

St Teresa of Avila – Humility in Prayer

When asking a favor of some person of importance would anyone be so ill-mannered and thoughtless as not first to consider how best to address him in order to make a good impression and give him no cause for offense? Surely he would think over his petition carefully and his reason for making it, especially if it were for something specific and important as our good Jesus tells us our petitions should be. It seems to me that this point deserves serious attention. My Lord, could you not have included all in one word by saying “Father, give us whatever is good for us?” After all, to one who understands everything so perfectly, what need is there to say more?

O Eternal Wisdom, between you and your Father that was enough; that was how you prayed in the garden. You expressed your desire and fear but surrendered yourself to his will. But as for us, my Lord, you know that we are less submissive to the will of your Father and need to mention each thing separately in order to stop and think whether it would be good for us, and otherwise not ask for it. You see, the gift our Lord intends for us may be by far the best, but if it is not what we wanted we are quite capable of flinging it back in his face. That is the kind of people we are; ready cash is the only wealth we understand.

Therefore, the good Jesus bids us repeat these words, this prayer for his kingdom to come in us: Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. See how wise our Master is! But what do we mean when we pray for this kingdom? That is what I am going to consider now, for it is important that we should understand it. Our good Jesus placed these two petitions side by side because he realized that in our inadequacy we could never fittingly hallow, praise, exalt or glorify this holy name of the eternal Father unless he enabled us to do so by giving us his kingdom here on earth. But since we must know what we are asking for and how important it is to pray for it without ceasing and to do everything in our power to please him who is to give it to us, I should now like to give you my own thoughts on the matter.

Of the many joys that are found in the kingdom of heaven, the greatest seems to me to be the sense of tranquility and well-being that we shall experience when we are free from all concern for earthly things. Glad because others are glad and for ever at peace, we shall have the deep satisfaction of seeing that

by all creatures the Lord is honored and praised, and his name blessed. No one ever offends him, for there everyone loves him. Loving him is the soul's one concern. Indeed it cannot help but love him, for it knows him. Here below our love must necessarily fall short of that perfection and constancy, but even so how different it would be, how much more like that of heaven, if we really knew our Lord!

From the book *Way of Perfection* by Saint Teresa of Avila, virgin

(*Obras de la gloriosa madre Sta Teresa de Jesus*, Tomo 1, Madrid, 1752: 30:1-4 pp. 526-528)