 30.)

—When occasion offers, the practice of charity towards the sick and the suffrages for the dead. (Nos. 73 to 81.)

—Lastly, to help the clergy in parochial works. (No. 72.)

Study on the Vocation and the Spirit of the Third Order of Carmel.

In the foregoing pages we have endeavored to give a summary of the Rule of the Third Order, not indeed to dispense with the reading of the entire Rule, but to facilitate a review of the whole at the general examen during evening prayer. It is found by experience that Tertiaries are too much in ignorance of the details of their Rule. They read it over too rarely, in some cases not at all, forgetting, with a lightness that is truly culpable, that they promised solemnly on the day of their profession "to observe it with all perfection possible to them, until death."

In our opinion the entire Rule should be read over two or three times a year, and with pen in hand, in order that good resolutions may be renewed, and notes taken of what may have escaped attention in a superficial reading.

A Third Order is not merely a Confraternity, a simple pious union, with the general obligations of such. Rather, it is, as the text of the Rule declares, "an association of persons, who though living in the world, *desire to aim at Christian perfection.*" This

is the first condition required of the Christian soul who would enter any Third Order.

This condition fulfilled, we must next find out whether the postulant shows the signs of vocation required for admission into one Third Order rather than into another, because each religious family has its end, and to attain the end, its own spirit and particular means. Applying this to our Third Order, let us consider its special end and its spirit. Knowing these, we Tertiaries of Carmel shall have the means of settling ourselves, *with the aid of the Rule*, in our true vocation. The Rule itself states (as we have already mentioned), that the Third Order of Carmel is "an association of persons who, though living in the world, desire to aim at Christian perfection"; let us now add the following characteristic: "*in the way most suitable to their state of life, according to the spirit and under the direction of the Discalced Carmelites, under the protection of the August Queen of Carmel, and in imitation of the many saints whose virtues have adorned her venerable Order.*"

"The object of our Third Order, following the example of the friars and nuns of the Order, is to give glory to God, to honor our Blessed Lady of Carmel and *to aid our holy Mother the Church by their prayers.*"

"The means proposed for the attainment of these ends are contained in the present Rule, which, if faithfully observed, will lead the Tertiaries to the at-

tainment of sanctification and the possession of eternal life." (Rule, Chapter I.) We wish to draw attention to the last paragraph of this Chapter. Moreover, in the letter by which he presents us with the text of this Rule, definitively approved by Pope Benedict XV, the Very Reverend Father Luke of the Blessed Virgin, Superior General of the Order, states: "In this Rule of the Third or Secular Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus, you will find clearly and distinctly laid down all that is necessary for you to live holily in the world, according to the spirit of Carmel, *whether you live in community or whether leading your life individually, isolated in the world.*"

The Rule, then, is the plan, the framework; we must hold to it absolutely, since we are to be sustained by it. Yet it is but a means, it is the letter which must be quickened by the spirit. "Littera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat." (II Cor. III, 6.) "The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth." The spirit is the interior life of the Order.

Let us now study this interior life which we should desire to possess, since it is for this purpose that we have come to Carmel. When there is question of examining anyone who presents himself for the religious life in the Order of St. Benedict, the Saint requires that it be found out if truly he seeks God, "an vere quaerit

Deum." Our Holy Mother St. Teresa wishes that in addition to this we enquire if the person desiring to enter religion be possessed of sound judgment; and this appears to her of capital importance, not only because it is well to exclude from an Order those who lack balance and stability, but because by judgment she means the *right understanding of supernatural realities*. Judgment, according to St. Thomas, is the act of the understanding seizing the substance of being; to have judgment is to be able to estimate each thing at its true value. The Christian possessed of right judgment understands that creatures are but creatures, and therefore he will not become attached to them. Following this knowledge of what a created being truly is and having the supernatural virtue of faith infused into right judgment, he will place God above all, in the first place. Understanding that God alone is necessary, and that created things are to be used only in so far as they lead unto God, or at least in so far as they do not impede our going to Him, the soul will more easily become detached from all things, it will no longer halt on the way.

We shall now consider what is the purpose, the end, of the Order of Carmel. The answer, an excellent one, is to be found in "The Interior Castle" of our Holy Mother St. Teresa, 5th Mansions, Chapter I:

"All of us who wear the holy habit of the Carmelites are called to prayer and contemplation. This was the object of our Order, and for this we came here. Our

holy Fathers of Mount Carmel sought in solitude and utter contempt of the world for this treasure, this precious pearl (*of contemplation*) of which we speak, and we are their descendants."

In these words we have our vocation clearly indicated. Our Rule is the outline of a life which should tend with all its strength towards prayer and contemplation. All the details of the Rule, whether they concern the vows, exercises of piety or practices of mortification, aim only at directing and training our life *towards prayer*. A soul lacking the attraction and the dispositions which could lead it to the practice of prayer, though possessed of other great gifts and qualities, would not bear the marks of a true vocation to the Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. However, this does not mean that the Third Order is incompatible with certain very engrossing avocations. When we speak of a marked attraction for prayer, we mean rather a general disposition of soul to serve God in the life of prayer, than the act of prayer itself. There are many good souls, probably lacking direction, who are assiduous in the exercise of prayer, but who have reduced it to a mere formula of prayers, indeed, into a mechanical and impersonal exercise.

We have seen that we should have a marked attraction towards the life of prayer. Let us now consider the Prayer of Carmel, and see what it should be.

We cannot meditate too carefully on the following passage of an old French author of the 17th century, Father Stephen of St. Francis Xavier, Carmelite of the Reform of Touraine. In his book "The Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, explained for the Brothers and Sisters who profess the same," he says: "What is the spirit of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel? It is contemplation. The Order originated in mountains, in deserts, in solitude. From its earliest traditions it receives the inclination and even the obligation to foster a life wholly interior, retired and hidden. Since St. Elias, the Patriarch of Carmel, lived always in God's presence, and had for motto those beautiful words: "The Lord liveth, before whose face I stand" (III Kings); since, according to the opinion of several doctors, he saw the divine essence on earth, as the blessed see it in heaven, he has inspired his religious with the spirit of contemplation, and though, by the authority of the Church, they be occupied in assisting their neighbor, he does not fail to preserve contemplation as the principal and essential aim of their Order.

"He regards exterior occupations as accidental to their state; they apply themselves to prayer as to the one and only thing necessary." "We give ourselves to prayer, not because it is a means of practising the religious virtues, of becoming proficient in the profession we have embraced, but as the very end which we propose to ourselves. And, as prayer is our whole life, we

are not satisfied with praying at any one hour of the day, but we continue to pray unceasingly, we never interrupt our prayer. . . . This may be illustrated by the example of a man famished with hunger, or tortured with thirst, or one who passionately desires anything. Whatever he does, whether he goes or comes, rests, converses, studies, he is ever conscious of the hunger which torments him, of the thirst which consumes him, or of the desire which urges him. All this explains our interior disposition with regard to God. We are ever conscious of an insatiable hunger, an extreme thirst for God which cannot be assuaged. Exteriorly, we are not idle, we fulfil the obligations of our profession, but we always feel that hunger, that thirst, that desire, drawing us to God, leading us to God, uniting us to God."

We have thought it well and of much interest to quote this long passage which explains so well the purpose of Carmel, and how necessary it is that aspirants should have the desire for the life of prayer, mentioned above. In our holy Reform of the Discalced Carmelites, the same language is used: "I do not ask of you anything new, my daughters," says our Holy Mother St. Teresa, in the fourth Chapter of her "Way of Perfection," "but only that we should keep what we have professed, which is our vocation and our duty."

"Our Primitive Rule ordains that we pray unceasingly, and it is most necessary that we do so diligently, with all the zeal of which we are capable."

But note once more, it is not enough simply to introduce an exercise of prayer into our life, we must make of our whole life a life of prayer. And what is this life of prayer but the continual striving after the possession of God by contemplation? Therefore, to enter Carmel, to have a vocation to the Third Order of Carmel, we must have, not merely an attraction towards a life of piety, but the attraction towards prayer tending to contemplation. And here we may state boldly that where there is no effort to reach contemplation there is no Carmel. This is so true that our Holy Father St. John of the Cross says in his *Maxims* (the 242nd Maxim, according to David Lewis' translation, the 276th according to Hoornaert): "Meditation tends to contemplation as means to an end." And our Holy Mother St. Teresa writes in her "Interior Castle" (5th Mansions, Chapter I), "All of us who wear this holy habit of the Carmelites are called to prayer and contemplation." The "Vade Mecum" of Novices of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers — (this work is a classic in the Order) — states in Part II, Chapter II, Sec. III, No. 12, "Thus all meditation becomes in the end contemplation."

We shall give at the end of this work the plan or synoptic table of the different acts of prayer, according to the Venerable Father John of Jesus Mary, 3rd Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, and we would strongly urge beginners to make use of this

plan, as well as to read the "Little Treatise on Prayer," by the same Father. This method has the advantage of being extremely simple. It calls for the following acts: a remote and a proximate preparation, reading, meditation, thanksgiving, offering and petition. It will be found useful, not only for beginners, but also for souls more advanced, who, as spiritual writers remark, have need, from time to time, to return to these principles and to this mental discipline. But speaking now of proficients, or those who have made progress, we say that, with the grace of God, the soul may be quickly led to acquired contemplation, which Bossuet calls "a short and simple way to practise the prayer of faith and of the simple presence of God." (Cf. Bossuet "The Prayer of simplicity.")

The late Cardinal Gotti († 1916), Discalced Carmelite of holy memory, in giving the following instructions to a nun for her retreat, wrote of prayer: "For the afternoon meditation, I suggest that you divide it as follows—first, read a page of the Gospel, as indicated for each day; then, *a sweet repose in Jesus, a gentle yielding of yourself up to listen to Jesus.* In your cell, in the oratory, in the garden, you will be like the happy Magdalen, sitting at the feet of Jesus,—before a Crucifix or a picture. Do not force yourself to make any determined meditation. Listen to Jesus. He will have something to say to you; He will speak to your heart."

"We must accustom our soul to a simple and loving regard or gaze towards God and towards Jesus Christ our Lord, and for this we must withdraw it gently from discoursing, reasoning and multiplicity of affections, to keep it in simplicity, respect and attention, thus drawing it ever closer to God, its only sovereign good, its first beginning and last end."* Here, we see, this simple regard depends still on ourselves, and it is still we who make the act.

* * *

But we should go farther, we should aspire to infused contemplation which is mystical contemplation, and prepare ourselves for it. Mystical contemplation is the normal term of sanctifying grace. We may say then that all Christians are called to infused contemplation, since all should tend to the perfection of charity. "Be you perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. V, 28). St. Teresa herself says the same thing in her Interior Castle (Fifth Mansions, Chapter I.) "How little do we care to prepare our souls, that our Lord may reveal this jewel to us! Outwardly we may appear to practise the requisite virtues, but we have far more to do than this, before it is possible to arrive at contemplation, to obtain which we should neglect no means great or small." With this

*Cf. P. de Caussade, S.J., *"On Prayer,"* Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., and *"Progress in Prayer,"* B. Herder Co.

observation, which shows us how important it is that we practise both the letter and the spirit of our Rule, *destined to maintain us in moral discipline, in the struggle to acquire virtues and to overcome self*, our Holy Mother maintains the general call of souls to contemplation, and particularly of souls who fight under the banner of Carmel.

“Remember that our Lord invited ‘any man.’ (Matt. XI, 28.) He is truth itself; His word cannot be doubted. If *all* had not been included He would not have addressed everybody, nor would He have said: ‘I will give you to drink.’ But as He said unconditionally, ‘If any man thirst, let him come to me,’ I feel sure that unless they stop half-way, none will fail to drink of this living water.” (Way of Perfection, Chapter XIX.) And further on, she says again: “His Majesty, being God, knows our weakness and has provided for us. He did not say: ‘Let some men come to Me by drinking this water, but let others come by some other means.’ His mercy is so great that He hinders no one from drinking of the fountain of life. Indeed, He calls us loudly and publicly to do so. ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.’ (John VII, 37.) He is so good that He will not force us to drink it, but He gives it in many ways to those who try to follow Him, so that none may go away disconsolate or die of thirst. For from this overflowing river spring many rivulets, some large, others small, while there are little pools for children—enough for them, as

they would be frightened at much water—by children, I mean beginners, unformed in virtue.” (Way of Perfection, Chapter XX.) Finally, she adds, in Chapter XXI, “Everything depends on their having a great and most resolute determination never to halt until they reach their journey’s end, happen what may, whatever the consequences are, cost what it will, let who will blame them, whether they reach the goal, or die on the road, or lose heart to bear the trials they encounter, or the earth itself goes to pieces beneath their feet.” . . . “Then take my advice; do not loiter on the road, but struggle manfully, until you perish in the attempt, for you only came here for battle.” (Way of Perfection, Chapter XX.)

These instructions are very clear and they are formal. According to our Rule, and guided by it, we should enter on the life of prayer, first of all, by the prayer of beginners, then, by the prayer of acquired contemplation, which St. Teresa calls the “prayer of recollection”; lastly, by all these efforts, we should dispose ourselves to receive more, namely, *mystical contemplation*, should it so please God. In mystical contemplation the work is His. He will come when He wills, as He wills, with what fullness He wills. But we may, while disposing ourselves for the gift, ask for it, and He wishes us to do so, since, after all, it is but to wish to love Him, know Him and serve Him better, in a word, to live in the most intense charity. Guided by a safe spiritual director, one versed in spir-

itual matters, wise and prudent, let us prepare ourselves for this, and often repeat through the day those words of St. Francis de Sales: "If I knew that within my heart was a single fiber that was not all for God, I would pluck it out at once."

This teaching is confirmed by our Mystical Doctor, St. John of the Cross: "God, indeed, must raise it up into this supernatural state; but the soul, so far as it can, must also be in good dispositions, which it may acquire by the help which God supplies. And so when the soul rejects these forms and empties itself of them, God causes it to enter into the possession of this union. When God does this, the soul is passive." (Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book III, Chapter I.)

Nevertheless, as we have seen, the contemplative life establishes us in ardent love, in perfect charity. But this charity cannot be sterile. "Love has a double precept *which bears on God and on our neighbor*. Because we love God we love our neighbor,—all those souls whom Jesus Christ came to redeem at the price of His Blood, and who are, if we truly love Him, our great care, as they were His. The contemplative life, the apostolic life, form but one in Carmel . . . one calls for the other, or to state it more clearly, the apostolic life is but the overflowing of the contemplative life" . . . because, "the apostolic soul is fit to give itself to its neighbor only when it is, so to say, immutably fixed in the contemplation of Truth, wholly possessed by essential Good. The apostle is not perfect

until he has reached transforming union.”—Fr. Jerome of the Mother of God, O.C.D., *Vie Spirituelle*, May, 1924.

But oh; what wealth, what power of action when this ideal is realised! For the sole aim, the one desire of Carmel is to aid the Church and souls, especially sacerdotal souls, missionary souls, the souls of priests and of religious charged with the teaching and the spreading of Truth. St. Teresa tells us so, and we shall see further on why she desired and established the Reform.

The Carmelite soul, placing above her coat-of-arms the flaming sword of the Prophet Elias, her Father and Founder, repeats whole-heartedly the cry of the Prophet of God: “With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts.” (III Kings, XIX, 10.) She not only repeats this cry, but she brings her life into accord with it.

Let us see what extent of this zeal, the outcome of true contemplation, our holy Founders demand of their followers, and consider the courageous efforts and dauntless perseverance entailed by this life of intense love for God.

We shall then require of our Brothers and Sisters that vigor of soul that St. Teresa herself asks: “To be courageous and energetic in seeking God; let them (her daughters and her sons) be persuaded that in so doing they will render great service to the Holy Church, and aid in the salvation of souls, while them-

selves advancing in the narrow way that leads to God." . . . She adds: "In the citadel into which the defenders of the Church have retired no famine can force us to surrender—it may kill us,—it cannot vanquish us!—But why have I told you this? To teach you, my Sisters, that we must ask God to grant that the captains of this castle or city,—that is, the preachers and theologians,—may be proficient in the way of our Lord. . . . This is very necessary, for, as I said, it is the arm of the Church and not of the state which must defend us now. We, being women, can fight for our King in neither way; let us, then, strive so to live that our prayers may help these servants of God. . . . I wish you to lead such lives as to merit to obtain these two favors from God. Firstly, that among learned theologians and religious there may be many with the qualifications I describe (to serve the cause of the Church), and that our Lord may perfect those who are less fitted, for one who is perfect can do more than many who are imperfect. The other favor is that when they engage in this war (which, as I said, is a fierce one), our Lord may uphold them with His hand and protect them from the many dangers of the world, and may stop their ears in these perilous seas, to the song of the Sirens. If we can prevail with God to grant these things, though we are enclosed in this house, we are fighting for Him, and I shall think all my pains have been well spent in building this little nook where

I also intended that the Rule of our Lady and Empress should be kept in all the perfection of its commencement." (Way of Perfection, Chapter III, *passim*.)

* * *

We shall conclude our little work by finishing the quotation from Father Stephen of St. Francis Xavier. It will be a final word of encouragement, and we feel that nothing better expresses what we believe to be the truth concerning our beautiful and holy vocation, into which we should enter whole-heartedly. "We do our work, according to the obligations of our profession, but we feel this hunger, this thirst, this desire, this inclination, which unites us to God; hence, in the interior communings which we hold with God, we endeavor, to the best of our ability, to rise above discoursing and reasoning, so that our gaze towards God, becoming ever more simple, may be less interrupted by exterior actions. Hence, we find that St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, the Blessed (Saint) John of the Cross, the Venerable Brother Dominic of St. Albert, the Venerable Brother John of St. Samson, and all our other mystics, have not tried to give us fixed rules for mental prayer. They endeavor to prepare us, to dispose our souls to relish God and the things of God, to feel His intimate presence in the depths of our soul, and to experience the sweetness of that presence. O my God! how

blessed is such a life! Oh! what happiness, to live only in God and with God!"

"What advantage, then, do our Brothers and Sisters derive from belonging to an Order so united to God by contemplation? When God raises anyone to a position of importance, He gives him, says St. Thomas, by a happy necessity, all the qualifications necessary for the fulfilment of his duties. St. Paul expresses the same thought when, speaking of the apostles, he assures us that God having chosen them for this noble ministry, gave them sufficient capacity to fulfil it; so that, as soon as they were made apostles by Jesus Christ, they were worthy apostles. Reasoning in the same way, we say that when God calls us to profession in an Order, His Providence gives us all the graces necessary to live therein and to perfect ourselves according to the spirit of that Order. Our Brothers and Sisters should believe, therefore, that God, having called them to an Order dedicated to contemplation, will not fail to give them light, fervor, the impulses and graces necessary for the attainment of the happy state which will be for them blessedness here on earth."

Summary of the Method of Prayer and Table of the Different Acts of Prayer.

According to the Venerable Father John of Jesus
Mary, O.C.D.

I. Preparation.

Remote: a truly Christian life, horror for sin, flight from occasions of sin, great care to preserve the spirit of silence, solitude, and the habit of the presence of God.

Proximate: recollection, acts of faith in the presence of God; acts of humility before the infinite majesty of God and our own lowliness.

II. Reading.

Slow, pious, attentive, but brief, and made without pauses.

III. Meditation.

With the one purpose of moving the will and inflaming the heart. The understanding is used principally. When meditating on the life and passion of our Lord, it is well to ask oneself the following questions:

- 1st, Who acts, or Who suffers?
- 2nd, What does He do? or what, and how much does He suffer?
- 3rd, Who causes Him to suffer?
- 4th, Why, and for whom does He suffer?
- 5th, How,—that is, with what charity, patience, humility, etc.,—does He act or suffer?
- 6th, Finally, consider the divine Power, Wisdom, Goodness, etc., which shine forth so admirably in this mystery. (Vade Mecum, Chapter II.)

IV. Thanksgiving.

First, for *general blessings*, creation, redemption, etc. . . .

Secondly, for *particular blessings*, natural and supernatural gifts.

V. Offering.

of ourselves, the saints, the Blessed Virgin, and even of our Lord Himself.

VI. Petition.

Ask pardon for our sins, different graces, especially the acquiring of the virtue we most need, victory over our predominant passion, the graces necessary to accomplish our duties during the day; lastly, make a practical resolution.

During prayer and after prayer, and all through the day, maintain boundless confidence in the goodness of God.

N. B. It is of the greatest importance to add to these acts a practical resolution relative to the virtue to be acquired or the passion to be overcome. This resolution should not be general, but precise and particular, bearing on actions to be accomplished or circumstances with which we shall meet until our next meditation.

It is also useful to take from prayer a thought as a spiritual bouquet. Occurring to the mind during the day, this thought will recall all our preceding prayer as well as our good resolution.

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A Short and Simple Way To Practise the Prayer of Faith and of the Simple Presence of God.

By BOSSUET

I

One must become accustomed to nourish one's soul with a simple and loving gaze at God and at Our Lord Jesus Christ; and to gain this end it must be gently separated from discourses, reasoning and the multitude of affections, so as to keep it in simplicity, respect and attention, and to bring it thus ever nearer God, its single sovereign good, its first principle and its last end.

II

Perfection in this life consists in union with our sovereign good, and the greater the simplicity the more perfect the union. That is why grace asks in an interior manner those who wish to be perfect to become simple, so that they may finally become capable of enjoying the one thing necessary, that is the eternal unity: Let us then often say from the bottom of the heart: O unum necessarium, unum volo, unum quaero,

unum desidero, unum mihi est necessarium. Deus meus et omnia. O only necessary One! Thee alone I wish for, seek and desire, Thou alone art my one thing necessary, my God and my all!

III

Meditation is good in its time, and very useful at the beginning of the spiritual life; but one must not stop there, for the soul by its fidelity in mortifying and recollecting itself usually receives a purer and more intimate prayer, which may be called the prayer of simplicity, which consists in a simple loving sight, regard or attention in oneself toward some divine object, either God in Himself or in one of His perfections, or Our Lord Jesus Christ or one of His mysteries, or some other Christian truths. The soul leaves aside reasoning and makes use of a sweet contemplation which makes it peaceful, attentive, and susceptible of the divine operations and impressions that the Holy Ghost communicates to it; it does little and receives much; its work is gentle and yet more fruitful; and as it comes nearer to the source of all light, grace and virtue, it is granted more and more.

IV

The practice of this prayer should commence on waking, by making an act of faith in the presence of God Who is everywhere, and of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose gaze leaves us not even were we buried

in the centre of the earth. Either this act is produced in a tangible and ordinary way, as when one says to oneself: I believe my God is present; or it is a simple remembrance of faith in God's presence which occurs in a more pure and spiritual way.

V

Further, we must not try to produce many other different acts or dispositions, but remain simply attentive to this presence of God, exposed to His divine regard, continuing thus this devout attention or exposure for as long as Our Lord gives us the grace, not trying to do any other things than those which come to us, for this prayer is a prayer with God alone, a union which contains eminently all the other particular dispositions and inclines the soul to passivity. That is to say, that God becomes sole Master in one's interior and operates more particularly there than ordinarily. The less the creature acts, the more powerful are God's operations; and since God's operation is repose, the soul becomes in a way like Him in this prayer, and receives also marvellous effects; and as the rays of the sun make plants grow, flourish and bear fruit, so the soul which is attentive and tranquilly exposed to the rays of the Divine Sun of Justice receives more fully the divine influences, which enrich it with all kinds of virtues.

VI

The continuation of this attention in faith will serve to thank God for the graces received during the night and throughout one's whole life, as an offering of oneself and all one's actions, in the sense of direction, intention, etc. . . .

VII

The soul will think she loses much by the omission of these acts, but experience will teach her that on the contrary, she gains much thereby, for the greater her knowledge of God the purer her love, the more upright her intentions, the stronger her aversion to sin and the greater and more continuous her recollection, mortification and humility.

VIII

This does not prevent her from making interior or exterior acts of virtue when she feels herself led thereto by the movement of grace; but the background and habit of her interior life must be its above named attention in faith, or union with God, Who will hold it surrendered in His hands and given up to His love, to do with it what He wills.

IX

When the time of prayer has come one should begin very reverently with a simple remembrance of God, invoking His Spirit and joining intimately with Our

Lord Jesus Christ; then continue it in the same way; with vocal prayers, the Office in choir, the saying or hearing of Holy Mass, and even the examination of conscience, for this same light of faith which holds us attentive to God will make us find out our least imperfections and conceive a great displeasure and regret for them. We must go to meals in the same spirit of simplicity, making us more attentive to God than to eating, and leaving us at liberty to attend better to the reading which takes place. This practice attaches us to nothing, except to holding our soul detached from all our imperfections, joined solely to God and united intimately with Him; in which union lies all our good.

X

We must take recreation in the same spirit, so as to give the body and the mind some relief without dissipating ourselves in inquisitive gossip, immoderate laughter, or indiscreet words, etc., keeping ourselves pure and free within, and not angering others; uniting ourselves often with God by simple and loving recollection; remembering that we are in His presence, and that He does not wish us to be separated at any time from Him or His divine will; this is the most ordinary rule of this state of simplicity; it consists in the sovereign disposition of the soul, to do God's will in all things, and to see all things come from and go to God; this sustains and fortifies the soul in all kinds of events

and occupations, and maintains us in the possession of simplicity. Follow then the will of God always, following the example of Jesus Christ, united to Him as to our Head; this is an excellent way of increasing this kind of prayer, and to tend by its means to the most solid virtue and the most perfect sanctity.

XI

We must bear ourselves in the same way and spirit, and remain in this simple and intimate union with God, in all our actions and conduct, in the parlour, in the cell, at supper, at recreation; on which point it must be added that in all conversation we must try to edify our neighbour, profiting by all opportunities to bring one another to piety, the love of God and the practice of good works, to be the good odour of Jesus Christ. "If any man speak," says St. Peter, "let him speak as the words of God," and as if God Himself spoke; for that, it is sufficient to give ourselves simply to His Spirit; He will command us in all eventualities as to what is advisable, without affectation. Finally, we will finish the day with this holy presence, examination, evening prayer and sleep, and will sleep in this loving attention, interpolating into our rest a few fervent words full of unction, when we wake in the night, like so many sighs for and cries of the heart towards God. For example: My God, be Thou all things to me; I want none but Thee for all

time and all eternity ; O Lord, Who is like Thee? My Lord and my God, my God and nothing more.

XII

It should be noted that this true simplicity makes us live a continual death and perfect detachment, for it sends us to God by a perfectly straight path without stopping for any creature ; but it is not by speculation that we obtain this grace of simplicity, it is by great purity of heart and by true mortification and contempt for ourselves. Whoever flees from humiliation, from suffering, from death to himself, will never enter into it ; this is why there are so few who approach this stage, for almost no one will leave himself ; without self-abandonment we lose immense things and are cut off from incomprehensible good. How happy are those faithful souls who spare nothing to belong truly to God ! How happy are those religious who faithfully practice all their observances according to their order ! This fidelity makes them continually dead to themselves, to their own judgment, to their own will, their natural inclinations or repugnances, and thus disposes them in a wonderful, unknown way to this excellent kind of prayer ; for what is there more hidden than a religious who follows only the common observances and exercises of religion in which there is nothing extraordinary, and yet lives in a total and continual death ? By this way the Kingdom of God is established in us, and the rest is granted us freely.

XIII

We must not neglect the reading of spiritual books, but we must read in simplicity and in a spirit of prayer and not in one of curiosity or research; we read in this fashion when we let the light impress itself on our souls and the feelings which this reading reveals in us, and when this impression is made more by the presence of God than by our own efforts.

XIV

For the rest, we must be fortified by two or three maxims: the first is that a devout person without prayer is a body without a soul; the second, that we cannot have true and solid prayer without mortification, recollection and humility; the third, that it needs perseverance not to be overcome by the difficulties we meet.

XV

We must not forget that one of the greatest secrets of the spiritual life is that the Holy Ghost leads us not only by light, gentleness, consolations, tenderness, and facility, but by darkness, blindness, insensibility, grief, anguish, sadness, revolts of the passions and the temper. I will say further that this cruel sacrifice of our peace is necessary, that it is good, nay, the best, the most assured, and that it leads us much more quickly to perfection. The enlightened soul cherishes respectfully the conduct of God, which permits it to

be harassed by creatures, and overwhelmed by temptation and desertion; and it well knows that these are favors and not disgraces, preferring to die on the cross of Calvary rather than to live in softness on Thabor. Experience will teach it in time the truth of these beautiful words: *Et nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis; et mea nox obscurum non habet, sed omnia in luce clarescunt.* After the cleansing of the soul in the purgatory of suffering through which it must pass, will come light, repose, joy, by intimate union with God, Who will make this world, exile as it is, into a little paradise for her. The best prayer is that in which we abandon ourselves most completely to the dispositions and feelings God sends into our souls, and in which we study ourselves with more simplicity, humility and conformity to the true will and to the examples of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Great God, Who, by a marvellous assemblage of particular circumstances hast arranged from all eternity the composition of this little book, do not permit certain spirits, some of which are among the scholars and others among the spiritual, to be accused before Thy dread tribunal of having helped in any way towards closing the way to Thee in numberless hearts, because Thou didst will that they should enter on it in a way whose very simplicity shocked them, and by a door, which, opened as it has been by the saints from the first centuries of the Church, was not perhaps well

enough known to them. Rather, make us become as little children, as Jesus Christ ordains, so that we may once enter by this little gate so as afterwards to show it more surely and efficaciously to others. Amen.

CONTENTS

	Page
Summary of the Obligations of the Third Order	11
Study on the Vocation and Spirit of the Third Order of Carmel	14
Summary of the Method of Prayer and Table of the Different Acts of Prayer, according to the Venerable Father John of Jesus Mary, O. C. D. (†1615)	31
Bibliography for Carmelite Tertiaries	34
A Short and Simple way to Practise the Prayer of Faith and of the Simple Presence of God, by Bossuet	53