

INTERIOR CASTLE - TERESA OF AVILA
GIFT OF TONGUES
Chapter 6.

11. Amongst these favours, at once painful and pleasant, Our Lord sometimes causes in the soul a certain jubilation and a strange and mysterious kind of prayer. If He bestows this grace on you, praise Him fervently for it; I describe it so that you may know that it is something real. I believe that the faculties of the soul are closely united to God but that He leaves them at liberty to rejoice in their happiness together with the senses, although they do not know what they are enjoying nor how they do so. This may sound nonsense (another translation had “gibberish”) but it really happens. So excessive is its jubilee that the soul will not enjoy it alone but speaks of it to all around so that they may help it to praise God, which is its one desire.

12. Oh, what rejoicings would this person utter and what demonstrations would she make, if possible, so that all might know her happiness! She seems to have found herself again and wishes, like the father of the prodigal son, to invite all her friends to feast with her and to see her soul in its rightful place, because (at least for the time being) she cannot doubt its security. I believe she is right, for the devil could not possibly infuse a joy and peace into the very centre of her being which make her whole delight consist in urging others to praise God. It requires a painful effort to keep silent and to dissemble such impulsive happiness. St. Francis must have experienced this when, as the robbers met him rushing through the fields crying aloud, he told them in answer to their questions that he was the 'herald of the great King. So felt other saints who retired into the deserts so that, like St. Francis, they might proclaim the praises of their God.

13. I knew Fray Peter of Alcantara who used to do this. I believe he was a saint on account of the life he led, yet people often took him for a fool when they heard him. Oh happy folly, sisters! Would that God might let us all share it! What mercy He has shown you in placing you where, if He gave you this grace and it were perceived by others, it would rather turn to your advantage than bring on you contempt as it would do in the world, where men so rarely hear God praised that it is no wonder they take scandal at it.

14. Oh miserable times and wretched life spent in the world! How blest are those whose happy lot it is to be freed from them! It often delights me, when in my sisters' company to see how the joy of their hearts is so great that they vie with one another in praising our Lord for placing them in this convent: it is evident that their

praises come from the very depths of their souls. I should like you to do this often, sisters, for when one begins she incites the rest to imitate her. How can your tongues be better employed when you are together than in praising God, Who has given us so much cause for it?

15. May His Majesty often grant us this kind of prayer which is most safe and beneficial; we cannot acquire it for ourselves as it is quite supernatural. Sometimes it lasts for a whole day and the soul is like one inebriated, although not deprived of the senses; nor like a person afflicted with melancholia, in which, though the reason is not entirely lost, the imagination continually dwells on some subject which possesses it and from which it cannot be freed. These are coarse comparisons to make in connection with such a precious gift, yet nothing else occurs to my mind. In this state of prayer a person is rendered by this jubilee so forgetful of self and everything else that she can neither think nor speak of anything but praising God, to which her joy prompts her. Let us all of us join her, my daughters, for why should we wish to be wiser than she? What can make us happier? And may all creatures unite their praises with ours for ever and ever. Amen, amen, amen!