

The Dark Night by St. John of the Cross (recited in Spanish & English) ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 I'm going to recite La Noche Oscura, The Dark Night, by San Juan de la Cruz, St. John of

00:00:20 the Cross.

00:00:23 St. John is considered to be one of the greatest poets in the Spanish language, but he was

00:00:32 also one of the greatest mystics in the history of Christianity.

00:00:38 So that brings together two extraordinary worlds, greatness in poetry and depth of spirituality.

00:00:51 When we hear this poem, at the end it leaves us with two tastes simultaneously, which is

00:01:00 the greatness of it.

00:01:04 It's able to convey in a poetic way, as opposed to a prosaic way, the essential character

00:01:15 of mystical experience, which is paradoxical.

00:01:23 Mystical experience is experience that is simultaneously deeply sensorially rich, and

00:01:31 at the same time utterly vacuous and benighted.

00:01:43 He's able to give us the taste of two things simultaneously.

00:01:51 On the surface, it seems to be talking about a young girl sneaking out secretly at night

00:01:57 for a romantic adventure.

00:02:05 But of course, it's really a direct description of his own experience of oneness with the

00:02:15 spiritual source in a state so deep that self and world as a thing have disappeared.

00:02:26 But yet, their richness has reached its fullest form at exactly the same time, in exactly

00:02:38 the same experience.

00:02:41 So we can taste, at the end of the poem, if you sort of close your eyes, you'll see you're

00:02:49 left with the paradoxical taste of mystical experience, a sense of great richness and

00:03:01 fulfillment and a sense of utter vacuity, timeless, spaceless transparency, both at

00:03:11 exactly the same time, coming from exactly the same source.
00:03:30 In una noche oscura, on a dark night, con ansias en amores inflamada, on fire with longing
00:03:42 for love, oh, dichosa ventura, oh, happy venture.
00:03:51 Salí, I left, sin ser notada, unseen, estando ya mi casa solcedada, my house being still
00:04:09 at last.
00:04:12 Oscuras, in darkness, y segura and safe, por la secreta escala, by the secret stairway,
00:04:28 disfrazada, disguised, oh, dichosa ventura, oh, happy venture.
00:04:40 Oscuras, in darkness, y encelada and concealed, estando ya mi casa solcedada, my house being
00:04:58 still at last.
00:05:04 En la noche dichosa, into the happy night, en secreto, in secret, que nadie me veía,
00:05:18 for no one saw me.
00:05:21 Ni yo miraba cosa, and neither did I see anything, sin otra luz iguía, without light or guide,
00:05:38 sino la que en el corazón ardía.
00:05:46 Other than that which burned in my heart.
00:05:52 Aquesta me guiaba, this guided me, más certo que la luz del mediodía, more certain than
00:06:03 the light of noon.
00:06:07 Adonde me esperaba, to where he awaited, quien yo bien me sabía, one well known to me, en
00:06:22 parte donde nadie parecía, in a place where no one could find us.
00:06:36 Oh noche que guiaste, oh night that guides, oh noche amable más que la alborada, oh night
00:06:52 more lovely than the light of dawn, oh noche que juntaste, oh night that unites, amado
00:07:04 con amada, the lover with the beloved, amada en el amado, transformada, and transforms
00:07:19 the lover into the beloved.
00:07:25 En mi pecho florido, on my flowering breast, que entero para el suelo se guardaba, which
00:07:36 I reserved for him alone, ahí quedo, there he dwelt.
00:07:46 Yo le regalaba, and I caressed him, y el ventallo de cedros aire daba, while the cedars fanned
00:07:59 us with their breeze.
00:08:04 El aire de la amena, the breeze came over the castle wall, cuando yo sus cabellos esparcía,
00:08:15 as I ran my fingers through his hair.

00:08:19 Con su mano serena, with his gentle hand, en mi cuello hería, he wounded my neck, y todos
00:08:34 mis sentidos suspendía, and suspended all my senses.
00:08:45 Quedéme, thus I dwelt, y olvidéme, and forgot myself.
00:08:56 El rostro recliné sobre el amado, my face resting directly upon the beloved.
00:09:10 Proceso todo, everything stopped, y dejéme, and I was set free, dejando mi cuidado, abandoning
00:09:28 my cares, entre las cenas olvidado, forgotten among the lilies.