

COMING TO THE FONT
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ST. TERESA OF JESUS
CARMEL AND THE HOLY TRINITY

The Trinity and the Interior Castle

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TERESA OF AVILA: SEVENTH MANSIONS: CHAPTER ONE

They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them. (John 14.21)
Here all three Persons (of the Trinity) communicate themselves to it, speak to it, and explain those words of the Lord in the Gospel: that he and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul that loves him and keeps his commandments.” (Teresa of Avila)
We’re in the Seventh Mansions of the Interior Castle. Teresa explains the difference between the Unitive Prayer of the Fifth Mansions and the Unitive Prayer of the Seventh Mansions.
(Unitive = Union with Christ)

BACKGROUND

The Interior Castle is about Prayer. Prayer can be separated into two categories:

Ascetic Prayer: In ascetic prayer we initiate interaction with God through vocal prayer and meditation. The first three Mansions of the Interior Castle cover this material.

Mystical Prayer: God drives the activity in mystical prayer. Teresa writes about this in Mansions four through seven.

We can separate mystical prayer into two categories:

Illuminative Prayer: Through illuminative prayer God enlightens our will and understanding. Teresa explains this in the Fourth Mansions. This section includes several posts on the *Prayer of Quiet*

Unitive Prayer: In Mansions five through seven Teresa writes about unitive prayer. Unitive prayer leads us to an intimate relationship with Christ “*where the most secret things pass between God and the soul.*” Unitive prayer covers 2/3 of the book and is the focal point of the Interior Castle.

AMPLIFIED UNDERSTANDING

Teresa explains that in the Fifth Mansions the soul doesn’t fully understand the “raptures” or mystical prayer experiences it has. But by the time the soul reaches the Seventh Mansions “*our good God now desires to remove the scales from the soul’s eyes and let it see and understand, although in a strange way, something of the favor he grants it.*”

THE TRINITY REVEALS ITSELF TO THE SOUL

We discover in the Seven Mansions that unity with God includes all three Persons of the Trinity being revealed to the soul. Notice Teresa's carefully worded phrasing that the three Persons of the Trinity are "distinct" yet "one God alone". "When the soul is brought into that dwelling place, the Most Blessed Trinity, all three Persons, through an [intellectual vision](#), is revealed to it through a certain representation of the truth. First there comes an enkindling in the spirit in the manner of a cloud of magnificent splendor; and these Persons are distinct, and through an admirable knowledge the soul understands as a most profound truth that all three Persons are one substance and one power and one knowledge and one God alone."

ALL THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY SPEAK TO THE SOUL

"Here all three Persons communicate themselves to it, speak to it, and explain those words of the Lord in the Gospel: that he and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul that loves him and keeps his commandments."

Teresa is referencing Jesus' words in John 14.23: "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." See [Indwelling](#).

THE ONGOING PRESENCE OF THE TRINITY

"Each day this soul becomes more amazed, for these Persons never seem to leave it any more, but it clearly beholds, in the way that was mentioned, that they are within it. In the extreme interior, in some place very deep within itself, the nature of which it doesn't know how to explain, because of a lack of learning, it perceives this divine company."

SUMMARY

In the Seventh Mansions:

- 1- God amplifies our understanding of his activity in our life.
- 2- All three persons of the Trinity speak to the soul and explain the "words of the Lord in the Gospel: that he and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul that loves him and keeps his commandments."
- 3- Experiencing the presence of the Trinity is constant instead of intermittent.