Structure of Interior Castle

By Teresa of Avila
Summarized by Dwight Judy ©

Mansions I
Life concerned with “worldly” cares; prayer sometimes; some insight into mystery of sin and grace; little light from “king’s” royal chamber.

Mansions II
Receptive to Christ’s grace through external means, such as books, sermons, good friendships, trials; need is to establish disciplined prayer life.

Prayer of Mansions III
Recollection
Life of disciplined meditation established; fondness for long periods of prayer and ascetic practices, time well used, charity practiced; might not heed the call to greater perfection; need for humility. Practices are like silkworm spinning cocoon (referenced in Mansions V).

Prayer of Mansions IV
Quiet
Contemplation or infused prayer begins; letting go of formal meditation when contemplation comes; passive recollection, prayer centered from God within the self given by God without effort, caterpillar being transformed by God within the cocoon.

Prayer of Mansions V
Union
Butterfly emerges, prayer experiences beyond sense; God touching person at core of being; visitations by God to self; internal pain when not being visited; “major surgery” transforming person from inside out.

Mansions VI
Ecstatic union in prayer; “out of body” experiences; extended prayer times, drawn out of senses into divine presence and taught there; betrothal, promise of divine union; intense inner journey.

Mansions VII
Divine union or divine marriage, certainty of divine presence at all times; able to be in service in world without disruptions of Mansions V and VI; death of butterfly; fruit of spiritual marriage is good works.
Notes on Teresa of Avila and Prayer
Dwight Judy

Definition of Recollection:

“The prayer is called ‘recollection,’ because the soul collects its faculties together and enters within itself to be with its God.”¹

Imagining the interior palace (castle)…

Well, let us imagine that within us is an extremely rich palace, built entirely of gold and precious stones; in sum, built for a lord such as this. Imagine, too, as is indeed so, that you have a part to play in order for the palace to be so beautiful; for there is no edifice as beautiful as is a soul pure and full of virtues. The greater the virtues the more resplendent the jewels. Imagine, also, that in this palace dwells this mighty King who has been gracious enough to become your Father; and that He is seated upon an extremely valuable throne, which is your heart.

This may seem trifling at the beginning; I mean, this image I've used in order to explain recollection. But the image may be very helpful--to you especially--for since we women have no learning, all of this imagining is necessary that we may truly understand that within us lies something incomparably more precious than what we see outside ourselves. Let's not imagine that we are hollow inside.²
