

FIRE WITHIN

Fr. Thomas Dubay

Session 1

1. On p. 10 Fr. Dubay sets out his thesis for this volume:

“The thesis is that the teachings of Teresa and John are nothing more or less than the integral gospel.”

Why would this statement be a surprise to many who have been discouraged from delving into these spiritual works? Do you have some of the same fears or pre-conceptions of the writings of these great saints? Is there anything you have experienced in these works that could help to encourage one of your directees to overcome their hesitation and make use of the teachings of John and Teresa to grow in their prayer?

2. As we read the author’s introduction to each saint in Chapt. 2, what characteristic strikes you the most in the personality and character of St. Teresa? And of St. John?
3. Give a few examples of ways in which one can have an “experience of God” and how this may change the person. Is it only in an advanced experience of God that true sanctity occurs in a person?
4. How can a too rigid application of a method of meditation obstruct our growth toward union with God?
5. When considering the divine gift of contemplation, how does the description of Faith as ‘a knowing loving’ help us to ‘prepare ourselves for the gift’?
6. Share your thoughts about St. Teresa’s 2 main images in describing growth in prayer, water and the crystal interior castle. Do you prefer one over the other in your own reflections?

Session 2

7. What are some principle means of growth in prayer, as taught by St Therese? (pg 112)
8. Some people have the misconception that progress is furthered by particular prayers, techniques and procedures. Reflect and share why this is not the key for growth. (pg 1126-127)
9. St John taught about detachment and how important this is in order to progress. What are some signs of attachment? What are some graces that come from detachment? (pg 135)
10. Explain the difference between a soul experiencing dark night of the senses vs dark night of the soul. (pg 160)
11. Explain the difference between dark night of the soul and someone experiencing mental/emotional problems. (pg 163)
12. What does a soul experience in transforming union? (pg 175-)

Session 3

13. What stood out for you the most in these Chapters?
14. In the Chapter "Miscellaneous Matters", what solutions does St. Teresa of Avila propose to reconcile the difficulty of meditating on the humanity of Christ when one struggles with imageless prayer? Page 219
15. In "Discerning Growth", what are indicators we are developing in our progress of prayer?

16. St. John of the Cross-gives some surprising reflections on Visions and locutions, How do we test these for authenticity? Page 261-262

17. The chapter on “Friendship” illuminates challenges and gifts in human friendships. Discuss these. How would you work these themes in your future Spiritual Guidance for laywomen? Page 282-283

18. What was your reflection on the Opening Chapter of Spiritual Direction, did it cause any need for changes in the way you personally approach your role as a Spiritual Director?

Given the gravity of the role of Spiritual Director what specific qualities does Sts. John and Teresa look for in a Spiritual Director? Page 293, 300