

Interior Castle. Fifth Dwelling Place: Chapter 1, Paragraph No. 2.

Teresa begins the 5th dwelling place by sharing her difficulty and reluctance to explain these dwelling places and by praying for the Lord's help: *"O Sisters, how can I explain the riches and treasures and delights found in the fifth dwelling places?... there is no knowing how to speak of them, neither is the intellect capable of understanding them nor can comparisons help in explaining them.... Send light from heaven, my Lord that I may be able to enlighten these, your servants so that they may not be deceived."*

1. Teresa begins by telling us that there are *"only a few who fail to enter this dwelling place"*. We should not be surprised by this statement. All who seriously live Christianity are destined to grow into this place of healing, transformation and Union with God.
2. However there are degrees and some people do not experience some of the things she speaks about; *"some do no more than reach the door"*. There is no serious following of Jesus Christ that can avoid this place.
3. All Carmelites are called to prayer and contemplation – here she tells us the purpose of this and the inevitable point of arrival of this journey. Here she urges her sisters [and all Carmelites] to live our vocations well: *"be brave in begging the Lord to give us His grace in such a way that nothing will be lacking through our own fault; that He will show us the way and strengthen the soul that it may dig until it finds this hidden treasure"*. Is she subtly implying that all Carmelites do not do this? Is it possible/easy for Carmelites to stop along the way and accept something less than what the Lord has called us to?
4. What is the Lord inviting us to? What is this hidden treasure? It is *"heaven on earth"*. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray; *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*. Wherever the Lord's will is done that is heaven. When our will is totally united with the will of God, then we are in heaven, we have total happiness, peace, joy – this is the treasure our whole lives have been committed to finding.

5. From the first dwelling place our eyes have been fixed on Jesus, he has been accompanying us and we have been following him. A careful reading of No. 12 of this Chapter tells us where we are. The Lord has now placed us in the “*wine cellar*” [Song of Songs]. Wine in the scriptures is the symbol of God’s greatest gifts and blessings and in the life of Jesus it is transformed into his blood. So we are at the **Last Supper**, our will “*has been entirely surrendered to him*” **Gethsemane**, the **tomb**, and **the locked room where he appeared to the disciples**. So we are taken on the whole journey of Holy Week.
6. We cannot do any of this by ourselves. It is total gift. “*However great the effort we make to do so, we cannot enter. His Majesty must place us there and enter himself into the centre of our soul*”.
7. In the fifth dwelling place we die and rise with Jesus. We receive the fullness of baptism grace. The “old self” dies and the “new self” rises with Jesus: “*It is like one who in every respect has died to the world so as to live more completely in God*” [No. 4].
8. “*Many are called, few are chosen*”. These words made a profound impact on the young sixteen year old Teresa [see Life 3:1]; they are the very first words of the Gospel to be quoted in Teresa’s writings. She is now sixty two years of age and is using them to inspire and encourage all her readers to do everything possible to prepare themselves to enter these dwelling places [she has spent her life doing this].
9. Entry into these dwelling places is possible for everyone: “*He doesn’t make it impossible for anyone to buy His riches*” .However entry requires the total commitment of the person according to their situation or state of life: “*He is content if each one gives what he has.....whether you have little or much, He wants everything for Himself*”. [No.3].
10. Teresa struggles to explain the “Union with God” that is brought about in this dwelling place and at the same time feels a deep need to explain it for the sake of the reader: “*its whole intellect would want to be occupied in understanding something of what is felt*”. The need for this understanding is one of Teresa’s principle motives for writing this book.

Points for discussion:

How do you understand “Union with God”?

Discuss the Carmelite vocation viewed from the 5th dwelling place.

Everyone who has loved knows the demands and possibilities of this place: commitment, self-giving, union of wills, putting other first, etc. Discuss