

St. Teresa's Interior Castle

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**Herein are but paragraphs on the chapters
of the Saint's masterwork.**

J.H.S.

Feb.24, 2006, St. Anthony of Padua Church, Union City, NJ

As I open the book and (having finished the introduction) read the first few words of the Saint: “Few tasks which I have been commanded to undertake...,” my head immediately rises from the page and I emit a deep groan, much as if stabbed. I cannot help but wonder with some trepidation what the Lord has in store for me in this writing. (I cannot continue today.)

Feb.27, St. Anthony

An obedient child, even in pain, and humble as ever, as truth requires.

First Mansions

Chapter I

Feb.28, San Alfonso Retreat House Chapel (sunset)

As I begin to read this chapter, quite alone in a darkening chapel of a retreat house, again the first words (“While I was beseeching the Lord today that He would speak through me...”) came as an arrow through my mind and soul, and again I groaned in pain... and again I could not go on.

March 1, Ash Wednesday morning (San Alfonso)

Outside the castle and in its outer courts are reptiles, empty beasts who perhaps shall never realize the many rooms present within their souls; though they be made in the image of God, to them He remains unknown. (O the many rooms! May we all enter the interior castle.)

Chapter II

Ash Wednesday afternoon

Let us not be afraid to enter into this interior castle, into prayer that raises the soul to God, to His presence within ourselves. We cannot in toil find our souls; only reflected in the light of the Lord do we begin to know who we are. And let us ever remain humble, taking the level road to that which is exalted – for we remain human here on earth, and so cannot fly as angels outside this frame.

Though there is certain darkness in these first Mansions, though the devil's snares yet remain strong toward our dust-filled eyes, let us indeed enter, and not fear to move on.

Second Mansions

Ash Wednesday Evening

As we pass on into the second Mansions, no longer are we deaf and dumb beasts – dumb, yes, for we can do little on our part, but now indeed we begin to hear, to understand the way the Lord is calling us.

And here the temptations seem the greater, for now of our weakness to combat the devil we become aware, even as our ears open to the Lord. But let us not turn back to the serpents of our sins but remember their vile emptiness and hold to the promise faith makes to our heart. Do not be discouraged by your weakness or desire that which is yet beyond your reach, but engage in the struggle knowing the Lord will take care. Hold His peace within your house and you shall find yourself increasingly in His presence... and when you fall, get up and move on – do not turn back as the devil mocks.

Third Mansions

Chapter I

3/2 (still in San Alfonso chapel)

Blessed the soul that has entered the third Mansions, for by setting its life upon the Lord and His work, desirous to do His will alone and so never sin against Him even venially, it has found a certain security that it is on the right road and that, should it continue striving forward, it shall come to the greater Mansions. But let us not grow overconfident or insipid; let us always maintain fear of the Lord and gratefulness for all He blesses us to accomplish in His name; for, of course, it is only He who does any good thing – this Servant of all – and we are but unprofitable servants of Him.

Chapter II

(same time and place)

We must be certain that it is God's will that is our desire now; however ordered our lives may be, if we become anxious about the things of this world as they are taken away or as they increase, then He is not with us and we shall not proceed from occasional spiritual sweetness to His generous consolations... and may even fool ourselves regarding our state, God forbid, thinking ourselves better than we are.

Let us rather with ardent love desire greater progress, ever realizing that others are better than ourselves, and perhaps being encouraged by their goodness to fly further unto God. Obedient to our superiors and to the life the Lord has ordained for us, in peace we shall come by humility to higher ground.

Fourth Mansions

Chapter I

3/3, back in St. Anthony Church

On to the fourth Mansions, where the serpents seldom enter and if they do, they become of benefit to the soul as it overcomes such trials. Here spiritual consolation begins to become known. Not only spiritual sweetness – which though it end in God proceeds from our own nature, as in virtuous works we perform – but the movement of God we begin to realize, in love and praise and service of Him more than in keeping to our order... more by the understanding than in thought.

And so the noise the thoughts do make as they spin inside our heads should not distract us from our state of spiritual union with God. We should let them pass as food into the latrine, all the while keeping our sights fixed on Him. (Of the distractions do not fret, for they shall pass into the earth from which they come.)

Chapter II

3/6

O how blessed is the Prayer of Quiet, the peace of the Lord filling the soul, quite unbeknownst to itself and without its effort, water, as it were, flowing directly from God. But this consolation we must not seek by our own power or expect as recompense for anything we have done; let us rather practice genuine humility and detachment, and this union with God will come to us as we but bear His Cross... Alleluia! The Lord's surpassing power be found by all souls! Do with us as you will, O Lord. (And does He not will such blessings upon all His children; can He do otherwise, He who is only Love?) Yes, silence my tongue, dear God.

Chapter III

3/7

The Saint in a sense backtracks to describe the Prayer of Recollection, which usually precedes that of Quiet. One likely first finds oneself becoming absorbed within oneself, by way of the gentle voice of the Lord, though why and whence one often cannot say... though it seems to come to those leaving the things of the world. But the saint warns against any leaving off of the faculties before their time, that these play their role until the Lord Himself suspend them; and so to consciously attempt to cease thinking, itself can be counterproductive, leading to thinking as a result. One must simply continue with one's practice of prayer and meditation until the Lord draw the soul into itself and unto Himself. It would be foolish to do otherwise, for He must come to us and not we to Him – and so all must be His effort, not ours. The signs that this Prayer is genuine are present in a reduction of fear – of hell or penance or trial – though one becomes more aware of one's miserable condition before God. And the Saint earnestly warns against lingering or languoring in this Prayer, falling asleep, as it were, when one should be most awake in joy; to watch the weakness of the flesh and health... and also to greatly beware falling into sin now that one has advanced to this state. For the devil's temptation will be severe, and the result of falling much more injurious.

Fifth Mansions

Chapter I

3/9

Now the Saint speaks of that which passes understanding; now more directly does she consider union with God, for our benefit. For here in these later Mansions we attain to the highest levels, here where the devil's lizards can barely enter – here he can do no harm. May the Lord indeed give us strength of soul to persevere in our pursuit of His favors, which He desires to grant to all.

Here in union with God the soul seems not even to breathe, so unconscious of its faculties does it become. But after this short transport, there is such a certainty in the soul that it has been with the Lord of all that it could never doubt it is so. (In God there is no doubt, you know; no shades of darkness exist in Him!) O let His Majesty put us right into the center of our soul! Though we be wretched and base, He by His power does what He wills. Trust in Him more and more.

Chapter II

3/10

“O faithless generation, how long will I be with you?” Mk.9:19
(Jesus, upon coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration)

The Saint begins to plumb the depths of this blessed union with God, first indicating the preparation the soul makes to receive this favor. For this she utilizes the image of the silkworm spinning its cocoon, from which it shall emerge a butterfly. We make our home in Jesus by conforming our lives to His; then, in His time, He grants new life to our souls. (And how different is the worm that enters the cocoon from the butterfly that emerges by the grace of God!)

But what of the butterfly that emerges, which is the Saint's concern? Now it's filled with desire for great penance and trial for the sake of the Lord and for souls; now nothing of this earth gives it satisfaction and so it seeks a new resting place. But yet it lives as in exile here, comforted only slightly by the thought that this is God's will. Now it finds great torment at witnessing offenses against God – though nothing can compare with Jesus' own, which gave Him greater grief than the Passion itself, the pains of which were alleviated by the nearness of their consummation and the souls that would be hereby redeemed.

But let us not be deterred by this grief for souls; rather let us savor the delight of suffering in doing the will of God and allow Him to impress His seal upon us – quiet and consenting, offering no impediment... as mere wax under His Hand.

Chapter III

3/11

Of the importance of uniting ourselves with the will of God, which is in essence love of neighbor – wherein we see whether or not we truly love God. For if this is not done, all else is vain. Whatever consolation or suspension in Quiet we may experience will mean nothing to our souls – though it may give encouragement to others if we relate it well, as does the Saint – if we are not in union with the will of God to love Him and neighbor.

So let us take trials upon ourselves for our neighbor's sake. Let us suffer the indignities of life, though it is not done easily, without complaint. For it is in imitation of what the Lord has done for us on the Cross that truly we unite ourselves with the Father's will. Only in this way can the perfection we all must achieve, which is the Father's will for every soul, be accomplished in us. Else it shall ever remain a long way from us, as it is this day.

Chapter IV

3/13

Here in the fifth Mansions the soul is not yet betrothed to its Spouse, to the Lord. Though He has visited it, it has been but a single short meeting; and though the happiness of its lot is now known, union has not yet taken place. And so, in this state we must be most careful to guard against the devil's wiles, to see that we are ever making progress in virtue. For this is as the devil's final chance to tempt the soul away from what it has been given to know, to serve him instead in futility. It would seem impossible that the soul could turn now, now that the Lord has touched it so, and indeed if it should fall it would be a terrible one... accomplished only by the most diligent work of Satan. For the Lord will give a thousand warnings and will not let the soul go easily – it shall surely perceive the danger.

And so, let us indeed make continual progress, asking the Lord to keep us ever in hand, for not to do so would be as to return, as to fall back; on fire with the Spirit should we be, and the Spirit does not rest in futility. And so, though little service can we worms give, let us give all that is ours to give; though it ever be tainted by sin, He in His mercy will redeem it still. And ever our heavenly reward is before us!

Sixth Mansions

Chapter I

3/15, St. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City
(Blessed Sacrament exposed)

The saint begins to speak of the great trials that inevitably come in these penultimate Mansions, when the Lord, desiring that the soul's yearnings for Him become still deeper, wishes also that His blessings be won at some cost to itself.

There are exterior trials, such as the abandonment of friends and their censure, as well as the worse trial of being spoken of well, but these and physical pains, though they can be intense, are nothing in comparison with interior trials. For the first do pass and the soul learns to take no notice of them – and they even become the sweetest music to its ears – but oh the interior sufferings! These the soul is not able to fathom or follow, and from them finds no means of escape. Confessors themselves can be their source and cause of their increase, and the soul finds, as is the Lord's desire, that it has no help except Him (for it knows only its sin). Thus when He comes with His light to free it from such battle... the soul is able only to praise God, as it realizes it is but a miserable creature, utterly powerless, and that He indeed is a great King. (Perhaps the best one can do when surrounded and helpless is to occupy oneself with external affairs and works of charity, and hope for God's mercy.)

The Saint shall speak of other interior troubles, which, though some may be harder, are not so difficult to bear – for in these the soul is aware of the favors the Lord is working in it as it approaches the seventh Mansions.

Chapter II

3/16, back in St. Anthony Church

Of the delectable pain the soul receives from the Lord, though it know not how – but it is certain it is a wound from His Hand. This is prayer beyond that of Quiet, for here the faculties are awake, though unable to stem or increase the Lord's touch.

How to describe such a wonder beyond words, and how can it be that one is so aware of the Lord's presence and yet in such distress? Perhaps it is as a spark from a brazier, whose subtle and delicate touch is deep but passing; and since one is not consumed by this fire of love, one is indeed left longing for such consummation... and does not yet find it. For however long the blessing last, it does pass; and for however long it last, there is this pain – for one ever knows that the touch is passing.

And there can be no doubt that it is from the Lord, for the devil has no authority to produce such sweet suffering; it is far beyond his power and our faculties to construe... and there are great benefits which herein accrue (so resolutely is the soul now set on the Lord and His Cross).

In the course of vocal prayer the soul may suddenly catch fire, too, and so be moved by delectable desire to enjoy Him and sing His praise. Though there is nothing in this that causes pain, it too is a favor deserving thanks.

Chapter III

3/17

Of locutions and their discernment, whether they come from God or the imagination or the devil, and how best to deal with them. Though perhaps it is always better to suppress them at first, the Saint concludes that one cannot turn away from locutions if they are from the Lord, and gives signs of their origin in Him. Of course, they must be in accord with Scripture, but they will also have a strong sense of authority, able to dispel distress with a single word. Indeed they breed great tranquility in the soul, never agitation, and they stay in the memory a long time. And there is a certainty in the soul, despite whatever trials the devil may devise over time, that the word the Lord has given it will come true... and it is joyous when it does.

In words that come from the imagination (or the devil), there is no certainty or peace or interior consolation. We are here but dreaming, perhaps of what we want to hear. However sure we may be of the locutions' origin in God, they should always be brought to a confessor, and his discernment followed – lest we follow our own opinion, a most perilous option.

The Saint also speaks of intellectual visions or locutions, which occur down deep in the soul, and that their very way of being understood, as well as their effects, testify to their genuineness. These will be very clear and often of something of which the soul has not been thinking. Here one seems actually to be hearing something and these words contain a world of meaning, much more than what the words themselves convey, which may not be grasped for some time.

The Saint's principle warning is that, should these favors come to the soul, it should not therefore think any better of itself but realize it is deserving only of hell... and always retain misgivings.

Chapter IV

3/20, St. Joseph's Feast Day

Of raptures, which give courage to the soul to achieve union with God. (Indeed that union is already effected in clear measure in this ecstasy.) The Saint says she will speak of different kinds but numbers only one – caused by the spark of a striking word that suddenly brings clarity – and speaks with great zeal of rapture as a whole, and the mysteries revealed therein to the soul. She declares that one will certainly have memory of what one experiences impressed deeply, unforgettably upon the mind, but that a complete description is not feasible, even less so with intellectual visions, which are more sublime. But the profit to the soul cannot be denied, again, though just how cannot be said.

The Saint speaks of Jacob's vision of the ladder and Moses' vision at the burning bush; these could not describe all that was revealed to them – I think here that God's Name is unknowable, though understandable – yet there was certainty in each that God had visited them... and this gave them the courage to go as they were called. She also speaks of a private area in a palace filled with innumerable wonderful things which simply overawe the mind and the senses so that there is no way of remembering or understanding all that one sees, but one certainly remembers well the majesty of the court as a whole. These seem to me to elucidate well the experience of rapture (though I cannot say I have experienced such). God shows the soul some small but overwhelming part of His great kingdom, even as He shuts the faculties of the soul that all it might know is Him, and such union indeed gives undying faith and courage to the soul.

And how worthless is all else, is anything that does not lead to this union with God! And why should we concern ourselves about anything other? For the Lord indeed desires to bless us so, if we desire thus to love Him in return.

Finally, the Saint describes the effects upon the soul during and following the rapture, that it loses its power to breathe and so speak, and at times all its powers at once; thus upon returning to its senses, the soul still has its will absorbed and understanding transported for some time thereafter (even days), desiring only greatly to be used by God, to die a thousand deaths for Him who now protects the soul from all attack.

Chapter V

3/21

Flights of the spirit, another kind of rapture, one which comes suddenly upon the soul with rapid motion (though no sound) and carries it, it seems or may be, outside the body, sometimes transporting body as well as soul.

Now that we have committed ourselves into His hands, He is free to act with such sweet violence upon the soul that is not its own. No longer in gentleness and quiet does He come gradually pouring water into our basin; now the very sources of water are loosed and we are lifted, without recourse, upon the waves that rise furiously, indeed raising us on high to glimpse His kingdom.

How much courage now we need! We who are full of faults and failings, who should keep nothing in mind but our sins (and so never offend the Lord who acts upon us!), must throw ourselves upon the mercy of God here and following.

The Lord is pleased that we come to know our wretchedness and His majesty, for it is out of this wretched world He would take us, to live in His glory eternally. May we have the humility needed to see all that He would teach us in this moment of transport, to recognize without thought His saints that dwell with Him, and to know the host of angels round about Him, whom we see now without eyes of the body or soul!

This earth is a great affliction to those who yet travel here, O Lord, but you lead us home to you. Give us the courage we need to bear your glory, we miserable creatures so far from you.

Chapter VI

3/27, Sts. Joseph and Michael

The saint concludes this chapter speaking of the great joy that brims over in the soul, whence but God one knows not, and makes the soul forgetful of itself and all else save the praise of God. This jubilation may seem a strange madness to the world, but may all souls and all Creation be filled with the praises of God!

But the lion's share of the chapter is spent on the "sheer, though delectable, torture" the soul experiences now in its anxiety that the gifts which God has bestowed upon it should come to fruition. (Even death it desires.) For it finds no lasting repose here, though raptures continually come to it and it has no way of avoiding them. And the murmurings and persecution of others, particularly of one's confessors, come to the soul. The soul would be alone with God always and it would be obedient to its confessor, who casts doubt upon its raptures... but it cannot do either. And is it then disobedient to its confessor? Oh how it would avoid all sin! O Lord, help us to fulfill our desire of union with you! Though we be cowardly on our own, with you we are sure.

Try to put your thoughts from such sweet distress, little butterfly, though it may not be possible. And do not encourage tears, in your weakness or in your emotion. Be sure they come from God, when He is pleased to send them, and Him alone. And when joy comes, rejoice!

Chapter VII

3/28, back in St. Anthony

The Saint counsels meditation, even for advanced souls, since we are not angels and shall always have need of these sparks to set aflame our desire for God. Though souls in the final two stages may be unable to engage in formal meditation, it cannot be that the events of Christ's life, in particular His Passion, do not come to mind (at least in Church celebrations), and so they must be engaged at these times...

It is always beneficial to meditate upon the Lord and His Passion, as well as upon His Mother and the saints, and so one should *never* disregard this prematurely, except at great risk of wasting one's time and placing oneself in danger from the devil. If the Lord take meditation from us, so be it; but it cannot be wholly set aside at any time, and at stages before the ones at hand must be practiced in a conscious fashion. One cannot be ever absorbed in the Prayer of Quiet, for example; there are many trials yet in life, and there is time for all... and one can in no way find continuous exposure to this favor from God.

Let us remember always our sin before the Lord, and the greatness of His majesty; let us ever increase in our knowledge of these, till the entire truth of them is with us. We merit none of His goodness and graces, but only to be cast into the flames of hell. (Our unworthiness burn up in your fire, O Lord!)

Chapter VIII

3/29

Of intellectual visions. The Saint explains clearly this favor from the Lord and its effects on the soul. In it there is no sight of the Lord (or the saints or our Mother), yet one is quite certain He is at one's side and is speaking to one's soul. This awareness of His

presence may last days or even a year, and brings the great benefits of peace and constant desire to serve God and not offend Him who is so very near. One may have misgivings at first, and this is good, and one may even be further perturbed by a director's doubts and aspersions. But the soul cannot deny that its vision is of God and that Christ is near to it. So let the soul find a spiritual and learned person from whom to find direction, and if it be of fancy, then simply pay it no mind and ask the Lord to take it; if it is said to be of the devil by an unlearned man, do not fear, for the Lord will grant peace to those whom He genuinely touches. And always thank the Lord for this special knowledge of His presence, and His constant companionship, though it would not be wise to publish it abroad. And never, of course, think one is better for experiencing such favor – for the Lord gives as He will to whom He will, and the favor is not from the person but from God. Be sure that you are ever humble, never puffed up by self-esteem, and the blessings of the Lord will be increased. Praise Him always!

Chapter IX

3/30

Of imaginary visions, which come as a flash of lightning, passing quickly but leaving a deep impression upon the mind. Here is clear revelation of the Lord's sacred humanity, brought suddenly by the Lord Himself; and though we do not actually see Him, the image is thus more deeply fixed in us. What a terrible sight it is to see His majesty, we miserable creatures! How could we look more than a moment at Him? And so it is with great storm and tumult these visions come; but then all at once comes great calm, great peace. And so we know beyond doubt that He has visited us, both for the fear invoked and the peace that follows. (Only He could give such peace.)

Let us speak candidly (always) to our confessor of these visions, as about all things. And he will gradually judge the vision genuine, or come more quickly to such realization, if a learned man. But let us never fear to reverence any image of Christ that is placed before us, for Christ should always be revered more and more. (Thus we can even turn the devil's tables back upon him, allowing ourselves to be more enthused to worship God even by the image the devil might present.)

But do not desire the grace of these visions; it would be most unwise. For where is humility in that? And will you not be the more easily deceived, and the more inclined to paint your own image in your mind? These visions bring great trials, and you do not know the best path for your life, but might find what you desire leads only to loss. All in God's hands. All in God's hands. And let us fulfill the obligations of whatever favors the Lord inspires, seeking only and always to serve Him in love.

Chapter X

3/31

The Saint describes two other ways – more sublime and so also less dangerous (and, again, both passing quickly but engraved in the mind) – by which God communicates Himself to the soul: by a sudden suspension wherein the soul sees how all things are seen in God; and by suddenly revealing a truth to the soul, and the principle truth, that He is alone is Truth.

And glimpsing vision of God, the way He sees, should we not then be most fearful; for how differently we see than He, we miserable creatures, and seeing thus, do we not also see that all we do, all the sin we commit, we commit in Him? O what a terrible thing! And offending the Lord as we do and requiring such great mercy from Him, should we then fret about what little insult we suffer? Let us rather endure everything and keep in mind how God sees.

And realizing that He alone is truth, that all in the world is but falsehood and all men liars, should this not move us to walk always in truth? And what is the truth but that He is indeed majestic and we are nothing... and so is not the truth found indeed in our humility?

There is no need to fear these favors, which fall well outside the devil's and our own imagination's realm; let us rather praise God for them.

Chapter XI

4/3

The desire for the Lord increases, and so the pain, for the soul is unable to attain that which it desires. And as favors are given it, it but comes more to see what it is missing. Then at some point the soul is touched by a word which is as a flaming arrow, passing into the very marrow of one's being and depriving it, as it were, of life, of movement, and giving it the greatest pain, one unlike any previously known, one it is unable to hide as it cries out in sheer agony. Though it pass in a few hours at most, its devastating effects remain for days and the soul is never the same, never content with the world or persons, who are utterly unable to relieve its torment, who are as but shadows – only God Himself has the cure for its distress!

The soul desires death in this time, and but for the Spirit's intervening comfort, would find what it desires. There is indeed danger of death in this, and one seems most near to its gates. (The soul may also approach danger of death in excessive joy at the presence of the Lord, when one would indeed fly from the body to God.)

How great is the torment of the soul! How much greater than any bodily pain! Much as the soul in purgatory suffers does the soul suffer – but thank God it is not as those who suffer in hell, finding

no purpose to the pain they must forever endure. Indeed the soul would suffer it all again and again for the wonderful effects of transcendence it produces, for the insight it gains into the emptiness of this world.

And now it is on the threshold of the seventh Mansion, ready, as it were, purged as it is, to enter Heaven.

Seventh Mansions

Chapter I

4/4, Sts. Joseph and Michael

To the wonders of the seventh Mansion, the second Heaven, as it were, where the Lord dwells with the soul here on earth much as it shall in the kingdom. There indeed is no end to the marvels worked in the soul, made in the image of God by His own mercy and love. And so let us indeed praise His greatness even as we recount His wonders.

Let us always pray for souls in the dark prison of mortal sin, for there is no greater work than this, but let us not be afraid to know the light, the light that is in *all* souls, that may come to the eye of one in a state of grace. Let us enter into that Mansion at the very center of our souls, where God does dwell. For here the delights are unlike those in any other Mansion.

Here the Holy Trinity itself is revealed to the soul, each Person individually and the Three as One. By way of intellectual vision one becomes aware of their presence – and their presence now never leaves the soul! Though the soul be occupied by things of the world and its faculties must be thus occupied by them, yet in the soul's center, in the very spirit of man, he is always conscious that the Lord is in his company... and the soul rests completely in His companionship when not occupied. Yes, sometimes the light

in the room is not so bright to reveal the Lord's presence in such detail, but, indeed, the Lord remains ever in the room and the soul is always aware of Him.

Is this not like Heaven itself, to be with the Lord at all times? And more and more the soul is encouraged to go onward to perfection, losing all fear along the way. May our souls join our spirits (those two so subtly divided here), and we come eternally into God's eternal presence. Alleluia!

Chapter II

4/5, St. Mary Hospital Chapel, Hoboken, NJ

The Spiritual Marriage known in this seventh Mansion, though it can only be fulfilled in Heaven, is unlike the Spiritual Union known in the other Mansions, principally because here indeed the Lord's presence is never withdrawn from the soul in its center, but always remains, bringing the spirit that is the soul's center peace despite any distractions. Indeed there is great pain and trial in this Mansion, but the spirit remains quite apart from it all, safe in God's hands.

The Lord first revealed Himself to the Saint in this way, first brought her into this Mansion, after she received Him in Holy Communion: His glorious presence was made indelibly known to her. With great force this intellectual vision came from a place where she had never experienced vision before; and He spoke the most blessed words of peace. Much as He came to the apostles after the resurrection – needing no door to enter but appearing suddenly – He came to her... and now by the glory imparted to her soul, she and He had become inseparably one. In Spiritual Betrothal separation may and does still occur: the two can be viewed as two. But now in Marriage they are joined as water or light, wherein no separation is possible. The two have become one.

Now the soul dies, and Christ becomes its life. And as time passes, more so does the soul realize it is endowed with life by God, and cannot help but utter loving words of praise to Him who sustains her. Emptied of all created things, now the soul may be filled with the love of God alone. And as Jesus and the Father are one, so He fulfills His blessed promise, joining the soul that loves Him to Himself and the Father, making it indeed one with God. How true it is that He is in us! And though the soul does not consider itself safe from faltering and has the greater misgiving, thus does it refrain even more so from offending its Lord and becomes more strongly desirous of serving Him. The greater penances are its joys, the greatest being its inability to perform any of these. But oh the peace that remains through all!

Chapter III

4/6, Sts. Joseph and Michael

The effects of this Prayer of Spiritual Marriage are great. The Saint speaks first of a self-forgetfulness so complete that the soul seems not to exist, for continually is it employed in service and praise of God. Now one does not mind anything that happens, for it attributes all to God, whom it loves and who loves it thoroughly. Its only desire is to advance the glory of God.

And now though eating and sleeping and such are a torment, the soul no longer desires death as it did before; it does not so much concern itself with the glory before it, but wishes only to lay down its life that others might find the Lord the soul now knows. Indeed, it is persecution it treasures, in which it finds its joy... and the soul would suffer these gladly even for its greatest enemy. For now the soul is desirous of union with the Crucified Lord (who is our light on earth).

Also, now fear has fled – death is but a gentle rapture and one is sure that God is with him, so all doubt and timor cease. And no

longer does the soul desire consolations, for indeed it knows the Lord Himself – what more could anyone desire? There are no longer aridities or interior trials in this detachment from the faculties, per se; there is only remembrance of the Lord and desire to praise Him, and to this desire the Lord continually draws the soul.

O God’s special care in His communing with us, in His begging us to dwell with Him! O the touches of His love! Let us always answer to His tender call. Let us always turn our hearts to Him in acts of love, even if engaged in public conversation (though it need be an interior one), for indeed He always calls to us in His gracious love.

Now having committed itself wholly to God, nothing is there left for the soul to do to draw its Savior unto itself – He comes with the peace we need. Tranquilly and noiselessly He teaches us; yes, He and the soul alone have fruition of each other in the deepest silence. There is not the need of rapture now, for the soul is with its God. It needs not the reassurance it required before, for the soul is not weak and anxious. The kiss is upon our lips now, the olive branch in our mouth: firm ground the soul stands upon – O that all might know such blessing! With these blessings we seem almost overwhelmed, but even our crosses, many though they are, are easy to bear. Peace is in us, is it not? And who will take away what the Lord has given?

Chapter IV

4/7, St. Anthony

Final chapter, concluding words – an exhortation to her sisters (and us all) never to forget the Cross, but ever to be united with it and Him who died upon it.

The effects the Saint has discussed do not remain all the time, but are, rather, “habitual.” There are indeed times of trial still, though

the trials be exterior. We must always remember the good we gain from the Lord and His favors, and by these trials, and by our faltering (though not intentionally), indeed we become more resolved to serve and praise Him. And we learn, too, to always beseech His protection.

It must be principally noted that the Lord does not give these favors for our own enjoyment; much the opposite. By them we gain strength to endure greater sufferings, for indeed the Cross is our call. St. Paul (as all the saints) did not rest in his visions but worked tirelessly, and so must we. We must indeed do the works of the Lord, for this is the sign of His favor with us. Prayer and contemplation alone is not possible – it is not a good foundation. Indeed our external repose grows less and less as interior repose the Lord provides. For we are not called to sleep but to fight the good fight, and our Lord will give us strength to do so by His grace and our union with Him. And the vigor gained by the soul will overflow into the body, and always greater penances will be sought, though never here will the soul be satisfied that it has done anything for God.

Martha and Mary must work together in our spiritual lives. We must always bring souls to the Lord, even if we but serve those around us (as well as, of course, by prayer). Here is where we always start, not with some grand and glorious plan – for such a structure founded on pride will collapse inevitably (by the grace of God). Yes, Mary was not always at the Lord's feet but must have suffered great mortification. And should we not have like humility? All must be offered to the Lord and one with His Cross it will be fruitful.

Pray for the Saint – and pray for me, I beg.

J.H.S.

4/9 (Passion Sunday), St. Anthony

Praise God that He has had His Saint set down words of His sacred Mansions, which we can enter anytime, any place, and under any circumstances, by our humility and the Lord's good will. In these we find rest in everything.

All is submitted to the Church (amen), and all good in it is of God, and all error of the author.