

# Keeping Faith Alive During Life's Dark Nights (Part IV of IV)

Carmelite Sisters

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*Editor's Note: In Part I, we saw how faith is a response to revelation, how it penetrates the veil of the ordinary, and how it is essential to our relationship with God. In Part II, we considered the general patterns of growth which we experience. In Part III, we began our exploration of how to keep faith alive during our lives' dark nights. Today, we will conclude our look at how to keep faith alive during these dark nights.*

### How to Keep Faith Alive During the Dark Nights of Our Lives (continued)

#### **Practice Humility: (\*paraphrased from Ruth Burrows)**

- The proud cannot allow themselves to be led. They have no need to listen, to be taught.
- They cannot bring themselves to hold out empty hands to God; they insist on offering virtues, good works, self denials, anything in order not to have nothing. God cannot give Himself to us unless our hands are empty to receive Him.
- They want to be beautiful for him from their own resources, whereas we are beautiful only because God looks on us and makes us beautiful.
- The deepest reason why so few of us are saints is because we will not let God love us. To be loved means a naked, defenseless surrender to all God is.
- Jesus came to us precisely to break down the bars, something we could never have done of ourselves. Most fervent souls are prepared to give God any mortal thing, work themselves to death, anything except the one thing he wants, total trust: anything but surrender into his loving hands. 'You must become as little children', whose one virtue is that they know they are unimportant.



#### **Know the Indications of the Dark Night**

The following points describing the Dark Night are helpful in distinguishing the Dark Night from depression or backsliding.

- A Sensible Aridity. One does not find consolation in the things of God or in created things.
- The Gift of Knowledge. This gift of the Holy Spirit is often very operative here. The person is enabled to see the variety and emptiness of sin and things created as opposed to God Himself. This is similar to what Saint Faustina refers to as "the illumination" where God grants a supernatural light of self-knowledge.

- A Keen Desire to Serve God. The memory now thinks about God with a painful anxiety. The soul thinks it is not serving God. It thinks that it is going backwards spiritually. This is because it is no longer conscious of any spiritual sweetness. In spite of this the soul desires to persevere in God's service.
- An Inability to Meditate or Make Reflections That Engage the Imagination. This is technically the commencement of contemplation which must be received passively. Contemplation starts in a dry, dim, secret manner. It is a secret even to the person experiencing it. God wants the soul to long for solitude and quiet. As the soul longs for this quiet, then God begins to communicate Himself to the soul.
- Signs That This Aridity Is From God:
  - (1) Although the soul feels no consolation in the things of God, neither does it find it in creatures;
  - (2) The soul is not indifferent—it fears it is not serving the Lord;
  - (3) The person is unable to meditate or converse as before even though it makes efforts to do so.

### **Stay Close to Our Blessed Mother**

She understands, and she wants to help you to remain close to Jesus. St. Alphonsus Liguori is a wonderful teacher of how someone might pray to Mary.

*Let us pray: My Queen, you are the one who guides souls to God. Surely you cannot expect me to draw closer to God if you do not take me by the hand and lead the way. Take hold of me, my Mother. If I resist, use force. Show heaven your power. Show everyone the depth of your mercy. Lead a faithless lover like me back to close union with God. You can make me a saint, my Mother, and I depend on you to do it! St. Alphonsus Liguori*

\* [Guidelines for Mystical Prayer](#), pages 83-84 by Ruth Burrows, published and copyright 1976 by Sheed and Ward [Ruth Burrows is the pen name for Carmelite nun Sister Rachel from Quidenham in Norfolk, UK].

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