

# The Dark Night of the Soul or Clinical Depression?

## Based on Fire Within:

### St. Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and the Gospel – on Prayer

by Fr. Thomas Dubay, 1989 (edited by Timothy G. Lock, Ph.D., 9/26/2025)

<b>Mental/Emotional Problem</b>
Explanation of condition does not provide remedy. Persistently excessive introspection. Mind is always on problem.
Unrealism. Things are not as hopeless, sinful (scrupulous), or worthless as s/he thinks it is.
Clinical depression.
Requires therapy and possibly medication.
Sleep difficulties and fatigue.
Difficulty concentrating.
Psychological disorders do not promote virtue or increase depth of relationship with God.

<b>Dark Nights</b>
Once condition is adequately explained, introspection greatly decreases or stops. Little awareness outside of prayer time.
Realistic view of his/her imperfectness or sinfulness.
No depression. Person is as cheerful as they are in other parts of their life.
Explanation by a spiritual director clears up anxiety with the first night and offers consolation in the second night.
No problems with sleep or energy level.
Concentration in prayer is difficult. No problems with concentration in all other areas of life.
Two nights do greatly increase love, humility, patience, etc. Nights prepare one for deeper prayer.