

Saint John Paul II and Saint John of the Cross: Masters of Faith

Saint John Paul II believed that every generation needs a *Master of Faith*—a spiritual guide who reveals how faith is not only believed but lived. For him, Saint John of the Cross was that master. In *Witness to Hope* (p. 61), George Weigel recounts that after Jan Tyranowski introduced the young Karol Wojtyła to the writings of Saint John of the Cross, noticeable changes occurred in his spiritual life. Tyranowski observed that “now he prayed as a means of entering God’s presence.” This insight marked a decisive transformation. Prayer was no longer mere recitation; it became communion, an act of love and self-gift that opened the soul to divine intimacy.

By studying and interiorizing the Carmelite mystic’s teaching, John Paul II became both a disciple and an heir of that tradition. He mastered prayer as dialogue, not theory, and demonstrated that faith is not simply about *inquiring about God* but *living with God*. In the section titled “Master of Faith,” John Paul II identified several parallels between himself and the Spanish saint—poet, philosopher, musician, and contemplative—each pointing to the unity of faith and culture. Through these shared qualities, he recognized a deep kinship of vocation.

His phenomenological formation helped him to interpret Saint John of the Cross in a language accessible to the modern world. He called him “a spiritual master and director of conscience,” one who helps humanity rediscover the dignity of the person in relation to God. Therefore, Saint John of the Cross continues to guide souls amid moral disorientation, showing that faith matures through purification, love, and self-knowledge. His witness—and John Paul II’s embodiment of it—teaches that true freedom and chastity arise when one’s heart becomes wholly united with Jesus Christ, the Light of Faith.

References

- [1] George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*. New York: Harper-Collins, 1999.
- [2] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*. Translated by Michael Waldstein. Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006.
- [3] Saint John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. Translated by E. Allison Peers. New York: Image Books, 1953.