

## THE POETRY OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

**READ:** Three Poems from: The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross

“The Dark Night”    “The Spiritual Canticle”    “The Living Flame of Love”

Read very slowly through the above poems (not all in one session!) in their English translations with the following objectives in mind:

**First reading:**        Read aloud, trying to let the words flow smoothly with coherent phrasing.

**Second reading:**    Read silently, pausing as needed to absorb the content in whatever way seems natural to you, but don't force yourself to analyze every phrase.

**Third reading:**     Read aloud once more, with a silent pause between stanzas. Allow yourself enough time to mentally absorb the poem in these short segments.

**REFLECT:** Choose one particular phrase from each of the three poems, and reflect for awhile on its meaning to you personally. Do this on several occasions if you possibly can. Record here three of the phrases you used:

1.

2.

3.

**RESPOND:** Choose one phrase from a poem and write down your impression of what it means in your own spiritual journey.

Write a poem of your own on any spiritual theme, if you feel inspired to do so.

Share with the discussion group, if you wish, how you feel about the poetry of St. John of the Cross.

You might try to memorize “The Living Flame of Love”. (It's a good mental exercise!)

## THE PRECAUTIONS

**READ:** “The Precautions” from The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross

**REFLECT:** Spend some time in meditation with each of the following questions or thoughts:

**Do I have an equal love for all persons, relatives or not? If not, why, and how can I attain to this ideal?**

**Many imperfections are involved in thinking good or bad things about others. Do I try not to do this?**

**What concerns do I have about my possessions? Do I need to be more detached?**

**Do I concern myself unnecessarily with what others are doing in the Community, my Church, my family, or in my workplace? Am I scandalized by their doings, or do I try to ignore them? (exception: unless I need to correct a wrong at the proper time with the person directly involved)**

**Do I keep a healthy suspicion of what seems good at first sight? Do I seek proper counsel in all decisions and activities which are out of the ordinary?**

**God desires obedience more than sacrifice. Can I renounce possession of my own will through obedience to legitimate superiors? Do I try to do this?**

**Do I truly rejoice in the good of others (temporal and spiritual) as though it were my own? Do I desire others to be given preference and precedence over me?**

**Do I try to humble myself in word and deed? How? Do I practice this more with those who attract me the least?**

**Do I think of others as the artisans who are helping God shape my soul by their words and actions?**

**Do I give up my good works when they no longer delight or satisfy me? Am I attached to spiritual sweetness or pleasant feelings in prayer?**

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**THE PRECAUTIONS**

**REPLY:** Answer the following questions as briefly as you can:

**1. For what purpose is John of the Cross giving his precautions? To attain what ends and to be freed from what?**

**2. What three enemies of the soul does he mention?**

**3. Which enemy is the least difficult to conquer?**

**Which is the hardest to understand?**

**Which is the most tenacious?**

**4. How are these three enemies related?**

**5. List the three precautions John gives to free oneself from the harm the world can cause:**

**A**

**B**

**C**

**6. What three precautions does he give against the devil?**

**A**

**B**

**C**

**7. What three precautions does he give against the flesh?**

**A**

**B**

**C**

## SAYINGS OF LIGHT AND LOVE

**READ:** Sayings of Light and Love, pages 83-97  
from The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross Rodriguez-Kavanaugh edition

**REFLECT:** Which of these sayings struck me most personally and why?

To which of these admonitions have I been most attentive recently? Which one do I most need to carry written on my heart?

Which part of the “Prayer of A Soul Taken with Love” was the most meaningful to me?  
(page 57)

Meditate on Sayings 13, 14, 15, and 20.

**RESPOND:**

Compose a “saying of light and love” of your own. Share it at the meeting if you wish.

Memorize one of the sayings you like best. Write it here.

Using the sayings as a guide for examination of conscience, make a good confession at least once this month.

Copy one of the maxims or counsels on a card, and on three other cards three more, one card for each week. Place this card in a spot you often look at, and try to live by it faithfully each day during that week. Call it to mind during the day.