

My prayer as a man of today

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The fact of writing means to me above all to fight against the enemies that try to convince me not to do so: the tiredness, the lethargy, the pressure of commitments of government, understood (maybe wrongly) as more important, the fear of adding useless words to those already said, and last but not least, the doubt as of the way in which it will be received and understood what I write. I have to confess that many times I end up losing in this fight, and that it may be a good luck for my brothers and sisters. But in this time I had in my disposition two occasional weapons that made me win the fight: it is Holy Friday, a day in which we are immerse in an atmosphere of a more recollection of ourselves and we are more available for ascetical exercises. Even more today is the anniversary of Pope John Paul II's death, of whom I remember with emotion an experience: his confession of guilt of the church and his request of pardon. He who had a doubt or amazement of such a gesture in the story of the church, responded: We shouldn't fear the truth; the truth will make us free. In his memory and example, I prepare myself with you my last experience of the reading of the book of "Life" of saint Teresa of Jesus. This morning I was re-reading chapter 10. We know that it is a crucial moment between the autobiography narrative and the doctrinal section of the former chapters. We can consider it as an introduction of the discussion of the prayer in the chapters 11 to 21, as well as to the important chapter 22, of the Humanity of Christ, is its conclusion. The doctrine of the four stages of prayer is like a tight cord between two firm points: my "self" and Christ. The image can help us understand that if one of the points is missing or lacking, the cord loses tension, it loosens up and it is unable to help us "jump". I wonder, if this is not what happens to us with

frequency. The prayer life is not tense, it is not our place or the time in which I put myself and I immerse myself in this state of my deep inner being, of the world, of life, were He waits for me. To cross over different boundaries is something that forms part of an authentic prayer experience, passing from the more superficial level to the deeper one, from what we know more toward what we know less, and ever more fundamental, that in the end is always the center of the soul itself: the certainty that we are loved. The ever more we approach this center, the more it itself attracts us, to the point that its force prevails over each one of our resistances, and we have no choice rather than to abandon us passively to it. But what is the firm point that does not withholds my prayer life as a man of today? I have little doubt in this purpose: it is my firm point, it is my "self" that doesn't stand firm. Teresa knows well that we can't be people of prayer without a proper self-esteem, rooted not on ourselves, but on the love of God for us. For this reason in chapter 10 she insists so much on the need of no to "cower our courage", but on the contrary to cheer it up and to strengthen it. In fact: "How can somebody improve and spend with generosity he who doesn't recognize himself as a rich person?. It is impossible according to our nature –in my opinion- to have courage for great things he who doesn't understands himself as favored from God. Because out of our own nature we are miserable and attracted to earthly things, that very badly somebody would reject all of this world with great detachment he who doesn't recognize that has any token of the other world"(Life 10,6). For Teresa it is not enough just to have "the truths of the faith" in order to be introduced in the path of prayer life. It is necessary that our self be awakened and reinforced, because by his own nature is weak and fragile.

If this is a truth for her, how much more it is truth for us today! We have a great fear to wake up our own self, of our own liberty, with its potentials, but also with its moral and spiritual responsibilities. In our evolved and oversupplied world, we restraint ourselves, out of fear, to live at the least of our potentials. It is a form of immaturity, for which, maybe behind false ideas of humbleness, that Teresa unveils like a mistake, lead us to minimize our commitment and our goals, in a way that everything may be under our control. If our prayer life is in crisis, it is because we ourselves are in crisis, the way we know and understand ourselves. Only a experience can make us grow, precisely the fundamental experience that Teresa expresses: “I suddenly felt myself being involved with a feeling of the divine presence, that in no way I could doubt that is was God in me or I totally sunken in Him” (10,1).