

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)

If a listening attitude is of utmost importance in prayer, it is to allow us to then express ourselves, to speak to Our Lord, to tell him what is in our hearts, to profess our love for him. Saint Teresa of Avila told her sisters that ‘in prayer, it is not about thinking a lot but about loving a lot.’ (4th Mansions 1:7)

The person who seeks the presence of God, at least in a certain way knows who he is looking for.
Brother Paul-Marie of the Cross

Snippet #20: I speak; what do I say?

Yesterday we talked about listening. We said that listening is a fundamental attitude of the person praying. Of course, when we consider listening, we then think of being able to speak. We consider what we are going to say to Our Lord.

Our response is not about our prayer intentions. We are not presenting a list of errands or a list for Father Christmas. We are not laying out all we want him to do for us in hopes that he will answer by making our lives better. Well then, when I speak to him what should I say?

The Orthodox have helped us answer this question. They explain that our intelligence needs to descend into the heart. This prevents us from being fragmented. We seek union between our intellect and heart. It is then, from this union that we can genuinely speak in truth.

Teresa of Avila told her nuns that in prayer: ‘it is not about thinking a lot but about loving a lot.’

It is not an intellectual exercise but an exercise of the heart. It is all about allowing our hearts to speak. It is like a friend speaking to a friend about what preoccupies him, what motivates him, about his joys, about his desires, about his longings and about his sadness. In sum, we speak in words and in silence about the love within us, about our gratitude and recognition for all God has done. Amen

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