

GUIDELINES FOR OUR TERESIAN STUDIES

**~ The Book of Life ~
Year 1 of 6 (2009 - 2015)**

- I READ TERESA AGAIN**
- II DISCERN WITH TERESA**
- III CELEBRATE**

In this section we would like to offer some key-ideas for a more in-depth study of the Teresian texts, which can be used in any personal or community study.

By way of 'Lectio Divina', we would like to suggest a possible practical plan that is pedagogical and clear. It is to allow the text and Teresa's own voice to question us today. The primary intention for this study is not pastoral, it is rather for our own renewal. This plan could be suitable for community meetings. If the community would like to get more out of the text or use it from a more pastoral perspective, we offer in the 3rd section (LET'S CELEBRATE) seven ways to share, celebrate and discuss the contents of each text.

I. READ TERESA AGAIN

HOW TO DO THIS? STEPS TO FOLLOW

(Each community is free to use these steps, selecting just some of them or organize themselves in another way. The steps are a pedagogical suggestion)

- 1) QUESTION MYSELF before beginning:**
 - From what context am I reading the text?
 - Where am I vocationally and spiritually at this particular time?
 - What is my interest in this? With what anxieties do I approach the text?

- 2) **INVOKE THE HOLY SPIRIT:**
In the spirit of Teresa de Jesus, we ask for light and wisdom of heart, to give us a better understanding, always humbly allowing ourselves to be enlightened and, like Teresa, to want to learn. We do not read to be informed but rather to be renewed.
- 3) **CONTEXTUALIZATION:**
Someone from the community takes it upon himself to situate the text in context: when does this happen in Saint Teresa's life, what is the social and ecclesial environment, the Carmelite situation. What is Teresa responding to? What does she bring to this of herself that is original, as a woman?
- 4) **READING AS A COMMUNITY:**
Read out loud, pausing occasionally: By reading the same passage together we bring Teresa's words to life and are reminded of what she wanted to say to us.
- 5) **SILENCE:**
Allow for brief periods to allow the text to resonate in each one. You might like to underline some aspect or words that resonated (others listen in silence).
- 6) **EVOCATION-RESONANCE:**
What aspects struck you in this reading, from what St. Teresa said of God, of herself, of others? What key-words did you encounter in the text? Underline two or three.
- 7) **WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY OF US?**
"This history is my history" The idea is to make real the experience described by Saint Teresa.
 - In what way does the text speak to me and my life? What does it say about me?

- Is what Saint Teresa says done in your community? What suggestions come up?
- What does this text suggest, condemn and reveal about our society and modern world? Our responses should be specific and concrete.
- What does Saint Teresa suggest to us?

8) PRAYER:

Let us conclude as Teresa would have done, praying spontaneously and sincerely, 'in spirit and in truth'. There should be opportunity for anyone who wishes to pray out loud.

II DISCERN WITH TERESA

CRITERIA TO BEAR IN MIND.

Teresa's writings confront us with life, entice us to experience, challenge us to take part in a real adventure; i.e., not something theoretical or imaginary. Her writings can be read using these key-ideas, and enlightened by some of the following approaches:

PASTORAL: *A pastoral application.*

EXPERIENTIAL, MISTAGOGICAL PROPHETIC: *Teresa's initiation to the experience.*

BIBLICAL & LITURGICAL: *read the events of her life from the perspective of the Word of God*

CRISTOCENTRIC & BIBLICAL: *an invitation to keep one's eyes fixed on Christ.*

ECCLESIAL: *an experience of communion with the Church.*

COMMUNITARIAN: *a sense of fraternity, relating with everyone and everything.*

APOSTOLIC & MISSIONARY: *“For this... the Lord has brought us together”...*

INCULTURATION: *a valid message for our time and for every culture.*

TEXT THAT COULD BE READ IN COMMUNITY

We would like to suggest eight important texts. There are eight, but each community can choose the number of texts to study in-depth, depending on the kind and number of meetings you wish to hold.

1. Chap. 1: Key-moment in her Life
“ I BEGAN TO WAKE UP”
“It was You that...”
2. Chap. 4. 10 & 8: 5-6: *Who is the God of your experience?*
“THE GREAT GOODNESS OF GOD...”
3. Chap. 9: Conversion
“I TRUST TOTALLY IN GOD”
4. Chap. 13: Prayer and a beginner
“LOOK AT CHRIST WHO IS LOOKING AT US”
5. Chap 22: 10-18: Christ’s humanity
“CHRIST IS A VERY GOOD FRIEND”
6. Chap. 26.6; 27:1-4. 6: Christological experience and Teresian prophecy
“TO MAKE KNOWN TO MY CONFESSOR THE WHOLE STATE OF MY SOUL AND THE FAVORS GOD GRANTS ME”

7. **Chap. 32: 11-18: Foundation of the new Carmel**
“HIS MAJESTY COMMANDED ME TO STRIVE FOR THIS MONASTERY”
8. **Chap. 40: 1-10, 23-25: The final chapter from an open book**
“THIS IS THE WAY IN WHICH I NOW LIVE”

III CELEBRATE

The following are seven ways you might chose to do this. They are offered as a pedagogical guide so that each community can use them as seems fitting. They can serve, as additional material, and implemented in other situations.

The text could be used as something to share, or for a prayer service again, for a day of renewal, catechesis, a penitential service, as something to study and compare with the world outside, etc.

1. ***SHARE - DIALOGUES***
2. ***PRAYER SERVICE***
3. ***A DAY OF RECOLLECTION***
4. ***CATECHESIS***
5. ***PENITENTIAL SERVICE***
6. ***QUESTIONS FROM OUTSIDE***
7. ***CHALLENGE, COMMITMENT, ADVENTURE, PROPHECY***
8. ***CULTURAL EXPRESSION***

1. OPEN ENDED DIALOGUES

Small groups to read / reflect on the text.

Discuss with friends, disalced Carmelites, prayer groups...

Any of the Saint’s texts can be used for dialogue, being born out of dialogue.

Cf. Life 7.20: “A great evil it is for a soul to be on its own”

2. PRAY WITH THE CHURCH

Prepare a prayer service using the Teresian plan, starting from the text in question, so that it can be taken up by the community or our groups.

Saint Teresa always interrupts the accounts of her life to pray; her life is always in God's presence, it is to Him whom she loves that she refers.

Life 8.5: "Taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us"

3. A QUIET DAY OR DAY OF RECOLLECTION

Prepare for a day in the desert.

GUIDELINES FOR A DAY OF QUIET

Teresa loved solitude, as a chance to be with herself, with others and with the Lord. She searched in the solitude for Him who as at the same time distant and near; in this way she discovered the Truth.

Life 11.9: "Get accustomed ... to solitude and withdrawal"

4. CATECHESIS

Start from the text and expand on what it says, making explicit Teresa's teaching in the chapter just read, that invites us to an experience of God. Catechesis should carry out by one's own community.

Teresa really knows how to entice people and to influence those around her with her enthusiasm.

Life 38.18: "It is a powerful lesson for raising one's desires for pure truth"

5. A PENITENTIAL SERVICE

Starting from Teresa's text, prepare a reconciliation service, bringing together the various and nuanced elements that were present in Teresa's conversion experience.

Teresa's life changed radically when she met Christ. She went from striving alone to placing all her trust in God. It was God who changed her life.

Life 9.3: "I was very distrustful of myself and put all my trust in God"

6. QUESTIONS FROM OUTSIDE

Someone from outside the Carmelite circle suggests a theme, transposing Teresa's voice in a novel and incisive way. Ask someone to talk to us and, without fear, ask us questions.

How do others who are not Carmelites see us, from the viewpoint of this text?

Life 10.8: "I have always tried to find someone who would give me light"

7. CHALLENGE, COMMITMENT, ADVENTURE, PROPHECY

Open up ways, explore paths. Teresa, as a teacher, did not want us to stick to her words, nor with her experience. She encourages us to have our own, unique experience of the God who loved her. God, eternally new, challenges us to give Him our lives.

Saint Teresa is a lady who rouses others. She is totally immersed in the experience she is narrating. With this experience she was not ashamed to express herself in public, to witness to the God who loved her with His intimated mercy.

So, we suggest you accept Teresa's challenge and search in the text for concrete suggestions, to present in the 'market place' (i.e., the communications media)

Teresa's wish to proclaim the truth out loud and without fear.

An example: Distribute in your city centre a clear and well-known text from St. Teresa's writings, that invites peoples to let Christ look at them.

Life 25.17: "Oh, who will cry out for You, to tell everyone how faithful You are to your friends!"

8. A CULTURAL EXPRESSION

Look within the cultural domain, including the secular, to where you might find an event, or a song, a film, an item of news etc., which reflects, coincides with, or even contrasts with some aspect from Teresa writings.

The community should strive to convert the text into something cultural, using modern language and make it accessible to people who are searching today. Each has read St. Teresa from its own perspective, making her writings come alive, evoking her, and being questioned by her, in spite of the long time gap.

Life 17.5: "It is (a grace) ... to know how to describe (the Lord's favor) and explain it"