

Introduction

St. Teresa's Interior Castle gives us a richness of wisdom and insight into the spiritual life. The purpose of these articles is to select short texts that can give helpful insights to the reading of the entire work. It is intended that they be used to help the reading and study of the entire work and not as a substitute for this. They do not set out to provide a summary of the main teaching or are they to be seen as a selection of the most important sections.

Furthermore while an article will be distributed each month for this year, the articles do not need to be used in any particular order, each stand alone and can be used at meetings, prayer groups, study groups, etc.

Interior Castle: 7th dwelling place, chapter 4, paragraph 12.

It may seem surprising to begin almost at the end of the book, however we must remember that the 7th dwelling place best describes Teresa's own spiritual life at the time of writing this book. This book is a description of the spiritual journey from the perspective of a person living in the 7th dwelling place. This is a place of peace: peace with oneself, one's life, one's circumstances and most importantly peace with God as He really is in one's life and experience [not as I would like Him to be or would expect Him to be!]. Prayer and "ordinary" life are no longer two separate realities – it is now impossible for the person not to be praying and all a person's work, decisions and attitudes have their source in the deepest dwelling place, the place where God lives within the soul.

The story of Martha and Mary [Luke 10:38 – 42] has traditionally been interpreted (or misinterpreted!), as a contrast between the active life and the contemplative life – Mary's life, the contemplative life being the "better". Teresa does not accept this interpretation; for her what matters is service, "to have the strength to serve".

Questions for reflection and/or discussion

1. Am I familiar with the inner conflict between work/activity/noise and prayer/contemplation/silence?
2. How do I deal with this apparent conflict in my life?

3. How can I use Teresa' teaching to help others in their struggles in prayer.