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Demystifying Mysticism

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Demystifying Mysticism

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Which “Mysticism”?

- In my tutorial, “Christian Mysticism,” I explored the mysticism of the Carmelite Order of religious sisters and brothers within the Roman Catholic Christian Church.

Thesis:

- The Carmelite tradition provides vocabulary and images to share the inexpressible, personal experience of the divine such that all persons may seek mystical experience in their lives.

The Carmelite tradition:

- St. Teresa of Avila
(1515-1582)
- St. John of the Cross
(1542-1591)
- St. Thérèse of Lisieux
(1873-1887)
- St. Elizabeth of the Trinity
(1880-1906)

Definition of
Carmelite
Mysticism:

The intimate personal experience of God.

Experience in general:

- What the experience of God and its elements:
 - “We cannot, of course, offer a logical definition of experience via genus and specific difference. Like existence and being, experience is so basic that it falls into no ready category. We can, however, work inductively, and by noting common elements in our meetings with reality, we can give a descriptive definition. We may distinguish five of these elements: contact, awareness, cognition, affectivity and passivity.” — Fire Within: Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and the Gospel on Prayer by Thomas Dubay

St. Teresa of Avila:

- Summary of the Waters:
 - Carrying a bucket to and from a river
 - Building an aqueduct to carry the water from the river to you
 - Being by the river
 - Being rained on

St. John of the Cross:

- Poetry and Counsel:
 - “What we need most in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God with our appetite and with our tongue, for the language he best hears is silent love.” — John of the Cross, Sayings of Light

St. Thérèse of Lisieux:

- The Little Way = Mysticism in ordinary life
- Not just the higher experiences, but also discovering God in the ordinary: a Mystical way of being:
 - "Then in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: O Jesus, my Love . . . my vocation, at last I have found it . . . My Vocation is Love!" (p. 194)
 - "But I want to seek out a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way that is very straight, very short, and totally new." (p. 207)

St. Elizabeth of the Trinity:

- “May my life be a continual prayer, a long act of love.”
- “It seems to me that I have found my heaven on earth, because my heaven is you, my God, and you are in my soul. You in me, and I in you – may this be my motto.”

Conclusion: Mysticism in the Ordinary

- Contemplation:
 - Through studying the examples of those four influential figures in Christian Spirituality, I saw how they model contemplative prayer as the accessible mode to Mysticism.

Bibliography:

- Thomas Dubay, S.M. *Fire Within* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989).
- Teresa of Avila. *The Interior Castle in The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila. Volume 2*. Trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980).
- Thérèse of Lisieux. *The Story of a Soul*. Trans by John Clarke, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1996)
- Selections from John of the Cross and Elizabeth of the Trinity provided.

Thank You for
Your Time!

- Are there any questions I can answer?