

Interior Castle, First Dwelling Place Chapter 1, para 7

Door of entry to the Interior Castle is Prayer.

1. Teresa begins this Book by giving us the image of the Castle and describing what it is: the image that tells us the dignity and worth of the human person made in the image and likeness of God. The two chapters of the first dwelling place are all about the invitation to enter this castle.
2. Everyone is invited to enter the castle. There are no pre-conditions: saint/sinner, Christian/non-Christian, believer/non-believer, - there is no human being to whom this invitation is not given. A person's past life is no obstacle to entry.
3. Conversion is not a pre-condition; it is a fruit of entry. Those who are in the castle are constantly invited to deeper and deeper conversion.
4. Prayer is the door to enter – if we want to enter we must begin to pray, or at least want to pray or be trying to pray [it is sometimes difficult for us to know if we are praying or not].
5. There is no particular type of prayer. However the more one enters into this dwelling place, the more one is called to reflect on one's prayer and consider more deeply the God to whom one's prayer is addressed.
6. The greatest gift given to us by God in this dwelling place is truth and self-knowledge. The truth of who God is and the truth of oneself - this leads to a mature self-knowledge.
7. This dwelling place brings us face to face with the reality of sin: our own sinfulness and the reality of sin in the world in which we live. This is a consequence of the deeper freedom the person is living. We must confront the truth that freedom can be misused. All sin is a misuse of the freedom God gives us – the more we grow in freedom, the greater is the awareness of the potential to misuse it.
8. Teresa time and time again, in her writings, speaks of herself as a "sinner" yet we are never given a list of her "crimes". She is not speaking about sins committed but of her ever deepening consciousness of her

state of sinner and the wonderful gift that God's mercy is. The greatest freedom God gives is the freedom not to sin – this is pure mercy, the saint knows this better than anyone.

9. Those who dwell in the other six dwelling places must make frequent visits to the first dwelling place because we are all constantly called to deeper conversion.
10. Once we enter this dwelling place we are given a guide, the guide is Jesus Christ [cf. Chapter 2 No. 11 “focus one's eyes on Jesus Christ”]. Jesus will be with us in each dwelling place. Look out for how Teresa describes Jesus' role in each dwelling place.
11. True humility is the first of the many fruits of this dwelling place. This is indispensable for all who will answer the call to enter the next dwelling places.

Questions:

A. Teresa's teaching in this dwelling place challenges the prevailing understanding of;

- God
- Prayer
- Sin

What is the prevailing understanding of God, prayer and sin in our Church today and does Teresa' teaching challenge this also?

B. If we are to pray well we must be willing to be changed by prayer. Do we truthfully see prayer as a life changing reality?

C. Some people see the Church of today as a Church that is living in Teresa's 1st dwelling place [A place of truth, invitation and opportunity but also

great challenge – we must say “yes” to the full truth of this challenge].
Do you agree?