



Spiritual aid for meditation, with the words of St. Augustine

Texts edited by the Augustinian cloistered Nuns of the Monastery of the Four Crowned Saints in Rome



Interior Life

«Education is a matter of the heart, and only God is its master; and we can achieve nothing, unless God teaches us the art of it and places its keys in our hands» (SAINT JOHN BOSCO)

«The child, who has achieved his interiority, becomes a guide for all humanity» (MARIA MONTESSORI, *The Mind of the Child*)

From the First Book of Samuel 16:7

For the Lord does not see as mortals see;
they look on the outward appearance,
but the Lord looks on the heart.

How many treasures lie hidden within a man, and yet he does not probe them!¹

¹ AUGUSTINE, *Expositions on the Psalms*, 6,9,7.

But when shall I come to know myself within? And how then shall I comprehend that which is higher than me? Yet to the human heart the vision of God is promised, and therefore the task is laid upon us to purify that heart. Scripture seems to counsel: Before you draw near to behold what you love, prepare the means by which you may see it. Having heard God and His name, who does not feel the sweetness of the sound? [...] Drive out evil from your heart, for there must dwell the One whom you long to see.²

Who will grant me rest in You, who will draw You into my heart to enrapture it? Then would I forget my afflictions and embrace my sole good: You. O Lord my God, by Your mercy, tell me what You are to me. *Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."* Speak it, that I may hear. Behold, the ears of my heart stand ready before Your mouth, Lord. Open them and *say to my soul, "I am your salvation."*³

From the Gospel according to Luke 15:17-18

But when he came to himself he said, 'I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.'

Return into your heart! Whither would you flee, far from yourself? By wandering outward you lose your way. Why set out upon desolate paths? Return from that roaming which has led you astray; come back to the Lord. He is ready. First enter into your own heart, you who have become alien to yourself through wandering: you do not know yourself, and yet you seek the One who made you! Return, return to the heart. [...] Enter the heart: there examine what glimpse of God you may perceive, for there dwells the image of God. In the inmost being of man Christ abides, in your interior you are renewed after the image of God: in His image you recognise your Creator.⁴

The cry addressed to God does not issue from the lips alone, but from the heart. Many, silent with their mouths, have cried with their hearts; many who shouted with their voices obtained nothing, because their hearts were turned elsewhere. If you cry, cry from within, where God hears.⁵

² *Ibidem*, 99,5.

³ AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, 1,5,5.

⁴ AUGUSTINE, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 18,10.

⁵ AUGUSTINE, *Expositions on the Psalms*, 30/II,D,3,10.

From the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are God's temple
and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

God must be sought and invoked in the most secret chamber of the heart, the inner man. He willed that this be His dwelling-place.⁶

But how shall I call upon my God, my Lord? To invoke is to invite Him into me; yet is there a place within me where my God may enter, where He who created heaven and earth might dwell? Is there truly in me, Lord my God, anything capable of receiving You? [...] I would not be, my God, I would not be at all if You were not in me.⁷

From the Gospel according to Matthew 6:6

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door
and pray to your Father who is in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Return into yourself and seek to withdraw from every clatter; see whether within you there is a sweet and secret cell of conscience where you make no noise, where you do not quarrel nor plot disputes, where you do not contrive stubbornness. Be meek to hear the Word, that you may understand.⁸

Return to the heart, and from the heart go to God. For if you have returned to your heart, you go to God from a place very near. You have become an exile from your inward self. You are urged by things without and so lose yourself. You are within, things are without; there are goods outside—gold, silver, riches, garments, clients, servants, cattle, honours—but they are outside. God would teach you to turn with longing to better goods.⁹

⁶ AUGUSTINE, *The Master*, 1:2.

⁷ AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, 1,2,2.

⁸ AUGUSTINE, *Sermons*, 52,9,22.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 311,14,13.

From the book of prophet Ezekiel 36:26-27

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you;
and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes
and be careful to observe my ordinances.

My good was no longer outside me, nor did I seek it with the eyes of the flesh. Many who seek joy outside themselves easily scatter, pouring themselves out upon visible and temporal things. [...] O that they might see the eternal within, which I, having tasted it, trembled to reveal! If only they would bring back the heart that they have cast outward by their eyes, far from You, and ask, “Who will show us the good?” There, where I conceived anger at myself, within, in my secret chamber, where contrition pierced me, where I immolated the old self and, trusting in You, began the meditation of my renewal—there You first gave me a taste of Your sweetness, and there You put joy into my heart.¹⁰

Recognise in yourself something of what I mean: you will find it within, in your most intimate being. [...] There is in you something deep and intimate, and something else that clings to you as a garment clings. Put off your garment and even the flesh, enter into yourself, penetrate into your inmost being, and, if you can, seek to see within. [...] If you are far from yourself, how will you approach God? [...] For man was made in the image of God, not in the body but in the spirit. [...] Let us, as far as possible, seek within the soul that which we speak of.¹¹

«By placing God's action at the center, the activity of both the educator and the one being educated is brought into clearer light: the learner is stimulated to cooperate with the inner strength that he has, of which the educating community is an ally»

(CARLO MARIA MARTINI, Pastoral Letter *God educates his people*)

¹⁰ AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, 9,4,10.

¹¹ AUGUSTINE, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 23:10.