

The Interior Castle

This treatise, called The Interior Castle, was written by Teresa of Ávila, a nun of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, for her sisters and daughters, the Discalced Carmelite nuns.

Saint Teresa of Ávila

© Gonzalo García Olagorta 2025

Translation into Modern Spanish, Preface and Edition:

Gonzalo García Olagorta (Gongarola)

Independently published

www.gongarola.com

ISBN: 9798291835173

All rights to the translation, preface, and notes are reserved.

However, the good faith use of significant excerpts from this work is permitted for reference in other editorial productions or for free distribution for educational purposes. In such cases, it is appreciated if the source is courteously cited.

The only restriction is that it is not permitted to copy and commercially exploit or distribute the entire work or its different parts in a single document, in any format.

The Interior Castle



Saint Teresa of Ávila

TABLE OF CONTENT

The Interior Castle	3
TABLE OF CONTENT	7
PREFACE	9
INTRODUCTION	12
PROLOGUE	13
FIRST MANSIONS	15
Chapter 1	15
Chapter 2	20
SECOND MANSIONS.....	30
Sole Chapter	30
THIRD MANSIONS	37
Chapter 1	37
Chapter 2	43
FOURTH MANSIONS	50
Chapter I	50
Chapter 2	58
Chapter 3	64
FIFTH MANSIONS	72
Chapter 1	72
Chapter 2	79
Chapter 3	86
Chapter 4	92

SIXTH MANSIONS	97
Chapter 1	97
Chapter 2	105
Chapter 3	109
Chapter 4	117
Chapter 5	125
Chapter 6	130
Chapter 7	137
Chapter 8	145
Chapter 9	151
Chapter 10	159
Chapter 11	163
SEVENTH MANSIONS	168
Chapter 1	168
Chapter 2	174
Chapter 3	180
Chapter 4	186
EPILOGUE	193
Works by the Same Author	195

PREFACE

This English edition of *The Interior Castle* by Saint Teresa of Ávila is exceptional in two fundamental aspects. Firstly, it presents a modernized version of the original text, carefully adapted to make the saint's words and expressions feel entirely contemporary. The aim was not merely to update the language but to revive Teresa's voice in a register that speaks directly to the modern reader. The essence of her thought and the intensity of her spiritual experience have been preserved, while freeing them from archaisms and structures that, though beautiful in their historical context, could pose barriers to current understanding.

This modernization seeks to convey the vital force of Teresa's words with the same freshness and relevance they had for her initial readers. It is not a betrayal of the original but a way to make it resonate in the heart of the present, as if the saint herself were speaking into our emotional and intellectual language. Her passion, humor, lucidity, and depth are not confined to the 16th century; they remain alive, waiting to be heard anew.

This English version also benefits from the fact that it is not a direct translation of the sixteenth-century original, but of a prior modernization into contemporary Spanish that I myself carried out. That earlier work allowed me to engage deeply with the meaning and rhythm of Teresa's text and to resolve many of the linguistic challenges before translating the result into fluent modern English. This two-step process has helped ensure greater clarity and resonance while remaining faithful to the heart of Teresa's message.

We live in an age deeply in need of the teachings of the great mystics. In a world increasingly absorbed by the external, the immediate, and the quantifiable, the inner dimension of the human being runs the risk of being buried beneath noise, haste, and a flood of stimuli. The mystical tradition—so vibrant in Teresa—offers not escapism or superficial comfort, but a radical invitation to reconnect with what is essential: silence, truth, love, the presence of the divine within the heart; our true spiritual identity. In contrast to a culture that has made material well-being its ultimate horizon, the mystics remind us that there is no fulfillment without depth, no freedom without transcendence. That is why returning to Teresa—not as a historical figure, but as a living guide of the soul—is an act of interior resistance and, at the same time, of hope. Her words, born of experience and enkindled by love, remain a luminous beacon for those who sense that life on the surface is not enough—that there is another life, deeper and truer, waiting within: the Kingdom of God within us, which Jesus urges us to seek.

In this mature work, Saint Teresa of Ávila offers a spiritual cartography of the human soul, a journey that traverses different stages of consciousness until reaching full union with God. *The Interior Castle*, considered one of the pinnacles of Christian mysticism, describes the soul as a castle composed of seven mansions, each representing a deeper degree of spiritual experience. As one progresses toward the innermost chambers, their relationship with themselves, the world, and the divine is radically transformed.

In the initial mansions, the soul is still closely tied to the distractions of the external world, dominated by attachments and a self-perception centered on the ego. The individual interprets reality from a standpoint of separation, and their experience is marked by the struggle between worldly desires and spiritual aspiration. However, as they advance toward the central mansions, especially the sixth, this perception changes drastically. The sense of individuality begins to dissolve, and the separation between the "self" and God becomes increasingly tenuous.

The seventh mansion represents the culmination of this journey: the soul experiences complete and permanent union with the divine in what Teresa calls the "spiritual marriage." In this state, the soul and God are fused in such profound love that they can no longer be separated. The individual identity, as previously understood, is radically transformed. However, Teresa insists that this union, though stable and irrevocable, does not imply the functional disappearance of personality. The soul continues living its daily life, fulfilling its responsibilities and interacting with the world, but from a completely renewed consciousness: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

An aspect of this path of soul perfection worth noting is that it rarely consists of a direct journey from the exterior of the castle to the central mansion, as one does not move consistently in the same direction. It should be understood more as a wandering from the outer mansions toward the inner ones, with many episodes of losing direction and retreating, due to the will not being firmly fixed on God. Thus, the spiritual seeker enters and exits, visiting different chambers and becoming familiar with various experiences. Sometimes, they enter one of the central mansions and experience intense contacts with the divine, but these experiences usually do not last long because they are unfit for their earthly condition and inevitable identification with the body. At other times, they simply pass near one of the mansions and glimpse what happens inside because the door is open, allowing them to envision what lies within. And on some occasions, they may gain some knowledge of the experience enjoyed in the final mansions in the form of a dream or a vague memory of their future, for time is an illusion, and what they will eventually experience has already been lived.

I have also published a fully annotated edition of this same work, accompanied by a profound exegesis of Teresa's teachings and enriched with extensive historical, cultural, and bibliographical notes, for those who wish to delve more deeply into the text and its context. Details of this edition, along with a downloadable extended sample, can be found at www.gongarola.com.

In addition, I have published both commented and unannotated modernized editions of *The Book of Her Life* and *The Way of Perfection*, following the same editorial principles.

May this edition serve as an invitation to embark on this journey with openness and dedication, allowing Teresa's words to guide the reader in their own inner quest. Beyond history and theology, this is a journey of the soul toward its true home, a path each person is called to undertake in their own time and manner.

INTRODUCTION

This book contains advice and counsel that Teresa of Ávila addresses to her religious sisters and spiritual daughters in the monasteries that, with the help of our Lord and the glorious Virgin, Mother of God, our Lady, she founded according to the Primitive Rule of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She dedicates it especially to the sisters of the Monastery of Saint Joseph in Ávila, the first she founded and where she was prioress at the time of writing these words.

In everything stated in this book, I submit myself to the teachings of the Holy Roman Church, and if in any way I deviate from them, it is out of ignorance. Therefore, I ask, for the love of our Lord, that the theologians who review it examine it carefully and correct any errors, as well as any other faults that may undoubtedly be found in various parts.

If there is anything of value in what is written, may it be for the glory and honor of God and in service of His most holy Mother, our Patroness and Lady, under whose habit I have the blessing to live, though I am most unworthy to wear it.

PROLOGUE

1. Few things that obedience has commanded me to do have been as difficult as writing now about matters of prayer. On the one hand, because I do not feel that the Lord grants me either the spirit or the desire to do so; on the other, because for the past three months, I have suffered from such great noise and weakness in my head that even writing about necessary matters is very difficult for me. However, understanding that the power of obedience often smooths the way for things that seem impossible, my will is determined to proceed with good disposition, even though my nature resists, for the Lord has not given me such strength that the constant struggle with illness and various occupations does not cause me great distress. May He, who has accomplished far greater things in order to grant me His grace, be the one to do it, for in His mercy I place my trust.

2. I truly believe that I will have little more to say than what I have already written on other occasions by command, and I even fear that it may be almost the same things. Just as birds trained to speak know only what they are taught or what they hear, and repeat it over and over, so am I, quite literally. If the Lord wills that I say something new, His Majesty will grant it to me or will bring to my memory what I have said before—which would be enough for me, for my memory is so poor that I would be glad to recall even a few things that were deemed well said, in case they have been lost.

If the Lord does not grant me even this, merely making the effort and worsening my headache out of obedience will already be a gain for me, even if nothing beneficial comes from what I write.

3. Thus, I begin fulfilling this command today, on the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, in the year 1577, here in the Monastery of Saint Joseph of Carmel in Toledo, where I currently find myself, submitting everything I say to the judgment of those who have ordered me to write, who are persons of great knowledge.

4. If I were to say anything that does not conform to the doctrine of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, it would be out of ignorance and not ill intent. This can be taken as certain, and that I always have been and always will be, by the grace of God, subject to it, as I have been until now. May He be blessed and glorified forever. Amen.

5. The one who commanded me to write said that, since the nuns of the monasteries of Our Lady of Carmel need someone to clarify certain doubts about prayer, and since it seemed to him that women understand each other better, as well as the fact that, out of the love they have for me, they would pay more attention to what I tell them, he considers that this might be of some use if I am able to express anything beneficial. For this reason, I will address them in what I write.

And since it seems unreasonable to think that this could be of use to others, I would consider myself greatly blessed by our Lord if even one of them were to benefit from it and praise Him a little more. His Majesty well knows that I seek nothing else; and it is very clear that if I manage to say anything of value, it should be understood that it is not by my own merit, for there is no reason for it, given my limited understanding and lack of skill in matters of this kind—unless the Lord, in His mercy, grants it to me.

FIRST MANSIONS

Chapter 1

On the beauty and dignity of our souls, a comparison is provided to help understand it, and the benefits of knowing and acknowledging the graces we receive from God are explained, as well as the fact that the door to this castle is prayer.

1. As I was praying to our Lord today, asking Him to speak through me—since I could not find the right words nor determine how to begin fulfilling this act of obedience—it occurred to me to start with the following image as a foundation: to consider our soul as a castle made entirely of diamond or of a very clear crystal, within which there are many chambers, just as in heaven there are many mansions.

If we reflect on it carefully, sisters, the soul of the righteous is nothing less than a paradise where, as the Lord Himself says, He finds His delight. For how do you imagine the dwelling place in which so powerful, so wise, so pure a King, filled with all goodness, takes His pleasure? I find no adequate comparison for the great beauty of a soul and its immense capacity, and truly, no matter how sharp our intellects may be, they can scarcely comprehend it—just as they cannot grasp the greatness of God. He Himself tells us that He created us in His image and likeness. If this is so, as it truly is, there is no need to weary ourselves trying to comprehend the beauty of this castle. For although there is, of course, the infinite difference between the Creator and the creature, it is enough that His Majesty has said that the soul is made in His image for us to scarcely grasp its great dignity and beauty.

2. It is truly a shame and a cause for deep sorrow that, through our own fault, we do not understand ourselves nor know who we are.

Would it not be great ignorance, my daughters, for someone to be asked who they are and be unable to recognize themselves, not knowing who their father or mother was, nor the land from which they came?

If such a thing would be sheer folly, how much greater is our own when we do not strive to understand what we are, limiting ourselves to thinking only of our bodies. In a superficial way—because we have heard it and because faith teaches it—we know that we have a soul, yet we rarely reflect on the treasures within it, who dwells there, or the great worth it possesses. As a result, we make little effort to preserve its beauty with the utmost care; instead, all our concern is for the crude outer shell—this body, the mere outer covering of the castle.

3. Let us consider, then, that this castle—as I have said—has many mansions: some above, some below, others to the sides, and at the very center, in the heart of them all, is the most important one, where the deepest encounters between God and the soul take place.

You must pay close attention to this comparison. Perhaps God will use it to help you understand something about the graces He deigns to bestow upon souls and the differences among them, insofar as I have understood them to be possible—for to comprehend them all is beyond anyone's reach, given how numerous they are, and even more so for someone as wretched as I am. However, it will be a great consolation for you to know that it is possible to receive these graces when the Lord grants them; and for those who do not receive them, it will be a reason to praise His immense goodness.

Just as it does us no harm to contemplate the wonders of heaven and the joys of the blessed—on the contrary, it brings us joy and inspires us to long for such gifts—so too will it not harm us to understand that even in this exile, so great a God can communicate with creatures as unworthy and miserable as we are, and that He loves with such boundless goodness and mercy.

I am convinced that if someone finds it offensive or troubling to believe that God can grant such graces in this world, that person lacks

true humility and the proper love for their neighbor. For if this were not the case, how could we not rejoice that God bestows these gifts upon a brother or sister of ours, especially since this does not prevent Him from granting them to us as well?

Moreover, His Majesty manifests His greatness in whomever He pleases, sometimes solely to make it known, as happened with the blind man to whom He gave sight when the apostles asked whether it was due to his own sins or those of his parents. Thus, it happens that at times He does not grant these graces because the recipient is holier than others, but so that His greatness may be known, as we see in Saint Paul or Mary Magdalene, and so that we may praise Him in His creatures.

4. It could be said that these things seem impossible and that we should be careful not to scandalize those who are weaker in faith. However, it is a lesser loss if they do not believe than if we fail to benefit those to whom God grants these graces. Moreover, those who do believe will rejoice and be stirred to a more fervent love for Him who performs such mercies, so great in power and majesty.

Furthermore, I know I am speaking to people for whom this is not a danger, for they know and believe that God continues to show even greater signs of His love. I am certain that whoever does not believe in this will never experience it personally, for God delights in not having limits placed on His works. Therefore, sisters, may this never happen to those whom the Lord does not lead by this path.

5. Now, returning to our beautiful and delightful castle, we must consider how we can enter it.

It may seem as if I am speaking nonsense, for if this castle is the soul, it is clear that there is no need to enter it since we *are* the castle. It would be like telling someone to step into a room where they already are. But you must understand that there is a great difference between *being* and *being*.

Many souls remain in the outer courtyard of the castle, where the guards stand watch, never concerning themselves with entering within. They do not know what lies in that precious place, who dwells inside, or even how many chambers it contains.

You have surely read in some books on prayer the advice that the soul should turn inward upon itself; this is precisely what I mean.

6. A learned man recently told me that souls who do not practice prayer are like a paralyzed or crippled body, which, though it has feet and hands, cannot move them at will. Such are these souls—so weakened and accustomed to remaining caught up in external things that there seems to be no remedy, nor any hope that they might enter within themselves. Their habits have led them to constantly associate with the vermin and beasts that inhabit the outer courtyard of the castle, to the point that they have almost become like them. And though they are, by their very nature, so rich and capable of conversing with none other than God Himself, they are unable to do so.

If these souls do not make an effort to understand and remedy their great misery, they will end up like statues of salt for failing to turn their gaze inward—just as happened to Lot's wife when she looked back.

7. As far as I can understand, the door to enter this castle is prayer and reflection. I do not mean only mental prayer, but also vocal prayer—provided it is done with true awareness.

For if someone does not consider with Whom they are speaking, what they are asking for, who they themselves are to be making such a request, and to Whom they are addressing it, I do not consider it to be prayer, even if they move their lips a great deal. It is true that, at times, it may still be prayer, even without this attentiveness, but only because on other occasions they *have* prayed with such care.

However, if someone habitually speaks to the majesty of God as if they were addressing a servant—without paying attention to what they are saying or whether they say it well, merely repeating words learned by routine—I do not consider that to be prayer. May God

never allow any Christian to pray in such a manner! And I trust in His Majesty that among you, my sisters, this will not be the case, given your practice of engaging in interior matters—a great safeguard against falling into such folly.

8. Let us not speak, then, of these paralyzed souls who, unless the Lord Himself comes to lift them up—like the paralytic who had lain by the pool for thirty years—are in great misfortune and danger. Instead, let us speak of those other souls who, at the very least, enter the castle. Though they may be deeply immersed in worldly affairs, they have good desires and, from time to time—even if only on rare occasions—they commend themselves to our Lord and reflect on who they are, though not very deeply.

Perhaps once a month, amid a thousand distractions, they pause to pray, though their thoughts are often scattered elsewhere, for they are so attached to worldly things that, as Scripture says, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

However, at times, they manage to pull away slightly and become aware of themselves, which is already a great step toward recognizing that they are not on the right path and toward finding the door.

Thus, they enter the first mansions in the lower part of the castle, but they do so accompanied by so many vermin that they can neither perceive the beauty of the castle nor find peace. Even so, it is already a great achievement that they have managed to enter at all.

9. You may think, my daughters, that this is unnecessary, since by the Lord’s goodness, you are not in such a state. But you must be patient, for I will not be able to explain certain interior aspects of prayer, as I understand them, except in this way. And even so, may God grant that I manage to convey something to you, for it is very difficult to express what I wish to make you understand unless one has experienced it. If you have, you will see that it is impossible to speak of these matters without touching upon things that, by God’s mercy, may He spare us from ever having to endure.

Chapter 2

It speaks of how dreadful a soul in mortal sin is and how God chose to reveal this to a certain person. It also addresses self-knowledge. This is a valuable topic, as there are important points to consider. It further explains how these mansions should be understood.

1. Before we continue, I want you to reflect on what it means to behold this radiant and beautiful castle, this precious pearl, this tree of life planted in the living waters of life, which is God, when it falls into mortal sin. There is no darkness more profound, no shadow so deep that can compare to it. Even though the very Sun that once gave it light and beauty remains at the center of the soul, it is as if He were not there, for the soul no longer partakes of Him. Though it has the capacity to reflect His Majesty as crystal reflects the light of the sun, it no longer serves this purpose.

This is why all the good works performed by a person in a state of mortal sin bear no fruit for attaining glory, for they do not proceed from that source, which is God, from Whom all virtue comes. Being separated from Him, such works cannot be pleasing in His sight. In the end, whoever commits a mortal sin does not seek to please God but rather the devil, who is darkness itself, and thus the soul is plunged into utter darkness.

2. I know a person to whom the Lord chose to reveal what happens to a soul after committing a mortal sin. She said that if human beings could truly understand it, it would be impossible for anyone to sin again, even if they had to endure the greatest suffering to avoid occasions of sin. For this reason, she fervently wished that all could grasp this reality. I hope that you, my daughters, will feel the same desire to pray earnestly for those who are in this state of total darkness, for their works are just as dark.

Just as clear streams flow from a crystalline fountain, so too are the works of a soul in grace pleasing to both God and humanity, for they come from that fountain of life in which the soul is planted like a tree, drawing from it freshness and fruitfulness. Without this fountain, the tree would wither and bear no good fruit. In contrast, a soul that, by its own fault, uproots itself from this fountain and instead takes root in another of foul and murky waters will bring forth nothing but wretchedness and impurity.

3. It is essential to understand that the fountain and that radiant sun dwelling at the center of the soul do not lose their light or beauty, for nothing can diminish their perfection. But if a black cloth is placed over a crystal that lies in the sun, it is clear that, although the sun continues to shine, its light cannot pass through the crystal or reflect upon it.

4. Oh, souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ! Understand this and have compassion on yourselves! How is it possible that, knowing this, you do not strive to cleanse the stain that darkens the crystal of your soul? Remember that if your life ends in this state, you will never again enjoy that light.

Oh, Jesus! How terrifying it is to see a soul separated from that light! How desolate the chambers of the castle become! What confusion reigns in the senses, which are like the castle's inhabitants! And the faculties of the soul, which act as its rulers and administrators—how blinded they are, and how poorly they govern!

In the end, if the tree planted in the soul is the devil, what good fruit could it possibly bear?

5. I once heard a spiritual man say that he was not amazed by the things a person in mortal sin might do, but rather by how little they did, considering the state they were in. May God, in His mercy, deliver us from such a great evil, for there is nothing in this life that truly deserves the name *evil* as much as this, since it leads to eternal ruin.

This, my daughters, is what should truly cause us fear and what we must ask of God in our prayers. For if He does not guard the city, our efforts are in vain, since we are fragile and inclined toward vanity.

The person I spoke of learned two great lessons from the grace God granted her. The first was a deep fear of offending Him, constantly begging that He would not allow her to fall into sin, having seen how terrible its consequences are. The second was a mirror of humility, as she realized that all the good we do does not originate in ourselves, but in that fountain where the tree of our souls is planted and in that sun that gives warmth to our works.

She said this truth was made so clear to her that whenever she did something good or saw it in others, she traced it back to its true source, understanding that without God's help, we can do nothing. From this realization arose an immediate impulse to praise the Lord, almost entirely forgetting herself whenever she did something good.

6. It will not be time wasted, sisters, for you to read this, nor for me to write it, if we can hold on to these two teachings. The learned and the wise already know them well, but in our simplicity as women, we need these comparisons, and perhaps this is why the Lord wills that they come to our understanding. May His goodness grant us the grace to comprehend them.

7. The things of the soul are so difficult to grasp that someone as ignorant as I am must say many unnecessary and even mistaken things just to get something right. Whoever reads this must have patience, just as I must have patience in writing about what I do not know. At times, I take up the paper as if it were an empty task, not knowing what to say or how to begin. But I understand that it is important for you that I explain, as much as possible, some interior experiences of prayer.

We always hear how good prayer is and are taught to practice it at certain hours, yet rarely is it explained to us beyond what we can grasp on our own. Little is said about the supernatural works that God performs in the soul. However, if these things are presented in

different ways, we will find great comfort in reflecting on this heavenly interior art, so little known among mortals, though many walk this path.

And although in other writings the Lord has granted me some understanding, I now see that there were things I had not fully grasped, especially the more difficult ones. The problem is that, to reach these truths, I will have to repeat things that are already well known, for with my limited understanding, I cannot explain them otherwise.

8. Let us now return to our castle with many mansions. You must not imagine these mansions as rooms arranged in a row, one behind another. Instead, think of the center, the grand hall or palace where the King resides. Picture it like a fruit, a date palm, whose edible part is reached only after passing through many layers. The same is true here: around that central hall, there are other mansions, as well as those above and below.

The realities of the soul must be considered with breadth and grandeur, for its capacity has no limits—it is far greater than we can imagine. And in every part of the soul, the light of that sun, which dwells in the innermost palace, extends.

This is very important for any soul engaged in prayer, whether much or little. Do not confine or limit it. Let it freely move through these mansions, ascend, descend, and explore its depths, for God has granted it such great dignity that we must not force it to remain always in the same place.

Oh, and when it comes to self-knowledge! Though it is absolutely necessary (listen carefully), even for the souls whom the Lord has led to the mansion where He dwells, it will never cease to be fundamental. No matter how exalted they may be, they will always need this knowledge, and even if they wished to do without it, they could not—for humility is a constant labor, like the bee that never ceases making honey in the hive: without it, all is lost.

Yet, also remember that the bee does not remain locked in the hive—it flies out to seek flowers. So must the soul in its self-knowledge: believe me, it must fly at times to contemplate the greatness and majesty of God. There, it will see its own smallness far more clearly than if it only looks at itself, and it will be freer from the minor miseries found in the first mansions, those of self-knowledge.

And while, as I say, it is a great mercy from God to practice self-examination, both excess and deficiency in this can be harmful. Believe me, with the strength of God, we act more effectively than when we are too preoccupied with our own wretchedness.

9. I do not know if I have made myself clear, for self-knowledge is so important that I would never want there to be any negligence in it, even for those who are very advanced spiritually. As long as we are in this life, nothing is more necessary than humility. That is why I insist that it is good and beneficial to enter first into the mansion of self-knowledge before attempting to ascend to higher ones.

This is the sure path, and if we can walk along a smooth and solid road, why long for wings to fly? Yet always seek to deepen this self-knowledge. In my view, we never truly come to know ourselves unless we strive to know God. By contemplating His greatness, we discover our smallness; by beholding His purity, we recognize our impurity; by considering His humility, we see how far we are from being truly humble.

10. There are two benefits to this. The first is that white appears much whiter when compared to black, just as black stands out more when placed next to white. The second is that our understanding and will become more noble and better disposed toward good when we maintain a constant relationship with God. On the other hand, if we never rise above the mire of our own miseries, this becomes a great obstacle.

Just as we said that those in mortal sin have darkened and corrupted thoughts, in a similar way (though not as grave—God forbid, for this is merely a comparison), if we remain trapped in the misery

of our own nature, we will never free ourselves from the mud of fears, cowardice, and insecurity: always worrying whether others are watching us or not, whether following a certain path will bring us harm, whether we will dare to begin a project, whether doing so would be an act of pride, whether someone as wretched as we are should even attempt something as lofty as prayer, whether others will think us better than we truly are, whether we should follow the same path as everyone else, believing that extremes—even in virtue—are not good. Thinking that, because we are such sinners, a possible fall will be even worse; that we may not progress at all and will only be a hindrance to the good; that someone like us does not need anything special.

11. Oh, my God, my daughters! How many souls must the devil have led astray by this path! Many believe that such an attitude is humility, but in reality, it stems from a failure to truly understand themselves. Self-knowledge, if not properly grasped, can become a trap: it locks us within ourselves and distances us from the truth. I am not surprised that this happens when one never steps outside their own inner world, for it is easy to fall into this error.

This is why I tell you, daughters, to fix your eyes on Christ, our supreme good. In Him, we will learn true humility. We can also look to the example of the saints, and in doing so, our understanding will be elevated, as I have already told you. In this way, self-knowledge will not turn into something petty or cowardly. Although this is only the first mansion, it is rich and of great value. If we manage to free ourselves from the minor miseries that surround it, we will be able to move forward to higher mansions.

The devil has very subtle strategies to prevent souls from knowing themselves and discovering the path to God.

12. Of these first mansions, I can speak with considerable experience. That is why I tell you not to think there are only a few rooms in this castle—imagine millions of them. Souls enter these mansions in many different ways, generally with good intentions. However, the

devil always acts with ill intent, and he must have legions of evil spirits stationed in each chamber to prevent the soul from advancing from one mansion to the next.

The poor soul does not recognize these traps. The devil uses countless deceptions to ensnare it, something he cannot do as easily with souls that are already closer to the King. In these first mansions, the soul is still very much attached to the world, immersed in its pleasures, preoccupied with honors and vain ambitions. Because of this, the soul's faculties—its senses and powers—are weakened and unable to defend themselves with the strength that God has naturally given them. Thus, even though these souls may desire not to offend God and may perform good works, they are easily overcome.

Souls in this state must turn to God frequently, however they can, and seek the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the saints, for they cannot defend themselves by their own strength alone. In reality, at any stage of the spiritual life, we are always dependent on God's help. May His Majesty grant it to us in His mercy. Amen.

13. How miserable is the life we lead! Elsewhere, I have spoken at length about the harm caused by a poor understanding of humility and self-knowledge. I will not dwell on it further here, though it is what matters most to us. May the Lord, in His goodness, grant that something I have said may be of benefit to you.

14. You must keep in mind that in these first mansions, only a faint light reaches from the palace where the King dwells. Though the soul is not in total darkness, as when living in mortal sin, there is still a lack of clarity that prevents it from seeing things clearly. This is not due to any defect in the soul itself—which I do not quite know how to explain—but rather to the many harmful influences surrounding it: serpents, vipers, and other spiritual poisons that entered with it and block its ability to perceive the light.

It is as if someone were to step into a sunlit room but had dust in their eyes and could barely open them. The light is there, but they cannot enjoy it because of their own blindness. The same happens to

the soul that, although not in a state of grave sin, remains so attached to worldly things—wealth, honor, or business—that it cannot perceive its own beauty or delight in the interior light.

To move forward to the second mansions, it is essential to begin letting go of what is unnecessary, each according to their state in life. This is so important for reaching the innermost mansion that, if one does not begin this process, I believe it is impossible to advance. Even remaining safely within the first mansion is difficult if one does not abandon everything that poisons the soul. Among so many harmful influences, sooner or later, one will cause harm.

15. And what would it be, my daughters, if we, who are already free from these external obstacles—like ourselves—who have entered the more interior mansions of the castle, were to return, by our own fault, to these worldly entanglements? Unfortunately, this has happened to many souls whom God had filled with grace, but who, through their own negligence, returned to this spiritual misery.

Outwardly, we are free from such distractions, but I pray to the Lord that we may also be free within. Guard yourselves, my daughters, from concerning yourselves with matters that do not belong to you. Remember that in nearly all the mansions of the castle, the demons continue their battle. It is true that in some of them, the soul's faculties are stronger and more capable of resisting, but we must never let our guard down. It is essential to remain vigilant in recognizing the enemy's traps, for he often disguises himself as an angel of light.

The devil can harm us in many subtle ways, gradually infiltrating our souls without us realizing it until his work is already done.

16. I have already told you that the devil acts like a *silent file*, working quietly and imperceptibly. This is why we must detect his deceptions from the very beginning. I will give you some examples to help you understand this better.

Imagine that a sister begins to feel great desires for penance, to the point that she cannot find peace unless she is suffering in some way. This is a good beginning. But if the prioress has ordered that no one practice penance without her permission, and the sister, convinced that in something so good she may disobey, begins to do it in secret, she may end up harming her health and failing to observe the Rule. Do you see how that good beginning has turned out?

Another example: a sister develops a great zeal for perfection, which is also very good. But from this could arise the tendency to see even the smallest faults in her sisters as great failings. This could lead her to constantly monitor others, to report their mistakes to the prioress, and, at times, even to become blind to her own shortcomings due to her obsession with the perfection of others.

The other sisters, who may not fully understand the spiritual background of her attitude, might not receive it well. This is why, even in good things, we must be careful and discern well the movements of our hearts, for the devil can slip in disguised as virtue.

17. What the devil seeks here is no small thing—he wants to cool the charity and love among us, which would be a great harm. Let us understand, my daughters, that true perfection consists in love for God and neighbor, and the more perfectly we keep these two commandments, the more perfect we will be. Our entire Rule and Constitutions are nothing more than means to help us live these commandments with greater perfection.

Let us set aside that indiscreet zeal, which can cause great harm. Let each one look to herself, for I have spoken enough on this matter elsewhere and do not wish to dwell on it further.

18. This love among us is so important that I would never want you to forget it. If we spend our time noticing small faults in others—which, at times, are not even imperfections but simply misunderstandings on our part that we interpret in the worst possible way—the soul can lose its peace and even disturb the peace of others. Consider how costly such a *misunderstood perfection* would be.

The devil could also plant this temptation in the heart of the prioress, which would be even more dangerous. This is why great discretion is needed. If something goes against the Rule or Constitutions, it should not always be overlooked—correction must be given with charity, and if there is no amendment, it should be reported to the superior. Done well, this is an act of true charity.

The same applies among sisters when dealing with a serious matter. Remaining silent out of fear that it may be a temptation could, in itself, be another temptation. However, we must be very careful that the devil does not deceive us: we must not discuss these matters with other sisters who cannot provide a solution, for from that could arise murmuring, which would be of great benefit to the devil.

We should speak only with those who can help correct the problem, as I have already said. Thanks be to God, in our community, there is less opportunity for this to happen because of the continuous practice of silence, but it is always good to remain vigilant.

SECOND MANSIONS

Sole Chapter

It addresses the importance of the perseverance required to reach the final mansions, the fierce struggle presented by the devil, and the crucial need not to go astray from the very beginning of the journey.

To stay on course, it offers a means that has proven to be highly effective.

1. Let us now speak of the souls who enter the second mansions and what they do there. I would like to say little, as I have already treated this subject extensively elsewhere, but it will be impossible not to repeat certain things, since I do not precisely recall what I have said before. If I knew how to explain it in different ways, I am sure you would not grow weary of it, just as we never tire of reading spiritual books, however many there may be.

2. In these mansions are the souls who have begun to cultivate a life of prayer and have understood the importance of not remaining in the first mansions. However, they still lack the firm resolve to completely avoid occasions of sin, which is a grave danger. Nevertheless, it is a great mercy that, at least at times, they try to withdraw from temptation and recognize the necessity of doing so.

These souls have more to contend with than those in the first mansions, though the danger is less, because they have begun to become aware of their situation and there is great hope that they will advance further. I say they have more to contend with because, if we compare them to someone who is deaf and mute, such a person may suffer less, not feeling the frustration of being unable to respond. Yet at the same time, to hear and understand is a great gift.

So it is with these souls: they begin to hear God's calls. As they draw closer to His Majesty, He, in His infinite mercy and goodness,

calls to them in many ways—even while they are distracted by worldly matters, pleasures, and entertainments, and even when they fall into sin and rise again. Though these “poisonous beasts” (temptations and passions) cause them to stumble, the Lord does not cease to call them, with a voice so sweet that the soul feels a deep sorrow for not obeying at once. For this reason, this state can be more difficult than not hearing anything at all.

3. I am not referring here to extraordinary visions or revelations, of which I will speak later. These calls come in the form of words heard in sermons, in conversations with virtuous people, in the reading of spiritual books, or even through illness and difficulties. They may also arise as truths that God reveals during prayer, however weak that prayer may be.

Do not underestimate this initial grace, nor be discouraged if you do not respond to the Lord immediately, for His Majesty knows how to wait many days—even years—especially when He sees perseverance and sincere desire. This is the most important thing here: perseverance. With it, much is always gained.

But it is at this point that the soul encounters great struggle. The demons attack with greater force and cause more distress than in the previous stage. In the first mansions, the soul was almost deaf and offered little resistance, like one who has already lost hope of victory. Now, however, the understanding is more alert, and the faculties of the soul are more active. Temptations appear with greater clarity and strength, and the soul cannot help but hear them.

Here is where the demons reveal all their deceptions: they present worldly pleasures as if they were eternal, exalt the importance of fame and human relationships, stir up anxieties about health when the soul desires to practice penance, and present a thousand excuses and obstacles to divert it from the path of virtue.

4. O Jesus, what confusion the devil causes at this moment, and how afflicted the soul becomes, unsure whether to advance or retreat to the comfort of the first mansion! On the one hand, reason shows

it that all the world offers is deception compared to what it seeks; faith teaches it what is truly beneficial; memory reminds it of the fleeting nature of life and the deaths of those who enjoyed worldly goods—how quickly they were forgotten, and how their bodies decayed in the grave.

The will, for its part, inclines toward loving the One who has shown it such love and who has never abandoned it, giving it life and existence. Understanding shows it that it will find no better friend than God, no matter how long it lives, and that the world is full of falsehood. The pleasures offered by the devil are filled with worry, contradiction, and disappointment. It shows the soul that outside this castle there is no peace or security, and advises it to stop searching elsewhere for what it already possesses within: a house filled with treasures, with a Guest who longs to make it master of all, unless it prefers to wander lost like the prodigal son, feeding on the food of swine.

5. These are powerful reasons to overcome the devil. But alas, Lord! The habit of living in the vanity of the world, and seeing that everyone else is engaged in the same pursuits, spoils everything. Faith is so weakened that we prefer what we see to what it teaches us, even though what we see is the misery of those who chase after these fleeting goods.

It is as if someone had been bitten by a viper: the venom spreads throughout the body, causing swelling and pain. So it is with the soul—it does not guard itself against harmful influences, and an intense treatment is needed for healing. God grants us great mercy if we do not die spiritually from this poison.

Indeed, the soul endures great trials at this stage. If the devil perceives that it has the qualities and disposition to make significant progress in the spiritual life, he will summon all his strength to drive it back. All of hell will unite in an effort to cast it out of the castle.

6. O my Lord, we need Your help here, for without it we can do nothing. By Your mercy, do not allow this soul to be deceived and to

abandon what it has begun. Grant it light so that it may see that all its good lies in this path, and help it to distance itself from bad company. It is of great importance to associate with people who are also seeking this way—not only those at the same stage, but especially those who have advanced further—for this will be of great help and, over time, they may lead the soul to greater heights.

It must remain ever vigilant not to be overcome, for if the devil sees that it is firmly resolved to lose its life, its peace, and all that the world offers rather than turn back, he will soon leave it in peace. Let it be courageous, not like those who surrendered before the battle even began, but rather resolved to fight against all the demons, knowing that the best weapons are those of the cross.

7. Although I have said this before, it is so important that I repeat it here: do not expect to find consolations in what you have begun, for it is a very poor foundation on which to build something so great and precious. If we build on sand, everything will collapse, and you will live in constant dissatisfaction and temptation.

These are not the mansions where manna rains down from heaven; those come later, when the soul desires only what God desires. It is absurd that, still full of imperfections and with virtues that have barely begun to emerge, we should have the audacity to seek consolations in prayer and complain of spiritual dryness. Do not allow this to happen to you, sisters. Embrace the cross that your Spouse carried on His shoulders and understand that this must be your task. Let the one who can suffer more for Him do so, for she will be the one who fares best. If the Lord grants you any consolation, give Him abundant thanks, but do not seek it as your goal.

8. You may think you are willing to endure external suffering if God grants you interior consolations. But His Majesty knows better than we do what is best for us. There is no need to tell Him what He should give us, for He might well reply that we do not know what we are asking.

The goal of anyone beginning a life of prayer—and do not forget this, for it is fundamental—must be to strive with all their strength to align their will with God's. This is the highest perfection one can attain in the spiritual life: the more perfectly one achieves this, the more one will receive from the Lord and the further one will advance along the path. Do not think there are any mysterious secrets here; everything comes down to this.

If we go astray from the beginning, wanting God to do what we imagine, how can such a structure stand? Let us do what lies within our power and guard ourselves against temptation. Often, God permits us to experience temptations and spiritual dryness so that we may learn to protect ourselves better and to test our repentance for having offended Him.

9. Therefore, do not be discouraged if you fall at times. Do not cease striving to move forward, for even from that fall, God can bring forth good, just as a remedy might be tested by first ingesting poison to prove its effectiveness.

If we recognized our misery in no other way, it would suffice to notice how difficult it is to recollect ourselves after having been distracted. Is there any greater harm than to find no peace even within ourselves? How can we hope to find rest in other things if we do not find it within?

And the saddest part is that even our own faculties, which ought to be our allies, seem to turn against us, as if rebelling against the harm our vices have caused them.

Peace, peace! said the Lord, and He repeated it many times to His apostles. Believe me, my sisters, if we do not have peace within, we will not find it anywhere. Let this battle come to an end. By the blood that Christ shed for us, I implore those of you who have not yet begun this journey: do not be afraid to start. And to those who have already begun, I say: do not turn back.

Remember that a relapse is worse than a fall. Trust in God's mercy, not in your own strength, and you will see how His Majesty will lead you from one mansion to the next, until you reach that place where temptations can no longer touch or weary you. There, you will have dominion over them and will enjoy blessings far greater than you could ever imagine—even in this life.

10. As I have already explained how you should act in those moments of turmoil caused by the devil, and how interior recollection should not be forced but done gently so that it may become more consistent, I will not dwell much longer on this. I only want to emphasize how beneficial it is to speak with people experienced in the spiritual life, because at times you may believe you are making grave mistakes when that is not the case.

As long as you do not abandon the path, the Lord will guide everything for your good, even if you find no one to instruct you. But if you stop trying, there is no remedy; the soul will gradually be lost, day by day, and I only hope you realize it in time.

11. Someone might think that if going backward is so dangerous, it would be better never to have started at all, and to remain outside the castle. But I told you at the beginning—and the Lord Himself says it—that whoever exposes themselves to danger ends up falling, and that the gateway into this castle is prayer.

To think we can reach heaven without entering within ourselves, without self-knowledge, without reflecting on our misery, and without asking God for mercy, is a mistake. The Lord says: "No one comes to the Father except through me"; and also: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

For if we never look upon Him or consider what we owe Him, nor the death He suffered for us, how can we truly know and serve Him? Faith without works, without uniting ourselves to the power of Christ's merits—what weight can it possibly have? Who will awaken in us love for this Lord if we do not seek Him in prayer?

May His Majesty grant us the grace to understand how much we cost Him, and that we belong to no one but our Lord. May we grasp what we must do to partake in His glory, and recognize that in order to achieve this, we need to pray so as not to fall constantly into temptation.

THIRD MANSIONS

Chapter 1

Concerning the little security we can have while living in this exile, even when one's spiritual state is advanced, and the importance of living in the fear of God. Some important points are presented.

1. To those who, by the mercy of God, have overcome these struggles and, with perseverance, have entered the third mansions, what can we say but: Blessed is the man who fears the Lord? It is no small thing that His Majesty has now granted me a true understanding of this verse, despite my dullness. And rightly do we call such a one blessed, for if they do not stray from the path they have begun, we can understand that they are on a sure course toward salvation.

Here you will see, sisters, how important it is to have overcome the previous battles, because I am certain the Lord never fails to grant the soul an inner peace and a clear conscience, which is no small blessing. I say “security,” and I am mistaken in saying it thus, for no such thing exists in this life. Therefore, always understand that I mean a conditional security: so long as the soul does not abandon the path it has begun.

2. It is a great misery to live in this world knowing that we must always be on guard, like those who have the enemy lurking at the door, unable to eat or sleep in peace, always armed, attentive to any breach through which danger might enter.

Oh, my Lord and my Good! How can You expect us to desire such a distressing life, unless it be with the hope of offering it to You or of spending it entirely in Your service? And, above all, if we do not understand that it is Your will that we remain here. If this be so, my God, let us die with You, as Saint Thomas said, for to live without

You, and with the constant fear of losing You forever, is nothing less than dying a thousand deaths.

For this reason I say, my daughters, that the true beatitude we must seek is to already be secure in heaven, among the blessed. What consolation can there be for one who finds all their joy in pleasing God, if they must live with the fear of offending Him? Consider that this same fear, and even greater, was felt by some saints who fell into grave sins. And we have no guarantee that God will grant us the grace to rise again should we fall, nor that we would do the necessary penance, for that particular help depends on His will.

3. Truly, my daughters, I feel such fear in writing this that I do not know how I manage it, or how I remain alive when I recall it—something that happens to me often. Ask His Majesty to live always within me, for if not, what security can a life so poorly spent as mine possibly have?

Do not be saddened to hear this truth, though I have sometimes seen a certain sorrow in you when I say it. I understand that you would wish I had been very holy, and you are absolutely right; I would wish it too. But what can I do, if I have lost that opportunity through my own fault? I cannot complain of God, who has always given me more than enough help to fulfill those desires. I cannot say this without tears and great shame, knowing that I am writing for people who could be teaching me.

How hard obedience is! May the Lord, for whose sake I do this, allow these words to be of some benefit to you, if only so that you may ask Him to forgive this wretched and presumptuous creature. But His Majesty knows well that I can only rely on His mercy. And since I cannot undo what I have been, I have no other recourse than to cling to it and to trust in the merits of His Son and of the Virgin, His Mother, whose habit I wear unworthily, as do you.

Praise the Lord, my daughters, for you are truly daughters of this Lady. You need not be ashamed that I am unworthy, for you have such an exalted Mother. Imitate her and consider the greatness of

this Lady and the joy of having her as your patroness, for not even my sins nor my misery have managed to tarnish the splendor of this sacred Order.

4. But I warn you of one thing: do not feel secure simply because you have such an exalted Mother. David was a very holy man, and you see what happened to him; the same with Solomon. Nor should you place your confidence in the fact that you live enclosed, practice penance, dedicate yourselves constantly to prayer, are removed from the world, and, in your opinion, have rejected all its allure. All of this is good, but it is not enough—as I have already said—for us to cease fearing. Therefore, remember and often repeat this verse: *Beatus vir, qui timet Dominum* (Blessed is the man who fears the Lord).

5. I no longer know what I was saying, for I have become greatly distracted, and thinking of myself has taken away my desire to say anything useful. So I shall stop here for now.

Returning to what I began to tell you about the souls who have reached the third mansions: the Lord has granted them a great grace in having overcome the initial difficulties. By God's goodness, I believe there are many such souls in the world: people who sincerely desire not to offend His Majesty, who guard themselves even against venial sins, who love penance, devote time to recollection, make good use of their time, and practice works of charity toward their neighbor. They are careful in their speech, in their dress, and in the good governance of their household, if they have one.

Truly, this is a state worthy of aspiration, and it would seem there is no reason why they should be denied entrance into the final mansions. The Lord will not withhold it if they genuinely desire it, for they are well disposed to receive all His graces.

6. Oh, Jesus! And who would say they do not desire such a great good after having already passed through the most difficult part? No one. We all say we desire it. But, as still more is required for the Lord to fully possess the soul, it is not enough to merely say it—just as it

was not enough for the rich young man when the Lord told him what he needed to do to be perfect¹.

Since I began to speak of these mansions, I have kept this in mind, for we resemble him greatly. And it is here that, generally, those great drynesses in prayer arise, although they may also be due to other causes. I leave aside, for now, the interior sufferings that many good souls endure—sufferings that are harsh and even unbearable, though they are not to blame. In such cases, the Lord always brings great good out of that pain. We must also consider those who suffer from melancholy and other illnesses. In any case, we must always leave judgment to God.

However, based on my experience, what I have mentioned is most common: these souls, seeing that they would never commit a mortal sin, and even consciously avoid venial ones, who make good use of their lives and possessions, cannot bear with patience to be denied entrance into the place where our King resides, to whom they consider themselves—and indeed are—servants.

But though an earthly king may have many servants, not all are admitted into his private chamber. Enter, enter within yourselves, my daughters; go beyond your little works, for as Christians you are obliged to do all this and much more. It is enough to be servants of God, but if you aspire to so much without the necessary disposition, you may end up with nothing.

Look to the saints who entered the King's chamber, and you will see the difference between them and us. Do not ask for what you have not merited, nor think that, no matter how much we serve, those of us who have offended God are owed anything.

7. Oh, humility, humility! I don't know what temptation troubles me in this matter that keeps me from fully believing those who are so distressed by these spiritual drynesses; it seems to me that it partly stems from a lack of humility. I do not refer here to the great interior sufferings I spoke of earlier, for those go far beyond mere lack of devotion.

Let us test ourselves, my sisters—or rather, let the Lord test us, for He knows well how to do so, even when we are reluctant to understand it. Let us consider these souls who live such orderly lives, and let us examine what they truly do for God. Then we will see that we have no reason to complain about His Majesty.

If we turn away from Him and walk away saddened, like the rich young man in the Gospel when the Lord told him what he must do to be perfect², what would you have His Majesty do? He gives the reward in proportion to the love we have for Him. And this love, my daughters, must not be a mere figment of our imagination, crafted in our minds, but proven by deeds. Do not think that God needs our works, but He does require the firm resolve of our will.

8. It may seem to us that, by wearing the religious habit, having taken it freely, and having left behind the things of the world for love of God (even if they were as simple as Saint Peter's nets, which he saw as a great sacrifice because he gave what he had), we have already done everything.

Undoubtedly, it is a good beginning if we persevere in that detachment and do not return, not even in thought, to the trivialities of earlier stages. There is no doubt that if we persevere in this poverty and renunciation of all things, we will attain what we seek.

But it must be with one condition—and take this well to heart: that we consider ourselves *unprofitable servants*, as Saint Paul or Christ Himself says³, and that we do not think we have obliged the Lord to grant us great graces. On the contrary, the more we have received from Him, the more we are indebted.

What can we possibly do for such a generous God, who created us, gives us life, and died for us? Should we not feel joyful simply to be able to return even a little of what we owe Him? His whole life on earth was one of continuous service to humanity, and yet here we are, asking Him for more favors and consolations.

9. Reflect well, my daughters, on some of the things I have pointed out here, even if they are expressed somewhat disjointedly, for I do not know how to explain them better. The Lord will give you light to understand them, so that from spiritual dryness you may draw humility rather than distress, which is precisely what the devil intends.

Believe me: where there is true humility, even if God does not grant consolations, there will always be peace and acceptance—and that peace is more precious than consolations themselves. One who lives with this interior disposition will be more content than those who receive spiritual gifts.

Many times, as you have read, the Divine Majesty grants consolations to the weaker souls, although I believe these, if they could choose, would prefer the strength of those who persevere through spiritual dryness. We are more drawn to consolations than to the cross.

Test us, Lord, You who know the truth, so that we may come to know ourselves better.

Chapter 2

Further discussion of dryness in prayer, what may occur in such states, and the need to test ourselves. Also includes how the Lord tries those who are in these mansions.

1. I have known some souls—and I believe I can say not a few—that have reached this state of spiritual maturity, living for many years with integrity and order both in soul and body, as far as one can tell. After all that time, when it seemed they were detached from the world—or at least thoroughly disillusioned with it—the Lord willed to test them with trials that were not very great, and yet they became so disturbed and distressed that I myself was left perplexed and even fearful.

Offering them counsel proves useless, for having spoken so much about virtue, they believe themselves capable of teaching others and fully justified in how they perceive their trials.

2. In the end, I have found—and still find—no better comfort for such people than to offer them understanding and to share in their sorrow—a sorrow that is indeed deep, seeing them subjected to such misery—without contradicting their arguments. They all justify their anguish by claiming they suffer “for God,” and this is precisely why they fail to see that it is an imperfection. This is another kind of delusion, one that can affect even those well advanced in the spiritual life.

That they feel pain or discomfort should not surprise us, though in my view, such feelings ought to pass quickly. Often, God allows His chosen ones to experience their own frailty by withdrawing His favor just a little. Nothing more is needed for us to see ourselves as we truly are.

It becomes clear that this is a test from God because these souls perceive their weaknesses with clarity, and sometimes feel more sorrow over their lack of control in small matters than over the actual

trials they face. I consider this a great mercy of God; although it is a fault, it is highly beneficial for fostering humility.

3. But in the individuals I speak of, it is not so. They come to regard such feelings as justified and even wish others would acknowledge them as legitimate. I want to explain some of these cases so that we may better understand one another and examine ourselves before the Lord puts us to the test. It would be of great help to be prepared and to have reflected on it beforehand.

4. For example, a wealthy person with no children or heirs suffers a financial loss. It is not complete ruin, since enough remains for them and their household to live comfortably, even abundantly. If such a person becomes distressed and agitated as though they were left without even a morsel of bread, how can God ask them to give up everything for His sake?

One might justify this by saying the sorrow stems from a desire to use that money for the poor. I believe God would prefer that this person accept what His Majesty has ordained, and although they may work to address the situation, they should preserve peace in their soul rather than indulge in such “restless charity.”

And if they cannot do so because they have not yet attained that level of detachment, they should at least acknowledge their lack of spiritual freedom. This will dispose them to receive it from the Lord, for they will ask for it in humility.

Another example: a person has enough to live on, even comfortably. An opportunity arises to gain more. If it is offered and they accept it, that is fine. But if they actively seek it out and, having obtained it, continue to desire more and more—though with good intentions (for, as I said, these people are prayerful and virtuous)—they should not expect to draw near to the mansions closer to the King.

5. The same applies if they suffer some slight or offense to their honor. Even if God grants them the grace to bear it outwardly with serenity (for He often strengthens virtue publicly so that the

reputation of His servants is not harmed), within themselves remains a restlessness that is very difficult to overcome.

Good heavens! Are these not the same people who have meditated so deeply on the sufferings of Christ and on how valuable it is to suffer for Him—even wishing for it? They would have everyone live with the same order and discipline they have achieved, and God forbid they come to think that their unease is caused by others, considering it even meritorious in their eyes.

6. It may seem, sisters, that I am speaking of things unrelated to you, because here we have no riches—we neither want them nor seek them—and no one offends us. But even if these examples do not directly apply to our situation, much can be learned from them.

Such cases will help you discern whether you are truly detached from what you have left behind. Small trials—though not of the same kind—will come, allowing you to examine yourselves and see whether you rule over your passions.

Believe me, it is not only a question of wearing the religious habit, but of striving to practice virtue and to surrender our will to that of God in everything. Our life must be in harmony with what His Majesty desires for us—not seeking to have our will done, but His.

And if we have not yet reached that point—as I have said—let us turn to humility, which is the best remedy for our wounds. Where there is true humility, even if healing takes time, the divine physician, who is God, will come to heal us.

7. The penances practiced by these souls are as orderly as their lives: they place great value on them because they desire to serve the Lord through them, which is not wrong. Moreover, they are very prudent in their practice, careful not to harm their health. Do not fear that they will go to extremes, for their reason is well balanced; love has not yet led them to lose their sense.

Nevertheless, I wish we possessed a spirit that would not settle for such a moderate way of serving God, always advancing at a slow

pace, for in this manner we shall never reach the end of the road. And even if it seems we are making progress and striving—believe me, this is a difficult path—we barely manage not to go astray.

But tell me, daughters: if one could travel from one city to another in eight days, would it make sense to take a year, stopping at inns, traversing snow, rain, and difficult roads? Would it not be better to move forward all at once, without so many pauses?

This road is also full of dangers, like serpents lying in wait. Oh, how well I could speak of this! And may it be that I have advanced further myself, for many times I feel that I have not.

8. Because we walk with such human caution, everything affects us, for we fear everything. Thus, we do not dare to press forward, as if we were waiting for someone else to walk the road for us. But that is not possible.

Let us exert ourselves, my sisters, out of love for the Lord. Let us place our reasoning and fears in His hands; let us forget this natural weakness that so preoccupies us. Let our superiors concern themselves with the care of the body; let them decide. Our task is to focus on advancing with determination to meet this Lord.

Even if you receive little or no consolation, excessive concern for your health may be a deception. Besides, I assure you that little is gained by that path. I also know that the problem does not lie in what affects the body, which matters least. True progress is a walk in deep humility.

If you understand this well, here lies the difficulty for those who do not progress: we must acknowledge that we have taken only a few steps and truly believe it. The advances of our sisters should seem swift and admirable to us, and we must not only desire but sincerely strive to be regarded as the most humble of all.

9. With this disposition, this state is truly excellent. Otherwise, we will spend our entire lives stuck in it, full of sorrow and misery.

For as long as we do not fully renounce ourselves, the path will be hard and burdensome. We go along weighed down by the load of our own misery, unlike those who have ascended to the higher mansions.

In those mansions, the Lord never ceases to reward, both in justice and in mercy, for He always gives more than we deserve. He grants joys far greater than any pleasure or distraction life can offer. However, He does not usually grant many spiritual delights—except occasionally, to encourage us and show us what awaits in the later mansions, thus preparing the soul to enter them.

10. Perhaps you think that “joys” and “delights” are the same and wonder why I make a distinction. To me, there seems to be a great difference, though I might be mistaken.

I will explain what I mean when I speak of the fourth mansions, for it is there that the delights granted by the Lord will become clear. That will be the right moment to explain it, and although it may seem unimportant, it might be of use.

Understanding the difference between the two may help you strive for the greater gift. It is a great consolation for the souls whom God leads to that state, and a wake-up call for those who believe they already possess everything, but perhaps do not.

If they are humble, this knowledge will lead them to give thanks; if humility is lacking, they will feel a kind of inner dissatisfaction without knowing why.

Remember that perfection does not lie in spiritual delights, but in loving more and in acting more rightly and truthfully. The reward will go to the one who loves the most and does the most good works.

11. You might ask: What is the point of speaking about these interior graces and explaining what they consist of, if the important thing is to love and to act? Well, I do not know—ask the one who commanded me to write this, for it is not my place to dispute with my superiors, but to obey, and that is what I do.

What I can sincerely say is that, when I had no experience of these graces and did not think I would ever receive them (rightly so, for it would have been enough for me to know that I pleased God in some small way), reading in books about the favors and consolations the Lord grants to souls who serve Him brought me deep inner joy.

That joy led me to praise God with fervor. So, if my soul—so miserable—reacted in this way, how much more will good and humble souls do the same!

And even if just one person were moved to praise the Lord for this, it would be worthwhile to recount it. Furthermore, it helps us to understand how many consolations and delights we miss because of our lack of openness.

And what's more, if these graces come from God, they are full of love and strength, which allows us to advance more easily and to grow in works and in virtue.

Do not think this is a small matter. And if the absence of such graces is not due to our own fault, the Lord is just: His Majesty will grant you, by other paths, what He has withheld on this one, according to what He sees is best for you. His ways are mysterious, but they always lead us to what is most beneficial.

12. I believe it would be very helpful for the souls who, by the Lord's goodness, find themselves in this state (for it is no small mercy to have reached this point, as they are very close to advancing further) to strive for promptness in obedience.

Even if they are not in religious life, it is very useful—as many do—to have someone to whom they are accountable, so they are not guided by their own will, which is where we often go most astray.

Do not seek someone who thinks like you, but someone who is truly disillusioned with the things of the world. Interacting with such people helps a great deal, because seeing how easily they overcome what seems impossible to us encourages and strengthens us.

It is like little birds learning to fly: at first, they do not take great flights, but little by little, they imitate their parents. This is of great benefit—I know it from experience.

No matter how determined we may be not to offend the Lord, we must not place our trust in ourselves or expose ourselves to occasions of sin. We are still near the first mansions and, if we are not careful, we could easily return to them.

Our strength is not yet firm like that of those who are accustomed to suffering and have learned that the storms of the world are neither to be feared nor desired.

A great trial could cause us to falter, for the devil knows well how to weave his deceptions. Even with the best zeal, in trying to correct others' faults, we might fall into tests we never expected.

13. Instead of focusing so much on others' faults, let us look to our own. It is characteristic of very orderly souls to be scandalized by everything, when in fact, we might learn much from those who surprise us.

We may feel superior in terms of external composure or behavior, but that is not what matters most. We should not expect everyone to follow our path, nor presume to teach the spiritual life when we do not yet truly understand what it is.

With these desires God gives us to work for the good of souls, we can make many mistakes if we are not prudent. That is why it is better to live according to what our Rule says: "*Live always in silence and hope*", because the Lord will care for souls.

If we do not neglect prayer and earnestly plead with His Majesty, with His help we will do much good. Blessed be He forever.