

Teresa of Avila on decision making

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First a word about this topic: why Teresa and decision-making. I chose this topic because Teresa achieved extraordinary things in the world and, as is normal when someone does something radical, she attracted great controversy. And she was a fairly uneducated, enclosed nun, living in an era when women were expected to stay in the kitchen and be quiet. And so, it's really interesting to examine how she functioned: how she came to conclusions about things, how she managed in her world. It can't have been easy.

Some of you might be thinking, but Teresa is teaching us about prayer, not about decision-making. And, yes that is true. But I want to show how her prayer effected change in her life; how prayer changed her and changed how she made decisions and lived her life in the exterior world.

This is a story of transformation, the story of a clever and beautiful young girl who lost her mother at 13, and her journey to wholeness, to what she would call union with God.

Tonight I'd like to say a little about Teresa's context, and then talk a bit about how we make decisions. After that we will look at Teresa's earlier and later life, and try to illustrate how she changed.

Then there will be some time for questions, and hopefully a few answers – if you are all happy to join in...

So, this amazing woman who is such a role model in some ways for contemporary women, and men: she changed a whole organisation, founded a new one – not just the women's order, but the men's order also. She networked with many of the rich and powerful in 16th Century Spain, including the king, and therefore had access to wealth and power herself.

She was in a world that was in turmoil, as ever. She was largely uneducated – she could read and write but had no real formal education – in a world ruled by men, in a church that was forming the Council of Trent to counter the effects of Lutheran Reformation, and so was battenning down the hatches, trying to control all written and spoken material, and that did not value the contribution of women. One theologian at the Council of Trent argued against the practice of mental prayer among the common people, saying that writers promoting this were “trying to write things about contemplation for mere carpenter's wives” (including Our Lady, I presume). So this was a sceptical environment, full of fear – you could be tortured and sent to jail for not following orthodoxy. And most of the books written on prayer were put on the index of forbidden books.

This was the context in which Teresa lived.

Today is different, although not as different as we might hope. We are always in a battle of ideas in our conversations, whether that is in our national politics or local community, the church, our families. There are always forces that wish to control, people that are happy to be controlled, people that aren't, people that go along with orthodoxy for a quiet life. And of course, we can be in all these categories depending on the issues that matter to us. So, what Teresa has to say is relevant to us. In her later life, she was focused and powerful, quite a public figure. We can all learn something pertinent to our own lives from how she thought and how she conducted herself.

In her book, the great masterpiece, "The Interior Castle", Teresa uses this wonderful image of a castle that looks like diamond or crystal with many mansions or rooms, as a symbol that illustrates our life as a journey to the centre of our soul, where God lives. Our ultimate aim is union with God, and she says, "...this secret union takes place in the very interior centre of the soul, which must be where God Himself is, and in my opinion there is no need of any door for Him to enter." (Interior Castle, Ch 7:3) The first room we go to in our journey is the room of self-knowledge. Truly knowing ourselves is being open to our preferences, our strengths and our vulnerabilities, our injuries from the past, our blocks to a bigger future.

And so I'd like to talk a bit about our preferences, particularly in relation to decision making.

I'd like to break down decision making into a few component parts – like this.

- ✚ Fundamental assumption/ world view
- ✚ Our motivation: towards a goal or away from a problem
- ✚ What we pay attention to/ where we get our energy from: our interior world of ideas, emotions, impressions, or the exterior world of people and things
- ✚ How we take in information/ our perception: convergent (details orientated) or divergent (big picture orientated)
- ✚ Time focus: past/present/future
- ✚ Conclusions/decisions: using a logical, cause & effect thinking process or a values/feelings process
- ✚ Time spent in making decision: fast or slow
- ✚ Commitment/implementation: don't look back or holding back (can we cope with the loss involved or not)

We each have preferences for one way or the other. Although we might do both, we grow up with preferences and so will choose one option before the other.

I'd like to divide Teresa's life into two phases: her life up to the age of 40; and her life after.

EARLY LIFE

As a young girl, Teresa was spontaneous and exuberant, full of imagination, and happy to take that imagination into action. At age 7 she persuaded her 11 year old brother, Rodrigo, to run away to be martyrs. They were caught by their uncle about

less than half a mile from home, and of course taken straight back home. And it was Teresa who was held responsible and reprimanded. This is how Teresa describes it:

*I had one brother close to my own age whom I loved best of all. We used to read the lives of the saints together. When I read about certain women saints who endured martyrdom for the sake of God, I concluded that death was a small price to pay for the utter joy they were given in return when they were whisked away to heaven. I desperately wanted to die like this. Not out of holy devotion, at least, not that I was aware of, but from sheer urgency to get hold of the sublime fruits that my books promised were stored up for me. My brother and I would discuss how we could best make martyrs of ourselves. We decided to head off to the country of the Moors, begging bread along the way, and ask them to please, for the love of God, chop off our heads. I believe that our Lord had given us, even at such a tender age, the courage to follow up on our plan. The only thing stopping us was the fact that we had parents. (Teresa of Avila, *The Book of My Life* – translated by Mirabai Starr, p6)*

So I think she was quite a bossy young girl.

Teresa since her early childhood had a deep, fundamental belief that temporary things are trivial and pass away. That was her world view, her basic assumption.

I think it's fair to say, that as a child and young woman, Teresa was naturally extravert; she got a lot of energy from her friends. Her writing too illustrates this: it's quite "stream of consciousness", like she is thinking out loud, quite a chatterbox. She was also quite intuitive; future orientated, a big picture person: she would take a few facts and get quickly to a conclusion – and act on it. Hence the running off to be killed by the Moors, ... She liked to make decisions quickly; if the decision took a long time, it would cause her some discomfort. Once she made a decision, it was a relief – and she had a determination, a commitment to the decisions she made – she would carry out her intentions and not look back or count the loss.

When she was 12 her mother died. By this time, her older siblings from her father's first marriage were grown up and her six younger siblings were too young to give her the companionship she needed. So, at a crucial point in her life, she had no mother figure. Deeply distressed, she prayed to Our Lady to become her mother.

In her own judgement, she went a bit awry in her teenage years; she got in with the wrong crowd, particularly one of her cousins; and they were both interested in nice clothes and doing their hair, and lots of friendships in the town. In her own descriptions of her character she says,

I couldn't have cared less about the deeper meanings of virtue and integrity, but I did go to great lengths to make sure that my image and reputation remained intact.....Besides, when it came to figuring out ways to do bad things, I was extremely clever. (Starr p10). And, "my own temperament is such that, when I desire anything, I do so with impetuosity."

So she was quite feisty; later she says of herself “the devil sends so offensive a spirit of bad temper that I think I could eat people up”.

So at the age of 16 her father sent her off to an Augustinian convent, in her view to keep her out of mischief and get some education.

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As well as being a favourite of the nuns, Teresa had her favourite nun who influenced her greatly. Teresa describes her as being “simultaneously witty and wise”. Through her she says, *“my thoughts drifted back towards God, and my desire for eternal things was returning.....I asked the nuns to intercede with God on my behalf, asking him to transform me in such a way that I would be inclined to give over my life in service to him. He had not yet blessed me with this desire. Still, while I was resistant to the idea of becoming a nun, the prospect of marriage repelled me even more. By the time I left the convent, I had reconciled myself to becoming a nun, but I had decided not to join that particular house. Their spiritual practices were a little too extreme for me.”* (Starr, p13)

But from a very early age, Teresa seemed to have a constant awareness that temporary things are trivial and pass away. Early on she learned about God, and early on she had a fear of hell, that would be normal for those times. This set up some internal conflict for her, an anxiety, starting in her teenage years and carrying on into adulthood. In her writing she could be deeply self-critical but at base, she felt deeply loved and secure.

“My sister loved me so much that if she could have had her way, I never would have left her home. Maria’s husband was also very fond of me. At least, he treated me with great tenderness. This is my Beloved’s grace: I am appreciated and treated beautifully wherever I go. I do nothing to earn this except to simply be who I am.”

(Starr, p14)

There were two options for a young woman in her context: get married, or become a nun. Having seen her mother die in childbirth, she was not at all in favour of getting married. She wrote later to her nuns, that they were fortunate to be spared being in total subjection to a man and risking an early death through many confinements. But at first, she had an aversion to becoming a nun. So in joining the convent it was the lesser of two evils. But it took her a while to decide. This was someone who normally liked to make decisions quickly. In this case, she waited a long time; she was, unusually for her, not clear about what to do. And during this inner conflict, she became ill. Visiting a favourite uncle, devout in his faith, and reading his books, she decided that the safest option was to become a nun. Later she admitted that her motivation was servile fear rather than love; she wanted to get to heaven and avoid the pains of hell, she had no great desire to live the life of an enclosed nun.

At 22, she made her final profession. Having made this decision, Teresa felt a lot of relief and even joy, and she didn’t ever go back on it or revisit it in anyway. She relaxed into the life of a nun, quite happy doing the most menial of jobs. But although she was exteriorly happy, she was struggling interiorly: she struggled in prayer and there was no one who could guide her. She tried to visualise Christ’s humanity,

recalling scenes from the gospels, and really couldn't. That wasn't the way her mind worked. She says,

"When I was in prayer, I would try to keep Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Good, present within me. I would think about a scene in his life and then try to picture it with my mind's eye. But what I liked best was to read good books. This is because God did not give me much talent for figuring things out with my intellect or making good use of my imagination. In fact, my imagination was so clumsy that not matter how hard I tried to meditate on the Lord's humanity, I could never quite succeed." (Starr, p21)

It wasn't a failure of imagination, I think it's that she couldn't recall detail through her senses. She is full of imagination and intuition, creating images of transformation that delight us still: symbols like the crystal interior castle, images for the different types of prayer, the symbol of the silkworm turning into a butterfly. But for 18 years she struggled, always needing a book to start her prayer time. She needed a stimulus to become recollected.

"Looking back, I can see that it was a blessing that God did not send me a spiritual teacher during that time. If he had, I don't think I would have been willing to endure this internal aridity and this inability to meditate for eighteen years. During all that time, I never dared to sit down to pray unless I had a book close at hand. My soul was as terrifying of praying as it would have been if thrown unarmed onto a raging battlefield. Books were my companions, my consolation, my shield against the explosion of thoughts." (Starr, p21/22)

This quotation illustrates a well developed, (perhaps over-developed!) thinking function, but getting out of hand. It needs to be calmed down...

Just a bit further on from the last quotation she digresses:

"Again and again, I find myself in awe of God's great goodness. Again and again, my soul has rejoiced in his magnificence and his mercy. May he be blessed for everything! I have clearly seen that he has never failed to reward me, even in this lifetime, for any of my good intentions. No matter how flawed or feeble my deeds may have been, this Beloved of mine has taken them and perfected them, polishing them and giving them worth. The minute I commit any errors, he hides them. Even if someone does witness my transgressions, his Majesty renders that person blind and wipes her memories clean.....I forget to reflect on what I owe him. I forget to acknowledge my own ingratitude and weakness. May he be forever blessed, who has put up with me for so long! Amen." (Starr p 22/23)

What is so interesting here, is that all her writing is after her transformation – when she has this great love for the Lord as her darling friend. She feels this great love as she writes, but that is not how she felt at the time she was writing about.

At 23 she became ill again, and the illness continued for a long time to the extent that her family were fearful of her dying. They sent her to a healer and, on her way there she stopped of at her uncle's house again, where she came across a book called the 3rd Spiritual Alphabet. This is where she was introduced to mental prayer and started

using her mental concentration and active directing of the mind “with all my might”. This book convinced her that, in her own words, “friendship and communion with God are possible in this life of exile.” She goes on, “this friendship is not remote but more sure and more intimate than ever existed between brothers or even between mother and child.”

But still, although she had a conceptual understanding of mental prayer, it was still a struggle for her: spiritual apathy, aridity in prayer, a deep sense of failure that at one point led her to give up prayer altogether.

LATER LIFE:

From about age 38 onwards, Teresa had a number of conversion experiences: those big experiences that surprise or even shock us, and make us re-evaluate our world view, our motivation, how we do things.

Her father’s confessor, a Dominican theologian, Vicente Barron, advised her to return to the practice of mental prayer; she took his advice and never abandoned prayer again, saying it was not in her power to do so, “He who desired me for His own in order to show me greater favours held me Himself in His hand”. She surrenders control to the Lord saying,

“This is another new book from here on – I mean another, new life. The life dealt with up to this point was mine; the one I lived from the point where I began to explain these things about prayer is the one God lived in me – according to the way it appears to me – because I think it would have been impossible in so short a time to get rid of so many bad habits and deeds. May the Lord be praised who freed me from myself.” (*The Book of Her Life, St Teresa of Avila Volume One, translated by Kavanaugh OCD & Rodriguez OCD, Ch 23.1*)

She still often started her prayer with a book, she needed that stimulus to her imagination. She couldn’t just meditate on a passage in Scripture, she said she didn’t have the mental capacity to do that. She wrote later that her own writings were intended for people like her, “who had minds like wild horses” She likened her distracting thoughts to “having a madman in the house”.

When she was nearly 40, very tired and maybe a bit stressed out, she saw a statue of Christ that had been borrowed by the convent for a particular festival. It represented Christ wounded and suffering, and it moved Teresa to the depths of her being. She said, “so great was my distress when I thought how ill I had repaid Him for those wounds, that I felt as if my heart was breaking.”

This was not the result of a decision she had made, like her distress when she went against her father’s wishes in running away to the convent. This came upon her, it happened to her.

So Teresa was in touch with her feelings and emotions, in fact she was overwhelmed by them; she is not afraid of having feelings. So many of us try to avoid them, particularly the difficult, distressful ones. So often we block them out or distance

ourselves from them. But Teresa accepted her difficult feelings with some courage. From the strength of her feeling, and her resulting beseeching of God for strength, “once and for all” she says, came her fiat: the moment when she gave herself totally to Christ. It came from a feelings process, not an intellectual or thinking decision. It was in tears of utter wretchedness and grief.

She then devised a method of prayer that suited her own temperament.

As an extravert thinker, used to sharing her thinking process out loud, she found it difficult to do this in her interior world. She was not able to form a picture of Christ in her mind, but she discovered that she could imagine His feelings, and dwell on those times when he was alone in the Garden of Gethsemane. As her thinking was in the exterior world of people, activities and things, her feelings were in her interior world of ideas, emotions, impressions. She wrote, ..the fact that He was “alone and afflicted, like a person in need, made it possible for me to approach Him.” She was connecting with Christ interiorly in a bond of friendship.

So, Teresa has found something crucially important for her: that interior relationship with God, which will now start to guide her more explicitly in her life. No longer will she be ruled by her impetuosity. Instead she will sit with her experience and perhaps take much longer in making decisions – but they will not result in interior conflict or make her ill, for she is now not alone in taking responsibility for her life and actions. She knows that God is in there with her.

Aged 45, Teresa has a major spiritual experience in the form of a vision that she had seen several times before she wrote about it. This is what is called her “Transverberation” experience. Here is how she describes it:

“I saw close to me toward my left side an angel in bodily form....the angel was not large but small; he was very beautiful, and his face was so aflame that he seemed to be one of those very sublime angels that appear to be all afire.....I saw in his hands a large golden dart and at the end of the iron tip there appeared to be a little fire.. It seemed to me this angel plunged the dart several times into my heart and that it reached deep within me. When he drew it out, I thought he was carrying off with him the deepest part of me; and he left me all on fire with great love of God.” (Kavanaugh, Ch 29.13)

Things are not going to be the same again. After this experience, God was really in charge

And at about the same time, after 25 years of an outwardly undemanding life, other than coping with her illness, she said she was ready “to digest other and stronger meat than I had been in the habit of eating.” This was the time when she got the idea, through conversation with one of her young relatives, of leading a more ascetic life, more like the hermits on Mount Carmel. It was just an idea at first, and Teresa still felt ambivalent about it. But, in prayer, she felt our Lord telling her “that she was to work hard to establish this convent and that she should call it St Joseph’s. And so these two conversations: one outward conversation and one inner conversation, were the seeds of the Reform of the whole Carmelite Order, the foundation of new monasteries for

men as well as women; a project that attracted huge attention, both positive and negative for the rest of her life and beyond. She had already attracted controversy for her visions and spiritual experiences that had manifested in quite a public way in church services and so on. Now she was attracting controversy for her plans for the order, involved as she was now on a merry-go-round of church politics and worldly practicalities. She was politically astute, she knew who to have conversations with, which conversations to have off the record, and so on. eg she created her first foundation in great secrecy, or her plans would have been sabotaged. At times it seemed that almost everyone was against her.

She was denounced from the pulpit in Avila – at which she laughed.

The papal nuncio wrote that she was “ a restless gadabout, disobedient and contumacious woman who invented wicked doctrines and called them devotion, transgressed the rules of enclosure, in opposition to the Council of Trent and to her superiors, and taught others, against the commands of St Paul, who had forbidden women to teach.”.

Teresa wasn't bothered by all this; by this time she had her own inner authority in the centre of her soul.

She had become an even deeper person, living from a very deep part of herself – towards the centre of the interior castle where God dwells. No longer was she ruled by her imagination and her preference for quick decisions; no longer would she be overwhelmed by anxiety or difficult feelings. Now she would be more measured: using her thoughts well, her feelings well, her intuition well and a sound grasp of the facts.

Just to illustrate how this dramatic personality had matured - there was one time when she was travelling with another sister to Salamanca and, when they arrived they found that their house had been rented out to students. The students were evicted and the two exhausted nuns got into this ramshackle old house. Teresa's companion was worried that the students would be hanging around and perhaps angry at being thrown out, so they might be vulnerable to attack. They chose to sleep in one room and lock the door. Teresa recounts the experience like this...

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When making decisions, she did not rely solely on her own perceptions, assumptions, or motivation.

She would hold her intentions open to scrutiny in a number of ways: through her own prayer, through her confessor, her friends. ...I understand that as long as God leads me by this path I must not trust myself in anything. So I have always consulted others, even though I find it difficult.” (Spiritual Testimonies, 3, no 13 – found in the introduction of *The Collected Works of T of A*, Volume 2) So she became adept at looking at situations from different perspectives, not just her own. She would make her conclusions, but then test them out against trusted advisers and counsellors.

All decisions involve loss – saying yes to one thing involves a no to something else-, if we are not able to cope with loss, we cannot be good at making decisions, far less taking them into action. Teresa could do both. We have much to learn from her. She

suffered much loss in her life: her mother when she was young, her health, her reputation.

But Teresa had developed detachment, she was true to her inner voice, and put up with what was happening exteriorly. Although being true to her conscience often caused great tension, complexity and even anguish, particularly when she was being pulled in different directions, she embraced the suffering and her interior life was unaffected. At one point, when she was exiled to Castile, effectively imprisoned, she was extremely happy. While the persecution of her reform of the Order was at its height, Teresa was writing her masterpiece, *The Interior Castle*. Her interior life was undisturbed. She had progressed on her spiritual journey to the point where she took pleasure in her trials. She had achieved a perfect balance between her inner and outer life.

In this phase of her life, she was reconciling the opposites in her personality, and reconciling them not by choosing one or the other, but through her contemplative prayer allowing the value of both and enabling new possibilities to emerge. Countless times she writes about how Our Lord has tasked her with something and she has no idea how to do it. But she starts, makes mistakes, starts again, changes her mind. Just like all of us. For example, she flipped over on her view that she needed revenue to found her convents. She realised that what she needed was to be recollected in listening to the Lord and the rest would follow. Being recollected entailed being clear and purposeful. She also realised that the anxieties would always be there, whether they were the anxieties of possessions, or the anxieties of poverty. But she said a very interesting thing. She had seen poverty cause her nuns to be distracted, “and it had not occurred to me that their distraction was not due to the poverty, but that their poverty was the result of their not being recollected.” (Teresa of Avila, *An Extraordinary Life*, Shirley du Boulay, p90).

She elsewhere described prayer as “the place where the Lord gives the light to understand truths” (Foundations Ch 10.13 p142)

She became adept at dealing with contradictions: such things as contradictory demands from her superiors, and demands made of her that she considered went against the will of God. So her life never became easy. She became easy with the difficulties: through her intimate relationship with God, she has become totally trusting. And this makes her enormously resilient. She was fully engaged in the world, yet had her sights fixed on God. She wasn't above all the politicking: she used her contacts and had plenty of private discussions – she did all that was necessary to get things done.

While she was fighting lawsuits, being denounced from the pulpit in Avila (she just laughed at this by the way), while her close friendship with a younger priest, Gracian, was gossiped about unkindly (all this was nasty stuff) – she maintained an inner peace. The exterior world was on the surface for her. She could still have a sharp tongue, complain about things, get upset when her painted portrait wasn't as attractive as she expected (she said something like “God forgive you” to the painter), get huffy when friends didn't stay in touch. Once she wrote to a friend, “if your head ached as

much as mine, your Charity might be excused for not having written to me for so long, but, as that is not the case, I cannot help complaining of you.” She could be inconsistent. Eg, it is clear she enjoyed close friendships yet she also wrote: “it is certain that in having need of no one a person has many friends. I have become clearly aware of this through experience.” She was normal! Deep down, however, in her interior world she was detached. This is different from being disengaged, she was fully engaged, but she handed the control over to God. And her basic message is, “if I can do this, anyone can.”

I want to give some extracts from her Letters – to give you a flavour of her personality, how human she is. They also give an insight into her decision-making and how she deals with quite complex matters.

Letter 23 to her sister Juana, who was poor at the time.

Letter 24 to her brother Lorenzo in Quito, Ecuador. He is planning to go back to Spain and is also sending Teresa some money. P83, 85

Conclusions

So, to conclude, in the first half of Teresa’s life, up to the age of 40, she was using her willpower to do the right thing and follow God. She wanted to get to heaven and avoid hell, but she had an internal struggle with herself to do what she thought was the right thing.

In her early life Teresa was impetuous, imaginative, made her decisions in a dispassionate way, it wasn’t about her immediate feelings – she entered the monastery through an act of willpower. She had feelings, of course, but she didn’t use them in coming to her conclusions. She wrote that, at that time, she was never before moved by the passion of our Lord – it was something she felt distant from, rather than something truly awful that happened to someone she loved.

All Teresa’s achievements take place after her transformation; her writings, reform of the order and so on..

After the age of 40, her focus was on loving more. She wrote, “You know, I no longer govern the way I used to. Love does everything. I am not sure if that is because no one gives me cause to reprove her, or because I have discovered that things go better that way.”

In the second half of life, although her natural preferences didn’t change, Teresa was more in touch with her less preferred side. She had developed a deep inner life in her conversations with God, she was in touch with her feelings – deeply moved, often in tears. Her heart was engaged now as well as her head.

She also became extremely practical and details conscious; although she was still imaginative and intuitive – she had an amazing capacity to create symbols, particularly symbols of transformation. You know the cocoon and the butterfly, the interior castle, the soul as a garden... In her first foundation, which had four nuns, she cut out and sewed the new habits for them herself.

From being focused on the future, that big picture of getting to heaven and avoiding hell that drove Teresa's decision to become a nun, she moved to being much more in the present – taking things a step at a time, listening to her Beloved and following Him, without much energy spent on the past or on speculating how things would turn out in the future. Her attention was directed to this primary relationship.

For me, one of the really interesting things about Teresa is her ability to deal with paradox; her ability to hold the tension of opposites. Eg she had great friends and spoke freely in friendship, wrote 000's of letters; and yet she always longed for solitude, and after her conversion experience, she renounced all her friends who did not talk of God or the things of God.

Teresa is telling us that prayer and self-knowledge are the gateways to grow more authentically in God, to learn our innermost motives. Perseverance, patience, a realistic sense of self and self-acceptance – and self knowledge are all necessary in equal measure. The first room to go to in our own interior castle is the room of self-knowledge. That is about dropping the mask, not trying to be what we are not, trying to connect with a deeper self in our centre – and the road is prayer. Prayer is described by Teresa as “an intimate sharing between friends”, and “spending time with the one whom we know loves us”.

Through prayer, and praying as she could, not as she couldn't, Teresa had a robust exterior life, a strong interior life; she focused on the big picture, she also cared about the detail; she was in touch with her feelings, she could also be logical and analytical (in other words, she used her heart and her head); she came to conclusions quickly and liked to act quickly; and she cultivated an ability to sit with things until an answer emerged or things played out as God wanted. Her inner life created an outer life that we are celebrating 500 years later.

What can we learn from her?

We can learn that we are all called to transformation; we can get to know our natural preferences and use them to develop our less preferred side. Our prayer life is crucial; it's about being present: bringing all our thoughts, feelings, tensions and anxieties, joys to conscious awareness. If we do this in the presence of the Lord, and He is always present – we are the ones who have to show up, all can be transformed. Prayer helps us in building and maintaining a connection with our interior self, and keeping that in charge, it can lead to the dropping of the masks we put on: a more authentic life – that is: a realistic sense of our strengths and weaknesses, a clearer identity in the world, a healthy self-regard, resulting in more ability to contribute to life and society, and a deep joy. Teresa had all this.

I'd actually like to finish with a quotation from Pope Francis talking about his decision-making, in an interview with El Jesuita (from Paul Vallely, “Pope Francis”, p131). I think it's apt and shows the level of his self-knowledge. He said: “I don't have all the answers; I don't even have all the questions. I always think of new questions, and there are always new questions coming forward. But the answers

have to be thought out according to the different situations, and you also have to wait for them. I confess that, because of my disposition, the first answer that comes to me is usually wrong. When I'm facing a situation, the first solution I think of is what *not* to do. Because of this I have learned not to trust my first reaction. When I'm calmer, after passing through the crucible of solitude, I come closer to understanding what has to be done.... You can do a great deal of harm with the decisions you make. One can be very unfair."