The Art of Teresian Prayer

Carmelite School of Prayer
Advent 2020

I take a moment to meditate on all these things in my heart (Luke 2:19)

Saint Therese of the Child Jesus (of Lisieux, the Little Flower) tells us in her autobiography (Manuscript C): "Prayer is, for me, a surge du the heart; it is a simple glance towards Heaven; it is a cry of gratitude and of love in the midst of a trial as well as in the midst of joy! In a word, it is something exalted, supernatural, which dilates the soul and unites me to Jesus.

"God alone is able to make holy, to weed out evil from the roots. In fact, he does everything, because he purifies the look, bends the will and our poor pain serves him."
Brother Bruno of Jesus-Marie

Snippet #10: Surge of the Heart

If God is present within us, if we turn within, it is to speak to him, to turn towards him. Saint Therese of Lisieux (the Little Flower) gives us her definition of prayer in an inspiring statement found in Manuscript C of her autobiography: "Prayer is, for me, a surge from the heart; it is a simple glance towards Heaven; it is a cry of gratitude and of love in the midst of a trial as well as in the midst of joy! In a word, it is something exalted, supernatural, which dilates the soul and unites me to Jesus.
I will focus on the first part of the definition- prayer is a surge of the heart. In prayer, we need to let our heart speak out. Saint Teresa of Avila, who came before, (just an aside, we refer to them as the Big Teresa and the Little Teresa) when speaking about prayer tells us: In prayer, it is important not to think much but to love much.
Prayer is not an exercise or a method to implement but rather a meeting between two hearts who love one another; the heart of God and the heart of man. Let our hearts speak. Avoid great ideas and eloquent presentations. Let our hearts speak as a friend speaks to a friend, like a deep friendship of many years that allows us to live within.   Amen

 Prepared by the Discalced Carmelite Friars, Paris, France   (translated from French)