

## 25. Conclusion

We began our journey by noting that prayer for Teresa is essentially something very simple. She speaks of prayer as

an exercise of love (*Life* 7.12),

an intimate sharing between friends ... taking time frequently to be alone with God who we know loves us (*Life* 8.5).

The soul is a paradise where the Lord finds his delight (*The Interior Castle* I.1.1).

In its centre take place very secret exchanges between God and the soul (*The Interior Castle* I.1.3).

However, such is our propensity for self-deception and the distracted nature of much of life that we can fail to listen to our deepest longings and we can fail to dare the inner journey of prayer. We thank God for the guidance and encouragement of Teresa and John, remembering Teresa's warning:

As much as I desire to speak clearly about these matters of prayer, they will be really obscure for one who has not had experience (*Life* 10.9).

These two great teachers of prayer have opened up for us the marvels of their own journey of love and they have warned us of the pitfalls.

John Climacus, abbot of the monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, in the seventh century, writes:

You cannot learn to see just because someone tells you to do so. For that you require your own natural power of sight. In the same way, you cannot discover from the teaching of others the beauty of prayer. Prayer has its own special teacher in God, who grants the prayer of the person who prays (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent* Step 28).

It is for each of us to listen to the call of love in our own hearts and, in the company of Jesus our brother and friend, to dare the purifying journey into the embrace of God.

### Bibliography

- Throughout this book we have quoted especially from
  - Teresa of Avila. Complete Works in 3 volumes. Institute of Carmelite Studies (ICS), Washington DC 1987.
  - John of the Cross. Collected Works in 1 volume. ICS, Washington DC, 1979.
- We have also quoted a number of times from
  - Marie Eugène OCD. I want to see God & I am a daughter of the Church: a practical synthesis of Carmelite Spirituality. Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics Inc. 1986
  - Therese of Lisieux. Story of a soul. ICS, Washington DC, 1976
  - Boylan, Eugene. Difficulties in Mental Prayer. Dublin, Gill, 1943