

John of the Cross

Spiritual Canticle 12



John of the Cross : *'The Spiritual Canticle'*.

Stanza 12

O spring like crystal!
If only, on your silvered-over face
You would suddenly form
The eyes I have desired,
Which I bear sketched deep within my heart.

- 'Faith is the only means by which one can reach true union and spiritual betrothal with God: "I will betroth you to myself in faith"(Hosea 2:20). O faith of Christ, my Spouse, would that you might show me clearly now the truths of my Beloved which you have infused into my soul and which are covered with obscurity and darkness'(12.2).

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- It is 'crystal', full of light, because 'it concerns Christ, her Spouse'(12.3).
- It is a spring: 'The water that I shall give will become in you a spring gushing up to eternal life'(John 4:14; referred to in 12.3).

'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'(John 7:40; referred to in 12.3).

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- The truths contained in faith are gold. The presentation of these truths is silver-plating. 'Faith gives us gold, but covered with silver'(12.4).
- 'She calls these truths "eyes" because it seems that He is now always looking at her'(12.5).

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Stanza 12 continued

'The sketch of love is drawn over the sketch of faith in the will of the lover.

When there is union of love, the image of the Beloved is so sketched in the will and drawn so intimately and vividly, that it is true to say that the Beloved lives in the lover and the lover in the Beloved.

Love produces such likeness in this transformation of lovers that one can say each is the other and both are one.

The reason is that in the union and transformation of love each gives possession of self to the other, and each leaves and exchanges self for the other.

Thus each one lives in the other and is the other, and both are one in the transformation of love.

This is the meaning of Paul's affirmation:

"I live no longer I but Christ lives in me"(Galatians 2:20)' (12.7).

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- 'Even though she reaches such transformation in love as is found in spiritual marriage, it can still be called a sketch of love in comparison with that perfect image, the transformation in glory'(12.8).
- 'As a deer longs for flowing streams, so do I long for you, my God. I thirst for God, for the living God. When shall I come and see Your face, O God?'(Psalm 42:1-2, referred to in 12.9).

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‘However impressive may be one’s knowledge and feeling for God, that knowledge or feeling will have no resemblance to God and will amount to very little’(Ascent II.4.3).

‘In this night both the sensory and spiritual parts are despoiled of all knowing and delights, and we are made to walk in dark and pure faith, which is the proper and adequate means to divine union, as God says through Hosea (2:20): “I will espouse (unite) you to me through faith”’(Dark Night II.2.5).

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‘God takes you by the hand and guides you in darkness, as though you were blind, along a way and to a place you know not. You would never have succeeded in reaching this place no matter how good your eyes or your feet’(Dark Night II.16.7)

- ‘Faith blinds the sight of the intellect’(Dark Night II. 21.4).

Faith Catechism n. 142-184

n. 142

- ‘By his revelation “the invisible God, from the fullness of his love addresses human beings as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and welcome them into his own company”(DV 2).
- Opening our minds and hearts to welcome God’s communication and loving invitation is what we mean by faith.

n.153

- ‘Faith is a gift of God ... we must have the grace of God to move and assist us; we must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind.’

n.162

- ‘To live, grow, and persevere in faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be “**working through charity**”(Galatians 5:6), abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church.’

n.166

- ‘No one can believe alone ... I cannot believe without being carried by faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.’

n.169

- ‘The Christian community is our teacher in the faith.’

n.181

- ‘**No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother**’(Saint Cyprian de Unit 6).

- Whether we think of our response to God's self-communication and the invitation into communion that God gives to us directly and personally,

or whether we think of our response to God's self-communication via the truths handed on to us in the Church,

faith involves welcoming this revelation.

- It also involves a graced capacity to respond to God by savouring what we have received, reflecting upon it, integrating it into our lives, and living accordingly.

The Psalmist speaks of 'savouring' God's self-communication when he invites us to 'taste and see the goodness of YHWH' (Psalm 34:8).

The knowledge we receive through God's revelation

- 'I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power'(Ephesians 1:17-19).

‘Do not seek to understand that you may believe.

Seek, rather, to believe so that you may understand.’ (Augustine Sermon 118.1)

Loving needs to be in accord with reason, but it cannot be confined within the realms of logic. The experience of love always involves something of a leap in the dark, a going beyond the limits of reason and control. And love opens up whole areas of understanding that we were unaware of before we dared to love. It is the same with Christ-inspired love. Believing opens up undreamed of areas of understanding.

‘I believe in order to understand.

I understand the better to believe’ (Augustine Sermon 43,7,9).

n.159

‘There can never be any discrepancy between faith and reason’.

Be-liev-ing

being-in-love

Believing in God is being in love (communion) with God
welcoming grace
opening to God (mind, heart, will)

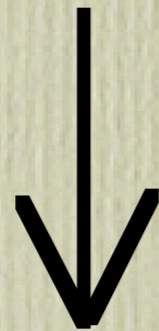
‘The only thing that counts is faith working through love.’
(Galatians 5:6).

The knowledge that we receive through faith is a knowledge
that only one who is in love can experience.

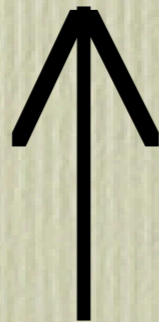
Hosea 2:20

‘I will betroth you to myself forever.
Yes, I will betroth you to myself
in **covenant love** and **faithfulness**.’

GRACE



Communion



BELIEF

FAITH

‘The only thing that counts is if
FAITH working through **LOVE**.’

- The Letter to the Hebrews (12:2) speaks of Jesus as **‘the champion and perfecter of our faith’** (quoted Catechism n.147).
- Through his gift to us of the Spirit of love that binds him in communion with God, Jesus offer us a share in his faith, and invites us to **‘believe in God and believe in me’** (John 14:1; quoted Catechism n.151).
- To believe is to have **‘the mind of Christ’** (1Corinthians 2:16).
- Paul prays for the Christians in Philippi: **‘Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus’** (Philippians 2:5).
- To have Jesus’ mind is to love with his love:
‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (John 15:12).

Mary, the perfect disciple n. 148-149

‘I am the handmaiden of the Lord.

Let it be done to me as you have said’(Luke 1:37).

‘Blessed is she who has believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord’(Luke 1:45).

n. 165

‘We must turn to the witnesses of faith ... to the Virgin Mary who, in her “pilgrimage of faith”(LG,58; Red Mater, 18) walked into the night of faith in sharing the darkness of her Son’s suffering and death’.

Hymn for the feast of Joachim and Anne

Lord God we give you thanks for all your saints
Who sought the trackless footprints of your feet,
Who took into their own a hand unseen
And heard a voice whose silence was complete.

Blest Trinity, may yours be endless praise
For all who lived so humbly in your sight.
Your holy ones who walked dark ways of faith
Now share the joy of your unfailing light.

McAuley, James (1917-1976) : In a Late Hour

‘Though all men should desert you my faith shall not grow less,
but keep that single virtue of simple thankfulness.

Pursuit had closed around me, terrors had pressed me low;
you sought me and you found me, and I will not let you go.

The hearts of men grow colder, the final things draw near.
Forms vanish, kingdoms moulder, the antirealm is here

whose order is derangement: close-driven, yet alone,
men reach the last estrangement, the sense of nature gone.

Though the stars run distracted, and from wounds deep rancours flow,
while the mystery is enacted I will not let you go.’

McAuley, James (1917-1976) : Faith (01/05/76)

I know that faith is like a root
That's tough, inert and old;
Yet it can send up its green shoot
And flower against the cold.

I know there is a grace that flows
When all the springs run dry.
It wells up to renew the rose
And lift the cedars high.

Longing

‘O Lord, all my longing is known to you; my sighing is not hidden from you.’
(Psalm 38:9)

‘As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold the face of God?’(Psalm 42:1-2)

‘O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.’
(Psalm 63:1)

‘My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of Yahweh;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God’(Psalm 84:2).

Longing

‘My soul yearns for you in the night,
my spirit within me earnestly seeks you’(Isaiah 26:9).

‘When you search for me, you will find me;
if you seek me with all your heart,
I will let you find me, says Yahweh,
and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations
and all the places where I have driven you, says Yahweh,
and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.’

(Jeremiah 29:13-14)

‘I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see,
but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it’(Luke 10:24).

‘The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “Come.”
And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of
life as a gift ... The one who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming
soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!’(Revelation 22:17,20).

Longing

‘God is silent and hidden so that the heart, thus pierced and hurt by desire, may finally open up to him, with a greater capacity for receiving him’(Arminjon Cantata of Love, page 251).

‘By delaying the fulfilment of desire, God stretches it; by making us desire he expands the soul, and by this expansion he increases its capacity’(Augustine, On 1John).

‘The Bridegroom hides when he is sought, so that, not finding him, the Bride may seek him with a renewed ardour; and the bride is hampered in her search so that this delay may increase the capacity for God, and that she may find one day more fully what she was seeking’(Gregory the Great Moralia V,6).