



The Catholic church of St Mary, Leek

Praying with St Teresa of Avila

St Teresa was born in Avila, Spain, in the year 1515. At the age of 20 she entered the Carmelite Order and undertook the reform. This brought many trials. She contributed to the renewal of the Church and wrote outstanding works on prayer and the spiritual life. She died in the year 1582. She was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970; the first female saint to receive this title.

The prayer of Recollection

This prayer is called, 'recollection,' because the soul collects its faculties together and enters within itself to be with its God.

St Teresa of Avila, The Way of Perfection, 28.4

Preparation

- Choose a quiet place where you are not likely to be interrupted. Sit comfortably with your feet placed separately on the floor in front of you. Your hands joined on your lap.
- Close your eyes. Take a deep breath, and slowly exhale. Repeat this deep breathing several times.
- Quiet your mind. Acknowledge any thoughts, or preoccupations, or worries, or anxieties. Whatever concerns or worries simply surrender them to God.

Meeting the Lord

- Now recall that you are in God's presence.
- Recall that Jesus, our Risen Lord, is within you. Sit in peace, aware of Jesus's presence within you.
- To remain attentive to the Lord, recall a passage from the Gospel. You may consider the meeting of Jesus and the woman at the well. Look at the Lord.
- You may wish to use another Gospel scene. Maybe you have a favourite passage from the Gospel.
- When you notice your mind wandering, as soon as you can, bring your attention back to the Lord. Look at him with the eyes of faith. He is looking at you. You may find it helpful to have an icon or a picture.

Sharing

- As you pray, as you look in faith at Jesus present within you, you may feel moved to speak to him. You may want to speak as a mother, a sister, a father, a brother, or as a friend. You may want to tell him that you love him, that you thank him. You may speak to him about whatever is on your mind.
- If you do not feel moved to talk with him, remain quiet. Be with him as you are. No matter what you are feeling, you find the Lord looking at you with understanding and love.
- You may experience deep peace or recollection. Rest in this peace for as long as it lasts. When it passes, let it go. With eyes of faith and love bring your attention back to the Lord.
- If your mind wanders, say to yourself without any judgement, "Oh, my mind is wandering again," and gently bring your attention back to the Lord.

Conclusion

- As your time of prayer draws to a close, open your eyes. Continue to sit comfortably for a few minutes until you are aware of your surroundings.
- You may wish to conclude the time of prayer by saying slowly and reflectively the Our Father, Hail Mary or some other prayer.

Some helpful advice about prayer from St Teresa

Make time for regular prayer

"Mental prayer ... means taking time frequently to be

alone with Him who we know loves us" The Book of Her Life, 8.5

Distractions

Distractions are "unavoidable ... and should not be a disturbance or affliction for you ... Pay no attention to these thoughts ..." Interior Castle IV