

St. JOHN

OF THE CROSS



...the knowledge of God is received in divine silence.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

In tribulation immediately draw near to God with confidence, and you will receive strength, enlightenment, and instruction. In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone.

The soul that is attached to anything however much good there may be in it, will not arrive at the liberty of divine union. For whether it be a strong wire rope or a slender and delicate thread that holds the bird, it matters not, if it really holds it fast; for, until the cord be broken the bird cannot fly.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. The soul has to proceed rather by unknowing rather than knowing.

This perfection consists in voiding and stripping and purifying the soul of every desire.

God will give to the soul a new understanding of God in God, the old human understanding being cast aside – and a new love of God in God.

The soul that is clouded by the desires is darkened in the understanding and allows neither the sun of natural reason nor that of the supernatural Wisdom of God to shine upon it and illumine it clearly.

Desire to imitate Christ – and study His life. Do the most difficult, the harshest, the less pleasant, the unconsoling, the lowest and most despised, want nothing, look for the worst.

All that is required for a complete pacification of the spiritual house is the negation through pure faith of all the spiritual faculties and gratifications and appetites. This achieved, the soul will be joined with the Beloved in a union of simplicity and purity and love and likeness.

The less a soul works with its own abilities, the more securely it proceeds, because its progress in faith is greater.

Like a blind man he must lean on dark faith, accept it for his guide and light, and rest on nothing of what he understands, tastes, feels, or imagines.

To reach the supernatural bounds a person must depart from his natural bounds and leave self far off in respect to his interior and exterior limits in order to mount from a low state to the highest.

The supernatural union exists when God's will and the soul's will are in conformity. Therefore the soul rests transformed in God through love.

The illumination of the soul and its union with God corresponds to its purity.

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If an experience fails to engender humility, charity, mortification, holy simplicity, and silence, ... of what value is it?

Live as though only God and yourself were in this world, so that your heart may not be detained by anything human.

Whoever flees prayer flees all that is good.

Strive to preserve your heart in peace; let no event of this world disturb it; reflect that all must come to an end.

The soul that desires God to surrender Himself to it entirely, must surrender itself entirely to Him without keeping anything for itself.

Not all the faculties and senses have to be employed in things, but only those that are required; as for the others, leave them unoccupied for God.

Souls will be unable to reach perfection who do not strive to be content with having nothing, in such fashion that their natural and spiritual desire is satisfied with emptiness; for this is necessary in order to reach the highest tranquility and peace of spirit. Hence the love of God in the pure and simple soul is almost continually in act.

If you wish to attain holy recollection, you will do so not by receiving but by denying.

The very pure spirit does not bother about the regard of others or human respect, but communes inwardly with God, alone and in solitude as to all forms, and with delightful tranquility, for the knowledge of God is received in divine silence.

Deny your desires and you will find what your heart longs for. For how do you know if any desire of yours is according to God?

If you desire to discover peace and consolation for your soul and to serve God truly, do not find your satisfaction in what you have left behind, because in that which now concerns you you may be as impeded as you were before, or even more. But leave as well all these other things and attend to one thing alone that brings all these with it, and persevere there in forgetfulness of all things.

Love consists not in feeling great things but in having great detachment and in suffering for the Beloved.

Not all the faculties and senses have to be employed in things, but only those that are required; as for the others, leave them unoccupied for God.

Although you perform many works, if you do not deny your will and submit yourself, losing all solicitude about yourself and your affairs, you will not make progress.

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No man of himself can succeed in voiding himself of all his desires in order to come to God.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. The soul has to proceed rather by unknowing rather than knowing.

This perfection consists in voiding and stripping and purifying the soul of every desire.

God will give to the soul a new understanding of God in God, the old human understanding being cast aside – and a new love of God in God.

The soul is wearied and fatigued by its desires... the (desires) disturb it, allowing it not to rest in any place or in any thing soever.... the desires and indulgence in them all cause it greater emptiness and hunger.

The soul that is clouded by the desires is darkened in the understanding and allows neither the sun of natural reason nor that of the supernatural Wisdom of God to shine upon it and illumine it clearly.

At the same time, when the soul is darkened in the understanding, it is benumbed also in the will, and the memory becomes dull and disordered in its dire operation. The intellect cannot get the illumination of God's wisdom, the will cannot get the love of God, and the memory cannot get God's image.

Darkness and coarseness will always be with a soul until its appetites are extinguished. The appetites are like a cataract on the eye or specks of dust in it; until removed they obstruct vision.

The affections and appetites deprive them of a treasure of divine light.

Any appetite, even one that is but slightly imperfect, stains and defiles the soul.

The unmortified appetites result in killing a man in his relationship with God.

An attachment (i.e. to conversation and friendship) can empty you of both holy solitude and the spirit and joy of God. Desire to imitate Christ – and study His life.

Do the most difficult, the harshest, the less pleasant, the unconsoling, the lowest and most despised, want nothing, look for the worst.

All that is required for a complete pacification of the spiritual house is the negation through pure faith of all the spiritual faculties and gratifications and appetites. This achieved, the soul will be joined with the Beloved in a union of simplicity and purity and love and likeness.

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In the night of sense there is yet some light, because the intellect and reason remain and suffer no blindness. But his spiritual night of faith removes everything, both in the intellect and in the senses. The less a soul works with its own abilities, the more securely it proceeds, because its progress in faith is greater.

Faith is a dark night for man, but in this very way it gives him light.

Like a blind man he must lean on dark faith, accept it for his guide and light, and rest on nothing of what he understands, tastes, feels, or imagines.

To reach the supernatural bounds a person must depart from his natural bounds and leave self far off in respect to his interior and exterior limits in order to mount from a low state to the highest.

God sustains every soul and dwells in it substantially, even though it be that of the greatest sinner in the world, and this union is natural. The supernatural union exists when God's will and the soul's will are in conformity. Therefore the soul rests transformed in God through love.

The illumination of the soul and its union with God corresponds to its purity.

When he is brought to nothing, the highest degree of humility, the spiritual union between his soul and God will be effected. The journey does not consist on recreations, experiences and spiritual feelings, but in the living, sensory and spiritual, exterior and interior death of the cross.

Faith is the proper and adequate means of union with God.

Contemplation, by which the intellect has a higher knowledge of God, is called mystical theology, meaning the secret wisdom of God. St. Dionysius calls contemplation a ray of darkness.

The more spiritual a man is, the more he discontinues trying to make particular acts with his faculties, for he becomes more engrossed in one general, pure act, a calm and repose of interior quietude.

The soul would want to remain in that unintelligible peace as in its right place. Since people do not understand the mystery of that new experience, they imagine themselves to be idle and doing nothing.

They must learn to abide in that quietude with a loving attentiveness to God. At this stage the faculties are at rest and do not work actively but passively, by receiving what God is effecting in them.

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The third sign: a person likes to remain alone in loving awareness of God, without particular considerations, in interior peace and quiet and repose, and that he prefers to remain only in the general, loving awareness and knowledge without any particular knowledge or understanding.

The more habituated he becomes to this calm, the deeper his experience of the general, loving knowledge of God will grow. This knowledge is more enjoyable than all other things, because without the soul's labor it affords peace, rest, savor, and delight.

Nothing is understood particularly in that loving, substantial quietude – and so might believe they are wasting time. The less they understand the further they penetrate into the night of the spirit. They must pass through this night to a union with God beyond all knowing.

The third sign is the loving, general knowledge or awareness of God. #10. A person might remain in deep oblivion and afterwards will think no time has passed at all.

This oblivion is caused by the purity and simplicity of the knowledge. Effects: an elevation of mind to heavenly knowledge, and a withdrawal and abstraction from all objects, forms and figures as well as from the remembrance of them. The soul knows only God without knowing how it knows Him.

The soul refrains from the desire to feel or see anything while it is in this loving awareness. The soul does nothing – only receives what is given. #4. As soon as natural things are driven out of the enamored soul, the divine are naturally and supernaturally infused, since there can be no void in nature.

In this darkness faith alone – which is dark also – should be the light we use. (not visions).

In the Son of God are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Humble recipients of supernatural experiences obtain new satisfaction, strength, light and security after consulting about them with the proper person.

Solitude and denudation concerning all things is a requisite for this union.

This dark, loving knowledge, which is faith, serves as a means for the divine union in this life as does the light of glory for the clear vision of God in the next.

A person should not store up as treasures these visions, nor have the desire to cling to them.

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Our journey toward God must proceed through the negation of all. One should remain in emptiness and darkness regarding all creatures. He should base his love and joy on what he neither sees nor feels – that is, upon God who is incomprehensible and transcendent

This divine knowledge of God never deals with particular things. This sublime knowledge can be received only by a person who has arrived at union with God, for it is itself that very union. It consists in a certain touch of the divinity produced in the soul, and thus it is God Himself who is experienced and tasted there... This knowledge savors of the divine essence and of eternal life.

They are so sensible that they sometimes cause not only the soul but also the body to tremble. Yet at other times with a sudden feeling of spiritual delight and refreshment, and without any trembling, they occur very tranquilly in the spirit.

Since this knowledge is imparted to the soul suddenly, without exercise of free will, a person does not have to be concerned about desiring it or not. He should simply remain humble and resigned about it, for God will do His work at the time and in the manner he wishes.

God does not bestow these favors on a possessive soul, since He gives them out of a very special love for the recipient. For the individual receiving them is one who loves God with great detachment.

If an experience fails to engender humility, charity, mortification, holy simplicity, and silence, etc., of what value is it?

In this faith God supernaturally and secretly teaches the soul and, in a way unknown to it, raises it up in virtues and gifts.

When together with the words and concepts the soul is loving God and simultaneously experiencing this love with humility and reverence, there is indication that the Holy Spirit is at work within it. Whenever He bestows favors, He clothes them with this love.

All these sensory means and exercises of the faculties must be left behind and in silence so that God Himself may effect the divine union of the soul. As a result one has to follow this method of disencumbering, emptying, and depriving the faculties of their natural rights and operations to make room for the inflow and illumination of the supernatural. If a person does not turn his eyes from his natural capacity, he will not attain to so lofty a communication; rather he will hinder it.

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If it is true that the soul must journey by knowing God through what He is not, rather than through what He is, it must journey, insofar as possible, by way of the denial and rejection of natural and supernatural apprehensions. This is our task now with the memory. We must draw it away from its natural props and capacities and raise it above itself (above all distinct knowledge and apprehensible possession) to supreme hope in the incomprehensible God.

The annihilation of the memory in regard to all forms (including the five senses) is an absolute requirement for union with God. This union cannot be wrought without a complete separation of the memory from all forms that are not God. In great forgetfulness it is absorbed in a supreme good.

Once he has the habit of union he no longer experiences these lapses of memory in matters concerning his moral and natural life. All the operations of the memory and other faculties in this state are divine.

If the memory is annihilated, the devil is powerless, and it liberates us from a lot of sorrow, affliction and sadness.

Moral good consists in the control of the passions and the restruction of the inordinate appetites. The result for the soul is tranquility, peace, repose, and moral virtue. The soul cannot control the passion without forgetting and withdrawing from the sources of these emotions. Disturbances never arise in a soul unless through the apprehensions of the memory.

The soul must go to God by not comprehending rather than by comprehending and it must exchange the mutable and comprehensible for the Immutable and Incomprehensible.

Distress and worry ordinarily makes things worse and even does harm to the soul itself. The endurance of all with equanimity not only reaps many blessings but also helps the soul to employ the proper remedy.

The more importance given to any clear apprehensions (visions, locutions, sentiments), natural or supernatural, the less capacity the soul has for entering the abyss of faith, where all else is absorbed.

It has not entered the heart of man what God is like. #4. A person should behave passively and negatively, because then God moves the soul to what transcends its power and knowledge.

In these apprehensions coming from above (like spiritual feelings), a person should only advert to the love of God they interiorly cause.

It is good for the soul to have no desire to comprehend anything save God alone in hope through faith.

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The communications of knowledge of the Creator are touches and spiritual feelings of union with God, the goal to which we are guiding the soul. The memory does not recall these through any form, image or figure that may have been impressed on the soul, for those touches and feelings of union with the Creator do not have any; it remembers them through the effect of light, love, delight and spiritual renewal, etc., produced in it.

The aim is union with God in the memory.

Images will always help a person toward union with God, provided he allows himself to soar – when God bestows the favor – from the painted image to the living God.

In passive joy the will finds itself rejoicing without any clear and direct understanding of the object of its joy.

Cares do not bother the detached man.

In remaining unattached, a person is unencumbered and free to love all rationally and spiritually, which is the way God wants him to love.

When the will, in becoming aware of the satisfaction afforded by the object of sight, hearing, or touch, immediately elevates itself to God, it is doing something very good.

The spiritual man is perceptive of the things of God, one who penetrates and judges all things, even the deep things of God.

The heart and the joy of will is withdrawn from all that is not God and concentrated on Him alone.

In this elevation of joy in Him, God gives testimony of Who He is. “In a desert way, dry and pathless, I appeared before You to see Your power and glory.” (Ps. 62:3).

The soul is exalted in purest faith, which God then infuses and augments much more abundantly. As a result the soul enjoys divine and lofty knowledge by means of the dark and naked habit of faith.

You should strive in your prayer for a pure conscience, a will that is wholly with God, and a mind truly set upon Him.

Sensible satisfaction is inconstant and very quick to fail.

“Because wisdom pleased you more than any other thing...” I give you everything.

Pray in our secret chamber, or in the solitary wilderness, and at the best and most quiet time of night.

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As God sets the soul in this dark night... He allows it not to find attraction or sweetness in anything whatsoever.

God transfers to the spirit the good things and the strength of the senses... if it is not immediately conscious of spiritual sweetness and delight, but only of aridity and lack of sweetness, the reason for this is the strangeness of the exchange.

If those souls to whom this comes to pass knew how to be quiet at this time... then they would delicately experience this inward refreshment in that ease and freedom from care... it is like the air which, if one would close one's hand upon it, escapes.

In this state of contemplation... it is God Who is now working in the soul. He binds its interior faculties, and allows it not to cling to the understanding, nor to have delight in the will, nor to reason with the memory.

God communicates... by pure spirit. From this time forward imagination and fancy can find no support in any meditation.

Spiritual persons suffer great trials from the fear of being lost on the road and that God has abandoned them... Their soul was taking pleasure in being in that quietness and ease, instead of working with its faculties.

Let them trust in God... who will bring them into the clear and pure light of love. This last He will give them by means of that other dark night.

The way to conduct themselves is to allow the soul to remain in peace and quietness, although it may seem clear to them that they are doing nothing and are wasting their time... What they must do is merely to leave the soul free and disencumbered and at rest from all knowledge and thought... but contenting themselves with merely a peaceful and loving attentiveness toward God, and in being without anxiety, ability and desire to have experience of Him or to perceive Him.

When the soul desires to remain in inward ease and peace, any operation and affection or attention wherein it may then seek to indulge will distract it and disquiet it and make it conscious of aridity and emptiness of sense.

By not hindering the operation of infused contemplation that God is bestowing upon it, it can receive this with more powerful abundance, and cause its spirit to be enkindled to burn with the love which this dark and secret contemplation brings with it and sets firmly in the soul. For contemplation is naught else than a secret, peaceful and loving infusion from God which, if it be permitted, enkindles the soul with the spirit of love.

From time to time the soul sees this flame and this enkindling grow so greatly within it that it desires God with yearning of love.

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This love is not as a rule felt at first, but only the dryness and emptiness. The soul then experiences a habitual care and solcitude with respect to God. This Divine love begins to be enkindled in the spirit.

The soul enters the night of spirit in order to journey to God in pure faith, which is the means whereby the soul is united to God.

The first and principal benefit caused by the arid and dark night of contemplation: the knowledge of oneself and of one's misery.

The soul learns to commune with God with more respect and more courtesy.

God will enlighten the soul, giving it knowledge, not only of its lowliness and wretchedness, but of the greatness and excellence of God. He cleanses and frees the understanding that it may understand the truth.

From the aridities and voids of this night of the desire, the soul draws spiritual humility.

The soul is aware only of its own wretchedness – and esteems neighbours.

It might possibly now lose, through defective use, what before it lost through excess.

The soul loses the strength of its passions and concupiscence and it becomes sterile because it no longer consults its likings.

It practices patience and longsuffering.

Four benefits of the dark night: delight of peace, habitual remembrance and thought of God, cleanness and purity of soul, and the practice of the virtues.

Often God communicates to the soul, when it is least expecting it, the purest spiritual sweetness and love, together with a spiritual knowledge which is sometimes very delicate (and cannot be perceived by sense).

The soul goes about the things of God with much greater freedom and satisfaction of the soul than before it entered the dark night of sense. It now very readily finds in its spirit the most serene and loving contemplation and spiritual sweetness without the labor of meditation.

This sweetness overflows into their senses more than was usual... since the sense is now purer. But they also endure many frailties and sufferings and weaknesses of the stomach and are fatigued in spirit. After the second night of the spirit: no raptures and no torments of the body because their senses are now neither clouded nor transported.

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The night of sense should be called a kind of correction and restraint of the desire rather than purgation.

A period of tranquility comes after the first night.

This dark night is an inflowing of God into the soul – called infused contemplation or mystical theology. God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in perfection of love, without its doing anything. It is the loving wisdom of God, and He prepares it for the union of love with God.

This Divine wisdom is night and darkness for the soul, and affliction and torment.

When this pure light assails the soul, in order to expel its impurity, the soul feels itself to be so impure and miserable that it believes God to be against it, and things that it has set itself up against God.

The Divine assails the human soul in order to renew it and thus to make it Divine... The soul feels itself to be perishing and melting away.

The sensual part is purified in aridity, the faculties are purified in the emptiness of their perceptions and the spirit is purified in thick darkness.

The soul itself should be destroyed since these passions and imperfections have become natural to it.

One hour of purgation here is more profitable than are many there.

Until the Lord shall have completely purged it after the manner that He wills, no means or remedy is of any service or profit for the relief of this affliction... The soul is powerless.

Spiritual things in the soul believes that, if trials come to it, that it will never escape from them. And if spiritual blessings come, the soul believes its troubles are now over.

If the soul sometimes prays it does so with such lack of strength and sweetness that it thinks that God neither hears it nor pays heed to it. Indeed, this is no time for the soul to speak with God – it should rather put its mouth in the dust, and endure its purgation with patience... It has such distractions and times of such profound forgetfulness of the memory that frequent periods pass by without its knowing what it has been doing or thinking.

This unknowing and forgetfulness are caused by the interior recollection wherein this contemplation absorbs the soul.

The affection, feelings and apprehensions of the perfect spirit, being Divine, are of another kind and of a very different order from those that are natural.

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It seems now to the soul that it is going forth from its very self with much affliction. At other times things seem strange and rare, though they are the same that it was accustomed to experience before. The soul is now becoming alien and remote from common sense and knowledge of things in order to be informed with the Divine. As the soul becomes purged and purified by means of this fire of love, it becomes ever more enkindled in love. This enkindling of love is not always felt by the soul, but only at times when contemplation assails it less vehemently.

The fire begins to take hold of the soul in this night of painful contemplation. The understanding is in darkness.

The spirit feels itself to be deeply and passionately in love.

The touch of this love and Divine fire dries up the spirit and enkindles its desires, so much so that it turns upon itself a thousand times and desires God in a thousand ways.

In the midst of these dark and loving afflictions the soul feels within itself a certain companionship and strength, which bears it company and so greatly strengthens it that, if this burden of grievous darkness be taken away, it often feels itself to be alone, empty and weak.

The soul went by a very secret ladder, which is living faith. In this purgative night the desires, affections and passions of the soul are put to sleep.

If the soul is hardly conscious of this contemplation, such a person is only able to say that he is satisfied, tranquil and contented and that he is conscious of the presence of God... Pure contemplation is indescribable and therefore secret.

This mystical knowledge has the property of hiding the soul within itself.

Ordinarily that which is of the greatest profit – namely, to be ever losing oneself and becoming as nothing – is considered the worst thing possible, and that which is of least worth, which is for the soul to find consolation and sweetness, is considered best.

Secret contemplation is the science of love. It is an infused and loving knowledge of God, which enlightens the soul and at the same time enkindles it with love, until it is raised up step by step, even unto God its Creator. For it is love alone that unites and joins the soul with God.

Mystical wisdom, which comes through love, need not be understood distinctly... for it is given according to the mode of faith, through which we love God without understanding Him.

In the inner wine cellar I drank of my Beloved, and, when I went abroad
Through all this valley I no longer knew anything, And lost the herd which I was following.

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I no longer tend the herd. Nor have I any other work
Now that my every act is love.

In solitude He guides her, He alone,
Who also bears in solitude the wound of love.

You are a hidden God. Neither is the sublime communication nor the sensible awareness of His nearness a sure testimony of His gracious presence, nor is dryness and a lack of these a reflection of His absence

A person who wants to find Him should leave all things through affection and will, enter within himself in deepest recollection, and regard things as though they were nonexistence. God is hidden in the soul.

You yourself are His dwelling and His secret chamber and hiding place.

God is never absent.

In order to find Him you should forget all your possessions and all creatures and hide in the interior, secret chamber of your spirit. And there, closing the door behind you, you should pray to your Father in secret. Remaining hidden with Him, you will experience Him in hiding, and love and enjoy Him in hiding.

God is the substance and concept of faith, and faith is the secret and the mystery.

Faith and love are like the blind man's guides. They will lead you along a path unknown to you, to the place where God is hidden.

Pay no attention to anything which your faculties can grasp. You should never desire satisfaction in what you understand about God, but in what you do not understand about Him. Never stop with loving and delighting in your understanding and experience of God, but love and delight in what is neither understandable nor perceptible of Him.

Spiritual wounds of love are very delightful and desirable. The soul would desire to be ever dying a thousand deaths from the thrusts of the lance, for they make her go out of herself and enter into God.

The wounded soul, strengthened from the fire caused by the wound, went out after her Beloved Who wounded her, calling for Him, that He might heal her. One goes out from oneself through self-forgetfulness.

Unless they go in search for God, they will not find Him, no matter how much they cry for Him.

How to being this journey: don't pursue delights, and overcome temptations and difficulties; which equal the practice of self-knowledge.

The will is content with nothing less than His presence and the sight of Him.

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This immensity is indescribable and because of it the soul is dying of love.

The sickness of love is not cured except by Yourvery presence and image. #10. The soul that loves God lives more in the next life than in this.

The soul is drawing nearer to Him, and so she has greater experience within herself of the void of God, of very heavy darkness, and of spiritual fire which dries up and purges her, so that thus purified she may be united with Him.

This soul is so near to God that it is transformed in the flames of love, wherein Father, Son and Holy Spirit communicate Themselves to it. The effect of the living flames is to make the soul live spiritually in God, and experience the life of God.

Love is ever throwing out sparks; the effect of lfoe is to wound, that it may enkindle with love and cause delight.

God wars against all the imperfect habits of the soul and, purifying the soul with the heat of His flame, He uproots these habits from it and prepares it so that at last He may enter it and be united with it by His sweet, peaceful and glorious love, as is the fire when it has entered the wood.

At death the rivers of love of the soul are about to enter the sea. Burning with sweetness. Consuming not but enlightening.

The soul feels its love to be increasing and growing in strength and refinement to such a degree that it seems to have within it seas of fire which reach to the farthest heights and depths of the spheres, filling it wholly with love.

Death is the 'old man,' namely, the employment of the faculties – memory, understanding and will – and the use and occupation of them in things of the world, and the occupation of the desires in the pleasure afforded by created things. All this and the exercise of the old life, which is the death of the new, or spiritual life... In this new life, when the soul has reached the perfection of union with God, all the desires and faculties of the soul... are changed into Divine operations.

Understanding is not the understanding of God. The will has now been changed into the life of Divine love. The memory has in its mind the eternal years. The desire now tastes and enjoys Divine food, being now moved by the delight of God.

With what procrastinations do you wait, since from this very moment you can love God in your heart?

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If formerly it sought sweetness and fervor, and found it, now it much neither seek it nor desire it, for not only will it be unable to find it through its own diligence, but it will rather find aridity, for it turns from the quiet and peaceful blessings which were secretly given it its spirit, to the work that it desires to do with sense; and thus it will lose one and not obtain the other, since no blessings are now given to it by means of sense as they were formerly... God secretly and quietly infuses into the soul loving knowledge and wisdom without any intervention of specific acts. And the soul has then to walk with loving advertence to God, without making specific acts, but conducting itself passively, and making no efforts of its own, but preserving this simple, pure and loving advertence.

The soul must be attached to nothing – not even to any kind of meditation or sweetness. The spirit needs to be so free and so completely annihilated that any thought or meditation which the soul in this state might desire, or any pleasure to which it may conceive an attachment, would impede and disturb it and would introduce noise into the deep silence which it is meet that the soul should observe so that it may hear the deep and delicate voice of God which speaks to the heart in this secret place.

Contemplation is receiving... and the spirit has to be silent and detached from sweetness and knowledge.

The sooner the soul reaches this restful tranquility, the more abundantly does it become infused with the spirit of Divine wisdom. At times the soul will feel itself to be tenderly and serenely ravished and wounded, not knowing how, since the Spirit communicates Himself without any act on the part of the soul.

The soul feels withdrawn from all things, together with a sweet aspiration of love and life in the spirit, and with an inclination to solitude and a sense of weariness with regard to creatures and the world.

God is secretly speaking to the solitary soul while the soul keeps silence.

The greater the progress it makes, the farther it must withdraw from itself walking in faith, believing and not understanding; and thus it approaches God more nearly by not understanding than by understanding.

God is communicating to the soul loving knowledge.

God greatly esteems having brought them to this solitude and emptiness of their faculties and operations, that He may speak to their heart, which is what He ever desires.

If you only wait upon God with loving and pure attentiveness (detach the soul from everything and set it free). God will feed your soul for you with heavenly food, since you are not hindering Him.

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When God brings the soul into that emptiness and solitude where it can neither use its faculties nor make any acts, it sees that it is doing nothing and strives to do something. Therefore it becomes distracted and full of aridity and displeasure.

Although it is doing nothing, it is nevertheless accomplishing much more than if it were working, since God is working within it.

The deep caverns of sense, with strange brightness, give heat and light together to their Beloved. 'Together' because the communication of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in the soul are made together, and are the light and fire of love.

These acts of love of the soul are most precious, and even one of them is of greater merit and worth than all that the soul has done in its life apart from this transformation.

These wounds, which are the fires of God, are the sparks of these tender touches of flame which touch the soul intermittently and proceed from the fire of love, which is not idle, but whose flames strike and wound my soul in its deepest center.

The virtues and properties of God, which are perfect in the extreme, war against the habits and properties of the soul, which are imperfect in the extreme, so that the soul has to suffer the existence of two contraries within it. This flame of love makes the soul feel its hardness and aridity.

The soul says to God, 'Perfect me now if it be Thy will.'

Any kind of thought or meditation or pleasure would impede and disturb the soul and would introduce noise into the deep silence which the soul should observe in order to hear the deep and delicate voice in which God speaks to the heart in this secret place.

When the soul is led into silence, it must forget even the practice of loving advertence... it must practice that advertence only when it is not conscious of being brought into solitude or interior rest or forgetfulness.

Pure contemplation consists in receiving.

The soul approaches God more nearly by not understanding than by understanding. Faith is darkness to the understanding.

God brought them to this solitude and emptiness of their faculties and operations that He may speak to their hearts.

God is leading you through the state of solitude and recollection and withdrawing you from your labors of sense. Return not to sense again. Lay aside your operations for they will now be a great obstacle and hindrance to you, since God is granting you the grace of Himself working within you.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

God is bearing the soul in His arms... and thus, although it is making progress at the rate willed by God Himself, it is not conscious of such movement.

Three kinds of love:

1. the soul now loves God, not through itself but through Himself.
2. the soul is absorbed in the love of God and God surrenders Himself to the soul with great vehemence.
3. the soul loves Him for Who He is.

God is awakened in the soul. God breathes in the soul.

Wisdom is more active than all active things.

Oh, how happy is this soul that is ever conscious of God resting and reposing within its breast!

If you do not learn to deny yourself, you can make no progress in perfection.

Where there is no love, pour love in and you will draw love out.

In detachment, the spirit finds quiet and repose for coveting nothing.

To be taken with love for a soul, God does not look on its greatness, but the greatness of its humility.

The Lord measures our perfection neither by the multitude nor the magnitude of our deeds, but by the manner in which we perform them.

I wish I could persuade spiritual persons that the way of perfection does not consist in many devices, nor in much cogitation, but in denying themselves completely and yielding themselves to suffer everything for the love of Christ.

Live in the world as if only God and your soul were in it; then your heart will never be made captive by any earthly thing.

O you souls who wish to go on with so much safety and consolation, if you knew how pleasing to God is suffering, and how much it helps in acquiring other good things, you would never seek consolation in anything; but you would rather look upon it as a great happiness to bear the Cross of the Lord.

In giving us His Son, His only Word, He spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word — and He has no more to say ... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son.

God desires the smallest degree of purity of conscience in you more than all the works you can perform.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

In tribulation immediately draw near to God with confidence, and you will receive strength, enlightenment, and instruction.

In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone.

If a man wishes to be sure of the road he treads on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark.

It is great wisdom to know how to be silent and to look at neither the remarks, nor the deeds, nor the lives of others.

Beloved, all that is harsh and difficult I want for myself, and all that is gentle and sweet for thee

If you purify your soul of attachment to and desire for things, you will understand them spiritually. If you deny your appetite for them, you will enjoy their truth, understanding what is certain in them.

He who interrupts the course of his spiritual exercises and prayer is like a man who allows a bird to escape from his hand; he can hardly catch it again.

Abide in peace, banish cares, take no account of all that happens, and you will serve God according to his good pleasure and rest in him.

Desolation is a file, and the endurance of darkness is preparation for great light.

The soul that is attached to anything however much good there may be in it, will not arrive at the liberty of divine union. For whether it be a strong wire rope or a slender and delicate thread that holds the bird, it matters not, if it really holds it fast; for, until the cord be broken the bird cannot fly.

Love consists not in feeling great things but in having great detachment and in suffering for the Beloved.

To saints, their very slumber is a prayer.

Take God for your spouse and friend and walk with him continually, and you will not sin and will learn to love, and the things you must do will work out prosperously for you.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Moral good consists in the control of the passions and the restruction of the inordinate appetites. The result for the soul is tranquility, peace, repose, and moral virtue. The soul cannot control the passion without forgetting and withdrawing from the sources of these emotions. Disturbances never arise in a soul unless through the apprehensions of the memory.

The soul must go to God by not comprehending rather than by comprehending and it must exchange the mutable and comprehensible for the Immutable and Incomprehensible.

Distress and worry ordinarily makes things worse and even does harm to the soul itself. The endurance of all with equanimity not only reaps many blessings but also helps the soul to employ the proper remedy.

The more importance given to any clear apprehensions (visions, locutions, sentiments), natural or supernatural, the less capacity the soul has for entering the abyss of faith, where all else is absorbed.

The aim is union with God in the memory.

Images will always help a person toward union with God, provided he allows himself to soar – when God bestows the favor – from the painted image to the living God.

Cares do not bother the detached man.

From time to time the soul sees this flame and this enkindling grow so greatly within it that it desires God with yearning of love.

This love is not as a rule felt at first, but only the dryness and emptiness. The soul then experiences a habitual care and solicitude with respect to God. This Divine love begins to be enkindled in the spirit.

The soul enters the night of spirit in order to journey to God in pure faith, which is the means whereby the soul is united to God.

The first and principal benefit caused by the arid and dark night of contemplation: the knowledge of oneself and of one's misery.

The soul learns to commune with God with more respect and more courtesy.

God will enlighten the soul, giving it knowledge, not only of its lowliness and wretchedness, but of the greatness and excellence of God. He cleanses and frees the understanding that it may understand the truth.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

From the aridities and voids of this night of the desire, the soul draws spiritual humility.

The soul is aware only of its own wretchedness – and esteems neighbours.

It might possibly now lose, through defective use, what before it lost through excess.

The soul loses the strength of its passions and concupiscence and it becomes sterile because it no longer consults its likings.

It practices patience and longsuffering.

Four benefits of the dark night: delight of peace, habitual remembrance and thought of God, cleanness and purity of soul, and the practice of the virtues.

Often God communicates to the soul, when it is least expecting it, the purest spiritual sweetness and love, together with a spiritual knowledge which is sometimes very delicate (and cannot be perceived by sense).

Ordinarily that which is of the greatest profit – namely, to be ever losing oneself and becoming as nothing – is considered the worst thing possible, and that which is of least worth, which is for the soul to find consolation and sweetness, is considered best.

Mystical wisdom, which comes through love, need not be understood distinctly... for it is given according to the mode of faith, through which we love God without understanding Him.

Pay no attention to anything which your faculties can grasp. You should never desire satisfaction in what you understand about God, but in what you do not understand about Him. Never stop with loving and delighting in your understanding and experience of God, but love and delight in what is neither understandable nor perceptible of Him.

God wars against all the imperfect habits of the soul and, purifying the soul with the heat of His flame, He uproots these habits from it and prepares it so that at last He may enter it and be united with it by His sweet, peaceful and glorious love, as is the fire when it has entered the wood.

Death is the 'old man,' namely, the employment of the faculties – memory, understanding and will – and the use and occupation of them in things of the world, and the occupation of the desires in the pleasure afforded by created things. All this and the exercise of the old life, which is the death of the new, or spiritual life... In this new life, when the soul has reached the perfection of union with God, all the desires and faculties of the soul... are changed into Divine operations.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Understanding is not the understanding of God. The will has now been changed into the life of Divine love. The memory has in its mind the eternal years. The desire now tastes and enjoys Divine food, being now moved by the delight of God.

When God brings the soul into that emptiness and solitude where it can neither use its faculties nor make any acts, it sees that it is doing nothing and strives to do something. Therefore it becomes distracted and full of aridity and displeasure.

Any kind of thought or meditation or pleasure would impede and disturb the soul and would introduce noise into the deep silence which the soul should observe in order to hear the deep and delicate voice in which God speaks to the heart in this secret place.

When the soul is led into silence, it must forget even the practice of loving advertence... it must practice that advertence only when it is not conscious of being brought into solitude or interior rest or forgetfulness.

Pure contemplation consists in receiving.