

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **St John of the Cross**

**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2004

**Publisher:**

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

## The Spiritual Canticle

### I THE BRIDE

Where have You hidden Yourself,  
And abandoned me in my groaning, O my Beloved?  
You have fled like the hart,  
Having wounded me.  
I ran after You, crying; but You were gone.

II  
O shepherds, you who go  
Through the sheepcots up the hill,  
If you shall see Him  
Whom I love the most,  
Tell Him I languish, suffer, and die.

III  
In search of my Love  
I will go over mountains and strands;  
I will gather no flowers,  
I will fear no wild beasts;  
And pass by the mighty and the frontiers.

IV  
O groves and thickets  
Planted by the hand of the Beloved;  
O verdant meads  
Enameled with flowers,  
Tell me, has He passed by you?

### V ANSWER OF THE CREATURES

A thousand graces diffusing  
He passed through the groves in haste,  
And merely regarding them  
As He passed  
Clothed them with His beauty.

### VI THE BRIDE

Oh! who can heal me?  
Give me at once Yourself,  
Send me no more  
A messenger  
Who cannot tell me what I wish.

VII  
All they who serve are telling me  
Of Your unnumbered graces;  
And all wound me more and more,

And something leaves me dying,  
I know not what, of which they are darkly speaking.

VIII  
But how you persevere, O life,  
Not living where you live;  
The arrows bring death  
Which you receive  
From your conceptions of the Beloved.

IX  
Why, after wounding  
This heart, have You not healed it?  
And why, after stealing it,  
Have You thus abandoned it,  
And not carried away the stolen prey?

X  
Quench my troubles,  
For no one else can soothe them;  
And let my eyes behold You,  
For You are their light,  
And I will keep them for You alone.

XI  
Reveal Your presence,  
And let the vision and Your beauty kill me,  
Behold the malady  
Of love is incurable  
Except in Your presence and before Your face.

XII  
O crystal well!  
Oh that on Your silvered surface  
You would mirror forth at once  
Those eyes desired  
Which are outlined in my heart!

XIII  
Turn them away, O my Beloved!  
I am on the wing:

#### THE BRIDEGROOM

Return, My Dove!  
The wounded hart  
Looms on the hill  
In the air of your flight and is refreshed.

XIV  
My Beloved is the mountains,  
The solitary wooded valleys,

The strange islands,  
The roaring torrents,  
The whisper of the amorous gales;

XV  
The tranquil night  
At the approaches of the dawn,  
The silent music,  
The murmuring solitude,  
The supper which revives, and enkindles love.

XVI  
Catch us the foxes,  
For our vineyard has flourished;  
While of roses  
We make a nosegay,  
And let no one appear on the hill.

XVII  
O killing north wind, cease!  
Come, south wind, that awakens love!  
Blow through my garden,  
And let its odors flow,  
And the Beloved shall feed among the flowers.

XVIII  
O nymphs of Judea!  
While amid the flowers and the rose-trees  
The amber sends forth its perfume,  
Tarry in the suburbs,  
And touch not our thresholds.

XIX  
Hide yourself, O my Beloved!  
Turn Your face to the mountains,  
Do not speak,  
But regard the companions  
Of her who is traveling amidst strange islands.

XX  
THE BRIDEGROOM

Light-winged birds,  
Lions, fawns, bounding does,  
Mountains, valleys, strands,  
Waters, winds, heat,  
And the terrors that keep watch by night;

XXI  
By the soft lyres  
And the siren strains, I adjure you,  
Let your fury cease,

And touch not the wall,  
That the bride may sleep in greater security.

XXII  
The bride has entered  
The pleasant and desirable garden,  
And there reposes to her heart's content;  
Her neck reclining  
On the sweet arms of the Beloved.

XXIII  
Beneath the apple-tree  
There were you betrothed;  
There I gave you My hand,  
And you were redeemed  
Where your mother was corrupted.

XXIV  
THE BRIDE

Our bed is of flowers  
By dens of lions encompassed,  
Hung with purple,  
Made in peace,  
And crowned with a thousand shields of gold.

XXV  
In Your footsteps  
The young ones run Your way;  
At the touch of the fire  
And by the spiced wine,  
The divine balsam flows.

XXVI  
In the inner cellar  
Of my Beloved have I drunk; and when I went forth  
Over all the plain  
I knew nothing,  
And lost the flock I followed before.

XXVII  
There He gave me His breasts,  
There He taught me the science full of sweetness.  
And there I gave to Him  
Myself without reserve;  
There I promised to be His bride.

XXVIII  
My soul is occupied,  
And all my substance in His service;  
Now I guard no flock,  
Nor have I any other employment:

My sole occupation is love.

XXIX

If, then, on the common land  
I am no longer seen or found,  
You will say that I am lost;  
That, being enamored,  
I lost myself; and yet was found.

XXX

Of emeralds, and of flowers  
In the early morning gathered,  
We will make the garlands,  
Flowering in Your love,  
And bound together with one hair of my head.

XXXI

By that one hair  
You have observed fluttering on my neck,  
And on my neck regarded,  
You were captivated;  
And wounded by one of my eyes.

XXXII

When You regarded me,  
Your eyes imprinted in me Your grace:  
For this You loved me again,  
And thereby my eyes merited  
To adore what in You they saw

XXXIII

Despise me not,  
For if I was swarthy once  
You can regard me now;  
Since You have regarded me,  
Grace and beauty have You given me.

XXXIV

THE BRIDEGROOM

The little white dove  
Has returned to the ark with the bough;  
And now the turtle-dove  
Its desired mate  
On the green banks has found.

XXXV

In solitude she lived,  
And in solitude built her nest;  
And in solitude, alone  
Has the Beloved guided her,  
In solitude also wounded with love.

XXXVI  
THE BRIDE

Let us rejoice, O my Beloved!  
Let us go forth to see ourselves in Your beauty,  
To the mountain and the hill,  
Where the pure water flows:  
Let us enter into the heart of the thicket.

XXXVII  
We shall go at once  
To the deep caverns of the rock  
Which are all secret,  
There we shall enter in  
And taste of the new wine of the pomegranate.

XXXVIII  
There you will show me  
That which my soul desired;  
And there You will give at once,  
O You, my life!  
That which You gave me the other day.

XXXIX  
The breathing of the air,  
The song of the sweet nightingale,  
The grove and its beauty  
In the serene night,  
With the flame that consumes, and gives no pains.

XL  
None saw it;  
Neither did Aminadab appear  
The siege was intermitted,  
And the cavalry dismounted  
At the sight of the waters.

St John of the Cross