

TERESA AND THE TASK OF REFORM AS ‘RENOVATIO ACCOMMODATA’

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SITUATING THE RELECTURE OF TERESA AND THE COUNCIL

The closing talks at this conference on the occasion of the fifth centenary of the birth of St. Teresa of Jesus cannot attempt chiefly to add still more detail to the many insights into Teresa's life and writings that have surfaced in the course of this interuniversity congress or at the interuniversity conferences of the last two years organized by the Universidad Católica “Santa Teresa de Jesús” de Ávila (UCAV). Even less could these talks be expected to provide a resume of what we have learned about Teresa as a “*Maestra de Vida*”. In the following reflections, I would like to consider what Teresa offers to the wider Church and society by asking about her contribution to what might well sound today like an isolated and now anachronistic task defined at the Second Vatican Council – even then enunciated without universal enthusiasm – as the *renovatio accommodata*, an updating retrieval, of consecrated life. It might seem too narrow a focus for concluding reflections on such a fascinating and attractive figure: the 500 years of Teresa seen through the focus of 50 years Vatican II, the decree *Perfectae caritatis* and the current and seemingly out of place “Year of Consecrated Life” (doubly anachronistic in the German title, “*Jahr der Orden*”). The question will be what a hermeneutics of conciliar reform stands to gain by looking for a hermeneutics of Teresian reform and by asking how the conciliar decree on religious life, *Perfectae caritatis*, while never citing Teresa, can show new signs of life when read in conjunction with the *Camino de Perfección*.

Teresa and the Second Vatican Council? Especially if we abstract from the difficult historical situation in which Teresa herself lived and wrote, worked and prayed, our own difficult interpretative context today for this question about Teresa and the Council must seem particularly at odds with our legitimate desire to celebrate Teresa's birth, genius and legacy. The decline of “consecrated life” since the Council – and with

it particularly the decline of the voice and "outreach" it provided women in the Church prior to the Council – is so obvious, that one might easily be reminded of the composite legend of the Sibyl of Cumae, who is said to have offered the last Roman king, Tarquinius the Proud, the chance to purchase for a stately price the oldest Greek collection of Sibylline Books. When Tarquinius declined, the Cumaean Sibyl burned a third of the material and offered the king what remained for the full original price. After he declined again, she burnt a further third and offered the remaining third at the full original price. Tarquinius' advisors inspected the material at his request and urged him to agree to the purchase, and so the Sibylline Books soon became one of the most treasured and closely guarded foundations of the Roman Republic. Even without associating these stories with the later Sibilline Oracles which they inspired or with that account of the unfulfilled death-wish of the shrinking Cumaean Sibyl in Petronius' *Satyricon*, cited by T.S. Eliot in 1922 at the beginning of *The Wasteland* in order to describe the "*Zeitgefühl*" of the decade following World War I, the question posed to us by the anniversary of Teresa's birth is whether the way of life described by Teresa's writings is something that Church and society can afford to ignore. In looking at Teresa's legacy against the background of the largely unsuccessful Conciliar program of religious renewal, we have before us a question similar to that posed to Tarquinius' advisors. How urgently do Church and society need Teresa's writings?

THE COUNCIL AND THE TASK OF REFORM AS 'RENOVATIO ACCOMMODATA'

The fortieth anniversary of the Council produced a good deal of historical research to document the debates prior to and especially at the Council, which after intense negotiations could agree in the end on sixteen hybrid documents, in which positions both of continuity and discontinuity with the recent Roman Catholic tradition and practice found their expression. Though never completely hidden, the heterogeneous character of the documents has become more evident in the last 15 years than ever before. The recent debates about the Council's legacy now at its fiftieth anniversary have focused more on the question of the normative value of the factual tensions in the documents and in their post-conciliar reception. The number of interpreters has become smaller who would accept or reject the Council's final negotiated statements as singularly innovative or singularly repetitive. Four of the leading interpretations of the

Council in the immediately post-Conciliar period have thus been rendered obsolete: that the Council documents as a whole are radically new, a break with the past, and should be accepted or rejected for that reason; or that the documents as a whole merely restate conventional positions, and should be accepted or rejected for that reason. There is little debate today that the documents are in fact compromise texts revealing the intense negotiations that occurred between 1962 and 1965, but the debate today has shifted to whether these contrary positions are contradictory or capable of and worthy of synthesis. If contradictory, then we must revert to the polarization of the conciliar and immediately post-conciliar years and decide either-or for simply one of the lines of argument. Where, however, what since 2005 has been called a "hermeneutic of reform"¹ can establish a plausible synthesis for positions of continuity and discontinuity, the texts themselves can be granted a higher degree of cogency and the path forward can be both genuinely conciliar and conciliatory. That kind of development is then possible which Newman called "genuine". Genuine development is the only alternative to corruptions caused by stagnation or rupture, by a deficiency in innovation or by its excess. It is just such genuine development for which also the twin hermeneutic described by Paul Ricoeur in his last great work is needed, the joint task of an *ars memoriae* and its corresponding *ars oblivionis*². As expressed in the title of the Council's decree on religious life, albeit in an expression formulated prior to the Council, *renovatio accommodata* names a program on two fronts, both a retrieval and a refiguration of sources. Our questions about Teresa and the Council are therefore also twofold: what did the Council ask us to recall, what did it ask us to forget about the theory and practice of consecrated life, and what do Teresa's writings teach us about each of these complementary arts?

It would take us beyond the limits of these reflections to trace the dynamic of something like a *renovatio accommodata* in the other agreed-upon documents of the Council. The contentious issues were often too specific to each constitution, decree or declaration as to allow for many generalizations about the overall direction of their content. Corresponding to the diversity of controversies, there were also shifting

¹ On Benedict XVI's suggestion and sense of this hermeneutic cf. K. KOCH et al.

² Ricoeur, P., *Memory, History, Forgetting*.

groupings of the proponents of continuity and discontinuity, as is clear, say, in the question of religious liberty, in which the U.S. bishops were more decisively in favor of the innovative position than were their European counterparts, who, by contrast, were then more decidedly in favor of innovations on matters of collegiality. Whether the voices of continuity or discontinuity made up the majority and minority positions on any given controversy varied as well. So in the debate on the Pastoral Constitution between those who wanted to stress the "*gaudium et spes*" of the contemporary world and those who warned the Council fathers not to overlook the world's "*luctus et angor*", if they had any realistic hope to be close to that world's own self-understanding and to provide today's world with new hope. This final document adopted by the Council is paradigmatic, the last in execution but in some ways the first in intention. *Gaudium et spes* was viewed by its proponents as "the promised land" of the Council, into which it crossed only on December 7, 1965, the day before the Council closed.

In 1963 and 1964, the well-known Reformed theologian and formal observer from the World Council of Churches, Lukas Vischer, made a successful intervention to critique early drafts of the Pastoral Constitution for the unbiblical, inflationary, and overly positive sense of the phrase, "the signs of the times"³. The restriction of the phrase in the final document to just one, nuanced instance (with the need to scrutinize such ambiguous signs in light of the Gospel: GS 4) was a reflection of Vischer's general worry that, precisely because the draft «[...] gives too innocent a picture of the world, it cannot mediate any real hope»⁴ to that world. When used to recall the eschatologically highlighted mix of hope and anxiety in our times and to "forget" the temptation to an easy accomodationalism, the figure of the signs of the times is more nuanced and suggestive than that of a definitive sign of God's favor, with which it was otherwise still being confused at the Council.

³ Cf. Marcos McGrath Papers (MCG), University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46556, CMCG 1/03 Document: «Remarks on Signa Temporum by Lukas Vischer». The typed, undated memorandum, entitled «signa temporum» and extending over five and a half pages, is hand-signed by Lukas Vischer on page 6 together with his Roman address and telephone number during the Council. For the importance of Vischer's memorandum cf. Moeller 1967, 251-260. In contrast to the account offered by H.-J. Sanders 2005, Vischer is not arguing for an expansion but for a restriction of the this Motiv in the Constitution.

⁴ L. Vischer, *Memorandum*, 6.

Less successful (and in this case thus part of the minority) was the intervention of Karl Rahner, whose address (together with that of O. von Nell-Breuning) to the German Bishops Conference at Fulda on August 31, 1965, argued against adopting GS as a Pastoral Constitution and suggested assigning the project to a postconciliar commission or demoting the text to the status of a simple letter⁵, due to what Rahner describes in his widely circulated position paper as an excessive and at times utopian optimism and moralism following upon the notable absence of a theology of sin or a theology of the Cross⁶. Although in the end the German bishops were persuaded by their French counterparts to return to their initial support for GS, the *de facto* critiques by Vischer and Rahner, despite the difference in the support they found at the Council, both help us today to identify the *de facto* tensions within the adopted text itself and to assign greater normative weight to the many instances where the Pastoral Constitution did thematize the luctus et angor of our times as a basis for a critical solidarity with the contemporary world. The greatest potential of GS lies in the synthesis made possible and cogent by a hermeneutics of reform.

Where are the voices of continuity and discontinuity still identifiable in the decree on religious life? The opening words of the decree, *Perfectae caritatis*, reflect the theology of religious life enunciated notably by Thomas Aquinas and elaborated in a long draft by the Roman schools and the Congregation for Religious in a year and a half of intense work prior to the Council. Developing the pericope of the rich young man (Mark 10.17-31 et par.), this theology saw the core of religious life not in universally binding commandments of Christian life but in the optional counsels, to which one could, but need not, bind oneself: «If you would be perfect [...]». The chief goal of religious life is on this account the quest for personal perfection by means of a voluntary self-obligation to poverty, chastity and especially obedience. By this account, the different forms of religious life derive their specificity chiefly from their different works in the realm of secondary, communal goals in the many fields of the Church's mission of proclamation, prayer and service to the needy. Correspondingly there was a tendency

⁵ Rahner's suggestions are quoted by Turbanti 2000, 623, n. 16.

⁶ Cf. Turbanti, 2000, 617-626; and H.-J. SANDERS 2005, 650-663. The well-known address was somehow not included by the editors in the two volumes of Rahner's contributions to the Council, but can be found in the Rahner-Archiv München, E. Klinger Nr. 476.

to privilege the life of contemplation over secondary fields of active ministry. The dissatisfaction with this conventional view was evident at the Council: it manifested itself in the progressive reduction in the length of the document, in the unusually critical outcomes of voting on preliminary drafts, especially for the first two-thirds of the emerging document, the high number of changes (or *modi*) demanded, and in the unsuccessful but telling suggestions, especially following the treatment of consecrated life in *Lumen gentium* (and there, only after the treatment of bishops, clergy, laity, and the general call to holiness), to forego a decree on consecrated life altogether⁷. This discontinuity to what had become something of the conventional theology set new accents of its own, chiefly ecclesial ones, in line with the Council's general ecclesiological thematic. The Church ministries to its own members and to the world of its time were now seen as the primary goal of consecrated life (so e.g. in the interventions and commentaries of Fr. Wulf, as peritus, and 1968, with frequent reference to the critique of Thomistic "individualism" or even "egotism", who offers an "Ignatian" alternative by inscribing the contemplative dimension of consecrated life into the primacy of active service)⁸. This ecclesiocentric innovation was not only concerned with the search for forms of contemplation immanent within action in Church and society, and not only with a diversification and pluralization of consecrated life to include secular institutes, but with an new generalization of the call to holiness and contemplation which had come to be seen – despite warnings from classical Thomists (and Carmel experts) such as Garrigou-Lagrange – *nolens volens* as an undue privilege of the religious orders.

The ecclesial programmatic of the Council demanded on the one hand a new subordination of religious institutes to the local churches (including of course the restriction of papal exemption). In a well-documented commentary on the decree, Joachim Schmiedl goes so far as to make the following claim about the decree on consecrated life:

The main concern “Die Hauptsorge” of the bishops was an appropriate regulation of the relationship of the orders to the dioceses, this in fact in the sense of an

⁷ Cf. the detailed accounts by Schmiedel 1999, 2005, admittedly in an all too single-minded apologetic for the rise of secular institutes).

⁸ Fr. Wulf, 1968.

inscription of the orders into the pastoral ministry structures controlled by the bishops themselves⁹.

This explains the greater episcopal interest in religious orders of priests than in institutes of sisters or unordained brothers. It also introduces an additional ambivalence to the dynamic of accommodation: Whereas the voices of discontinuity began by rightly pointing out the insufficiency of replacing a theology of vocation with a juridical account of the different types of vows and cloister¹⁰, the increased programmatic subordination of consecrated life to local churches generated the need for and stress upon new regulations of canon law.

On the other hand, the ecclesial programmatic of the Council also promoted the application of what earlier had been most associated with religious life as a distinct form of Christian community to what was now identified as Christian existence in general. Whereas the call to holiness is meant *in recto* univocally for all Christians (if sought by different paths), the evangelical counsels to which relatively few consecrate themselves literally are nevertheless an analogical sign of the calling of all Christians. This significance of the evangelical counsels for Christian existence as a whole had already been expressed by the Council in *Lumen gentium* 44:

The profession of the evangelical counsels, then, appears as a sign (*tamquam signum*) which can and ought to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their Christian vocation. The people of God have no lasting city here below, but look forward to one that is to come. Since this is so, the religious state, whose purpose is to free its members from earthly cares, more fully manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below.

This is the insight into the ecclesiological and eschatological semiotics of the evangelical counsels with which the decree *Perfectae caritatis* begins and from which it takes its name:

The sacred synod has already shown in the constitution on the Church that the pursuit of perfect charity -*Perfectae caritatis*- through the evangelical counsels draws its origin from the doctrine and example of the Divine Master and reveals itself as a splendid sign of the heavenly kingdom (*praeclarum signum Regni caelestis*). Now it intends to treat of the life and discipline of those institutes whose

⁹ Schmiedl, 2005, 501.

¹⁰ Fr. Wulf 1967.

members make profession of chastity, poverty and obedience and to provide for their needs in our time (PC, Nr. 1).

The explication of the eschatological and ecclesiological semiotic of the evangelical counsels is mentioned again with explicit reference to chastity (Nr. 12: *peculiare signum bonorum caelestium*) and to poverty (Nr. 13: *signum praesertim hodie multum aestimatum*). Obedience, too, while not explicitly called a sign in PC, finds its prefiguration in the acts, sufferings and sacrifice of Jesus (in the end, avoiding the suggestions of *holocaustum* in the first draft) and its refiguration in the wider Church as a whole. The whole Church that is called to something like poverty, chastity and obedience is one that lives in the eschatological awareness of all that is fragile and fragmentary about it, all that lets it look to another than itself for its hoped for perfection. One of the central tensions in the decree is between familiar passages of continuity stressing the proper identities of the vowed groups consecrating themselves in some concrete way to the evangelical counsels and more innovative passages situating the semiotic logic and the pragmatic of vowed existence in the context of the wider Church.

THE CAMINO DE PERFECCIÓN AND THE HERMENEUTIC OF TERESIAN REFORM

Teresa's "short opusculum" of 1566¹¹ focuses on interior prayer and the internal and external conditions that would foster it. The notion of perfection which is at the heart of the book and which later supplied its title refers less to the evangelical counsels than to the desired perfection of interior prayer, the path leading in progressive interiority to collectedness (*recogimiento*), peace (*quietud*) and union with God (*unión con Dios*). To borrow the criterion "type" from J.H. Newman¹², the hermeneutic of reform in reading the Council 50 years after its conclusion would need to involve a collective examination of conscience about whether individuals and specific communities within the Church as well as the ecclesial community as a whole have developed those new forms of Christian existence needed to preserve the "type" of a community that understands and

¹¹ The following references follow the German translation by Ulrich Dobhan and Elisabeth Peeters, *Teresa von Avila, Weg der Vollkommenheit* (Freiburg, Herder spectrum 2003, 4th Edition 2012), following the Spanish edition by D. de Pablo Maroto of what appears to be the first redaction of the work (1566?) as represented in the Ms. of El Escorial.

¹² J.H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.

responds to the attraction of the call to be perfected in interior prayer, or whether we have become with one another that young rich man who, renouncing the search for perfection, went away sad because he possessed much else.

The proximity of the *Camino de Perfección* to the Conciliar voices of continuity might appear deceptively easy to identify. Teresa seeks by her own reform to establish a distinct community within the Church in which the search for the perfection of individuals in interior prayer can better be fostered. For a hermeneutics of Conciliar reform the question is what it would mean for this devotedness to interior prayer to be understood synthetically both as its own special charism and also as an ecclesiological-eschatological sign in such a way that ecclesial particularity and ecclesial universality, contemplation and service mutually condition and foster one another. As a mere “*letrado*”, at best, allow me to set aside in the following reflections the ladder of perfection within interior prayer itself to address the ecclesiological implications of the *Camino's* significance as it regards interior prayer, taken first as a concern of the few and then as a sign of a concern of all.

Teresa's contention that she is writing at the request and for the benefit of her sisters reflects a long-standing trope, but in this case it does seem to identify the immediate aim of her work. It serves her and her Carmelite community's shared intentions of renewal and innovation for the community itself, which is to be reformed so as to better provide the conditions conducive to interior prayer. At the same time, chapter 34 of the *Camino* urges the sisters to share this vision beyond the Carmelite community. The writing and re-writing of this work underscore its exoteric intentions and readership. What the “accommodation” of this reform program of interior prayer can mean for newer forms of ecclesial community, still considered at a more particular level than what is demanded of every Christian, is evident at our conference at the Universidad Católica de Ávila (UCAV) thanks to the hospitality and academic creativity of the secular institute, the Cruzadas de Santa María. Even apart from the pastoral activities that can be integrated into such new communities, there is an ecclesial meaning (sometimes poorly named an ecclesial “function”) to particular ecclesial communities' placing particular emphasis upon the importance of interior prayer. The Council took up the theme of pluralization not only to defend and expand the plurality of religious orders into new forms of consecrated life, but also to concretize its

reception of the trope of Christ's three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king as well the Church's participation in it. Everyone baptized into the Christian community and notably the local churches are called to all three forms of service, but, as internal differentiation of labor is a sign of any advanced society, so too is it a sign of the grace of Christians called and gifted particularly for one of these offices. Local churches will not correspond to their three-fold calling adequately without the help of sub-communities dedicated to proclamation, prayer, and aid to the most needy. No local Church would live up to its calling which would neglect the theoretical and practical issues of its day, a life of vibrant prayer, or care of those in need. Truly, no Christian can declare himself such a specialist in just one of these offices as to be unconcerned about the others, say a theologian or bishop who would not pray, or a social worker who would not believe, or a man or woman of interior prayer or even well organized exterior prayer would not see the spiritual and physical sufferings of this world as somehow their own. A hermeneutics of reform will reject the rivalry between office and charism in the Church. In the call to a share in Christ's threefold mission, charism will discover its need for the unity provided by office, and office will discover its need for the vitality of charism. Charism without office is blind, office without charism is empty, formalistic, authoritarian but without genuine authority. Only where room is left for particular charismata in the distribution of these “offices”, where the temptation is overcome to have an administratively “managed” Church, can the Church flourish as a “*totum potestativum*”, a whole of heterogeneous parts, in each of which the Spirit is “*vivificans*” in different ways and degrees¹³. Communities dedicated especially to interior prayer are vital for the local churches to answer their call to share in the three-fold ministry of Christ: not by delegating away any one of the missions, but by energizing each of them with resources beyond their own. It belongs to a hermeneutic of reform to acknowledge the particular identity of communities and individuals particularly attentive to interior prayer (and to other charismata) as vital to the local and universal Church and to acknowledge the concern for the mission and unity of the wider Church as vital to these particular communities and individuals.

¹³ On the structure of a *totum potestativum* of heterogenous parts cf. Oeing-Hanhoff, Muniz, Husserl, Schenk.

The key insight of GS, that Christians share not just in the *gaudium et spes* of their age, but also in its *luctus et angor*, suggests the ecclesial importance of Alasdair MacIntyre's analysis of a contemporary society suffering under “over-management”. MacIntyre's influential text, *After Virtue*, sees a good deal of consensus between Max Weber and his critics on:

How managerial authority is justified in bureaucracies. For those modern sociologists who have put in the forefront of their accounts of managerial behavior aspects ignored or underemphasized by Weber's (account) –as for example, Likert has emphasized the manager's need to influence the motives of his subordinates and March and Simon his need to ensure that those subordinates argue from premises which will produce agreement with his own prior conclusions– have still seen the manager's function as that of controlling behavior and suppressing conflict in such a way as to reinforce rather than to undermine Weber's account of managerial justification. Thus there is a good deal of evidence that actual managers do embody in their behavior this one key part of bureaucratic behavior, a conception which presupposes the truth of emotivism¹⁴.

Wherever the episcopal office or the local church or even a well-disciplined religious community has been tempted by the managerial paradigm dominant in the “world of our times”, it has misunderstood the call of the Council for a less unidirectional distribution of office and charism. A second “service” to the wider church offered by particular communities of consecrated life emphasizing interior prayer is to help the Church identify the “*luctus et angor*” immanent in managerial models of the episcopacy, the local church and communities of consecrated life. There is much to “retrieve” for our times in the lessons from Teresa's experience of bishops like the then bishop of Avila, Álvaro de Mendoza, and of the quite different styles of episcopal leadership identified by Teresa. The earlier views of religious life from Thomas Aquinas' *De perfectione spiritalis vitae* (Horst 2006) and Teresa's *Camino de Perfección* to the initial drafts of *Perfectae caritatis* all acknowledge the importance of the episcopal order for religious life, like its importance for the work of theologians or politicians, especially when questions arise about how well or poorly the doctrine and mores generated by religious, theologians and politicians fit the overall well-being of the actual and potential members of Christ's mystical body. A simplistically neo-Platonic schema of cascading top-down derivation or its contemporary managerial

¹⁴ MacIntyre, 2007, 26f.

counterpart was arguably the *opinio communis* neither before nor after the Council. An all too managed Church would stifle those structures of charismatic subsidiarity that should be tested by office, not contracted for or “managed” by it; otherwise, there will follow a leveling of the local churches, depriving them of the outside resources they need to fulfill their mission. A synthesis of the esteem for the local churches and for consecrated life is the cogent path of genuine reform. Whatever newer forms or older forms of Christian life and service could and should be developed to better include more men and especially more women in the threefold mission of the church, little stands to be gained by first reducing the vision of office to that of a manager and then recruiting a few more ecclesial CEO's. The downward spiral of recent statistics would only be accelerated. What is needed is a different vision of the relationship of office and charism, not the least the charism of interior prayer.

Closely related is therefore a third “service” provided by individuals and particular communities, who by their dedication to interior prayer warn against too pragmatic a view of the Church's mission, imitating the one-dimensionality of domination by instrumental reason that writers of the “Frankfurt School” have diagnosed for the wider society of recent centuries¹⁵. A “functionalistic” interpretation of consecrated life would share the dialectic common to all functionalisms, namely that they tend to function badly. Instrumentalization of what is more than a means to an end produces a dysfunctional instrument. The suspicion of interior prayer as egotism misses two points: that God is more than an arbitrary pleasure of the few, and that the lack of obvious pragmatic functionality in seeking him has its own additional “function” of witnessing to the limits of functionalism in an age suffering under the absolutization of instrumental reason. In an age crippled by pragmatism, that which is not chiefly sought for its *pragmata* is of eminent practical value. Already in the Older Covenant, the “form” of the entire decalogue had sought the liberation of creatures from the obligation of playing God for other creatures seeking to be fulfilled by them; creatures were set free by my letting God alone be God, the Teresian «*Solo Dios basta*».

¹⁵ Cf. H. Marcuse, *The One-Dimensional Man*, and M. Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*, appropriately entitled in its German version, *Die Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft*; cf. also M. Horkheimer and Th. W. Adorno, *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

With this third ecclesiastical contribution of the search for the perfection of interior prayer as an option of the few, the line has also been crossed to its universal ecclesiological significance. It is not just the evangelical counsels common to the many forms of consecrated life that can provide here an ecclesiological and eschatological sign. The more characteristically Teresian focus on the quest for the perfection of interior prayer signals a dimension that should be present –and yet will to some degree nevertheless remain deficient– in every Christian existence. The ever imperfect search for the perfection of the relation to God in prayer is a necessary, but of course still insufficient, condition of Christian discipleship as such. Especially in the last eight chapters of her *Camino*, Teresa reminds us that the path towards the perfection of prayer will never be travelled to the end. The perfection of prayer remains an *acquirenda*, just as we remain *viatores*. Meditating on the text of the Our Father, the *Camino de Perfección* exemplifies how interior prayer flows from and in turn enlivens our attempts to pray the written prayers of the Church. Without interior prayer, liturgy would lapse into ritualism, advertising or carnival; proclamation, into ideology and self-assertion; and pastoral leadership, into management and the search for one's own honor and power. What Christianity has to offer to the world is first and foremost the chance to approach God. In declaring Teresa 1970 a doctor of the Church, the first woman to be acknowledged as such, Pope Paul VI pointed to this theocentric and Christological dimension in the teaching of the *Maestra de Vida*, whose acceptance of and reply to divine love led her to «wisdom in divine things, wisdom in human things [...]». The Church of our time needs this wisdom. «It comes to us just when we are tempted by the great noise and the great business of the world outside to yield to the frenzy of modern life»¹⁶.

This “way of perfection” cannot be the exclusive reserve of a few, no more than can those three gifts that prepare, accompany, and grow stronger from the progressive perfection of interior prayer: the love of neighbor (Chapter 6-11), letting go (Chapter 12-14), and humility (Chapter 15-23). They, too, are necessary but not yet sufficient elements of every genuine Christian existence and of a living Church. They are also a

¹⁶ Paul VI, *Homilía en la misa de proclamación de santa Teresa de Jesús como Doctora de la Iglesia* (1970).

place where what is called *interior* prayer shows its essential *exteriority*, its relation to the Other and to others. Here is finally the place where the synthesis of *nova et vetera* in a hermeneutic of reform, Conciliar and Teresian, should be sought. There is much we all have yet to learn about ourselves, our Church and our times from Teresa of Jesus, *Maestra de vida*.

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