

## ONE DARK NIGHT

En una noche oscura  
con ansias, en amores inflamada  
oh dichosa ventura!  
sali sin ser notada...

The entry at about this time of a young Australian woman into one of the American houses of the Discalced Carmelites of St Teresa of Avila (St Teresa of Jesus) provides the author with an opportunity to publish his paraphrase, a loose rendering in English, of the great poem of St John of the Cross, *En una noche oscura*.

The night was dark now and the day long past  
When I went out.  
The fears that had afflicted me consumed  
At length by love's desires, no longer loomed,  
And quiet now possessed my house at last.

Secure, though in the darkness of that ground  
And in disguise,  
I climbed the secret ladder in my yearning,  
And what desire within my heart was burning!  
While never from my house was heard a sound.

And secretly on that most happy night,  
Unseeing and  
Unseen by any other, with that fire  
I mounted, and the flame of that desire  
Within me, was my guide and only light.

Dark night, and yet more surely did I tread  
Unto the place—  
Than had I gone at midday in the Sun—  
Unto the place where none could be but One  
Whom well I knew, so surely was I led.

How beautiful this night that was my guide!  
More lovely than  
The light of dawn. Oh night that did discover  
The belov'd at last united with her Lover  
Transformed in Him, forever to abide.

For here He slept and here He took His rest,  
Where I allowed no other;  
And I caressed Him in the gentle breeze,  
The air fragrant from the moving Cedar trees;  
His head reclining on my flowering breast.

And when the wind from the battlements descended,  
And its gust  
Disturbed His hair, my yearning soul was stayed  
And wounded by the gentle hand He laid  
Upon my neck, and all my sense suspended.

All cares forgotten now and all released  
Among the lilies,  
Myself abandoned never more to rouse,  
My face laid upon my Loving Spouse,  
I went out from myself and all things ceased.

Michael Baker

15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 — *Memorial of St Teresa of Jesus*