

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Eleven: Teresa of Ávila

A Heartfelt and Humble Prayer

In this heartfelt prayer from Teresa of Ávila, we witness her concern for the whole world, her desire to speak truth to power, and her willingness to risk everything in order to be of service. Here is CAC friend Mirabai Starr's translation:

Blessed be the soul the Lord brings to an understanding of the truth! If only world leaders could enter this exalted consciousness. It would be so much more worthwhile for them to strive for this state of prayer than for all the power in the world. What righteousness would prevail in a nation like this. What atrocities would be avoided.

Any man who reaches this stage has such unshakable love of God that any fear of risking his honor or his life falls away. This is an especially great blessing for someone who has the obligation to lead his community....

O Lord, even if you were to give me the authority to proclaim these truths publicly, no one would believe me.... But at least it would satisfy me to have a real voice. I would count my life as nothing if it meant that I could clearly communicate even one of these sacred teachings to the world....

I keep having these irresistible impulses to speak the truth to political leaders. But since I do not have access to these men, I turn to you, my Lord, and beg you to make all things right. You well know that I would gladly forfeit all the blessings you have given me and transfer them to these rulers.... If they could experience what I have experienced, I know that it would be impossible for them to allow the violations they have been condoning.

O my God! Please help world leaders understand the magnitude of their responsibilities....

I sincerely pray for our leaders, and I would like to be of some help to them. Such an urge makes a soul reckless. I would gladly risk my life to gain what I believe in....

Once a soul has attained this level of prayer, she does not merely desire to serve God; his Majesty [*a name Teresa uses for God*] gives her the strength to manifest the desire. The soul would not hesitate to try anything that might be of service to him. Any sacrifice for his sake feels like nothing, because she knows that anything other than pleasing him means nothing....

Here is my life. Here is my honor. Here is my will. I give them all to you. I am yours. Use me as you will....

The soul is his soul. He is in charge. He illuminates her. It seems that he is guarding her against offending him. He helps her to wake up in service of him....

As long as she receives God's favors with humility and gratitude, always bearing in mind that the Beloved gives them and that she herself does almost nothing, she will retain her equanimity.

Teresa of Avila, *The Book of My Life*, trans. Mirabai Starr (Boston, MA: New Seeds Books, 2007), 150, 151, 152, 154, 155.

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Perched in solitude, in communion with the Beloved.