

11. Believing in the Sun

You are running up against the classical obstacle: the feeling of getting nowhere, of wasting time at mental prayer. Perhaps—who knows?—you feel the secret humiliation offering God only a formless, desperately empty prayer. And you are already discouraged. Are you forgetting that you are not alone in your mental prayer, that God is there with you? You must not judge the value of this time of prayer solely from the point of view of your own activity. God acts too, and acts first. His actions may well be more important than yours!

When you are sunbathing, you do not need to scurry about to get the sun to warm and penetrate you. You need only to be there, offered to the sun's rays. The same is true of prayer: we need only to expose ourselves to the Sun.

But we must believe in the Sun and in its action. It is our faith that matters. It alone perceives the sanctifying action of God, and opens us up and surrenders us to this action.

So never begin your mental prayer without taking cognizance of God present to you, and offer yourself to his active and efficacious love.

And persevere: it is because of your perseverance that God will transform you and divinize you, little by little.

If you are tempted to lose heart, look at the end point to which fidelity to mental prayer has brought the saints. The powerful desire that impelled you to walk toward God, the desire for a very intimate union with him, will reawaken. Look! Here's a passage from St. John of the Cross. It can restore your courage:

“In thus allowing God to work in it, the soul...is at once illumined and transformed in God, and God communicates to it His supernatural Being, in such wise that it appears to be God Himself, and has all that God Himself has.

...all the things of God and the soul are one in participant transformation; and the soul seems to be God rather than a soul, and is indeed God by participation; although it is true that its natural being, though thus transformed, is as distinct from the Being of God as it was before, even as the window has likewise a nature distinct from that of the ray, though the ray gives it brightness.”*

Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book 2, Chapter 5, Paragraph 7, in volume one of *The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross*, translated and edited by E. Allison Peers, Newman Press, 1935, 1964.