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**DAY 17**

What's the Catch?

The Offering to Merciful Love sounds great: For the purpose of consoling Jesus, we would ask for and accept all the rejected love and tender mercy that other souls don't want. Wonderful. But what's the catch? Clearly there's a catch when it comes to making an offering to Divine Justice: lots of suffering! (Remember Sr. Marie of Jesus? Yikes!) So what's the catch when it comes to making an offering to Merciful Love? Well, there is, indeed, a catch — but it's not a scary one. Let me explain. We're just outside the walls of Jerusalem at Calvary, and Jesus is dying on the Cross. Do you see him there, all bloody, bruised, and broken? He's a victim soul to Divine Justice. After all, Jesus made a kind of deal with the Father. He basically said, "Father, please give to me all the punishment due to sinners, and give to sinners all the blessings of my own divine Sonship." That's really what's taking place there on the Cross: Jesus is paying the price of sin and bearing the harsh burden of Divine Justice so we don't have to and so we might enjoy the gift of salvation. The "catch" for him, as a victim to Divine Justice, is the terrible pain of his Passion, culminating in his three-hour-long agony on the Cross. Now, Mary is also there on Calvary, standing at the foot of the Cross. Her presence there helps us to understand the "catch" that comes with being a victim soul to Merciful Love. I say that because, while she was not physically crucified at Calvary, she did suffer a kind of spiritual crucifixion. How? Well, let me put it this way: I'm sure any mother who has had to watch her child suffer through an agonizing illness will tell you she immediately would have switched places with her child if given the opportunity. Okay, so with that in mind, now reflect on the idea that Mary probably has more motherly love in her Immaculate Heart than all other mothers combined. Not only that, but her Son is the most lovable child of all. Not only that, but Mary had to watch her child go through a suffering worse than anyone has ever had to bear.

Okay, so all that should give us a sense of Mary's suffering as she stood at the foot of the Cross. But, when we think of it, that suffering isn't so scary — at least it's not as repulsive as the idea of a violent, bloody, and torturous death. Why not? Because Mary's suffering at Cavalry was the suffering of compassion. Now, compassion means "to suffer with," and such suffering, by its very nature, is other-directed. In other words, the focus is on another person, not on

ourselves. And when our focus is not on ourselves when we're suffering, although our pain is certainly real, we often don't even notice it. We're too focused on the beloved who suffers. On the other hand, when we stub our toe or have a terrible headache, it's hard not to focus on ourselves, and then we really notice the pain. So, in a sense, compassionate suffering is easier to bear and less scary than physical suffering. It's also something that gets to the heart of who we're called to be.

As Christians, our hearts are supposed to be merciful. In other words, we're supposed to be moved with compassion at the suffering of others. Unfortunately, our sins, the sins of others, and the pains of life are very good at hardening our hearts, which makes us less compassionate, less merciful, and less like Jesus. Well, the Offering to Merciful Love is all about helping us grow in compassion, and it begins with having compassion for Jesus. It begins with seeing that he longs to pour his Merciful Love out on sinners and that so many reject his love. Then, for the purpose of consoling Jesus, we ask for all that rejected mercy. And what happens next? Jesus gives it. His tender mercy comes rushing into our hardened hearts, purifying them and, thereby, making them more compassionate, loving, and sensitive. So, that's the catch!

To offer ourselves to Merciful Love is to let our hearts be more deeply moved by the suffering of others. It's to allow our hearts to become more like the heart of St. Francis of Assisi, who, in his great compassion for Jesus, went around weeping and crying out loud, "Love is not loved! Love is not loved!" It's to allow our hearts to become more like the heart of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who attentively listened to Jesus' painful cry from the Cross: "I thirst!" It's to allow our hearts to be healed of indifference toward the pain and suffering of our neighbor. In short, it's to allow Jesus to make our hearts more like his.

Now, don't worry. The heart-healing graces of the Offering to Merciful Love don't usually come all at once. I mean, Jesus tends to gradually heal our hearts as we live the Offering. But it does involve real pain. After all, compassion for those who suffer wounds the heart. But it's a beautiful wound — the wound of love! Therese's sister Celine (Sr. Genevieve of the Holy Face) puts it best: "We must not confuse [my sister's desire to be a victim to Merciful Love] with the ... victims of justice. Therese's heart was wounded, it is true, but here, love was answered by love ... the wound of love! Indeed, there is nothing that is sweeter, nor more terrible."

So, the Offering to Merciful Love not only consoles the Heart of Jesus, but it also (paradoxically) heals our hearts by wounding them with love. The Offering, thereby, makes life both “sweet” and “terrible” (in a good way!) as our hearts awaken in compassion to the reality of Christ’s Mystical Body (the Church) suffering in both its Head and members. But if all that isn’t enough to convince us to choose to make the Offering to Merciful Love, then maybe this will: If we make and live the Offering, we need not fear purgatory. What? More on that tomorrow.

**Today’s Prayer:**

Come, Holy Spirit, fire of mercy.

Make my heart like the tender Heart of Jesus, full of mercy and compassion.

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**St. Hannibal’s Introduction** to the “Twenty-Four Hours of the Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ” Book: (He is speaking about Luisa, of course)

I’d like to mention now that this pious author is not a cultured person. She can barely read and write, and yet she can render such a vivid description of the sufferings, mistreatment, offenses, and tortures of our adorable Redeemer that the words deeply penetrate the hearts and minds of her readers, touching, moving and drawing them to Love.

Love, we should note—yes—Divine Love, in its most tender expression, is the predominant note of the HOURS OF THE PASSION: the love of Jesus Christ for men, and the love of this solitary soul for Jesus Christ. She is an enamored soul, who expresses her feelings for the Beloved in a most amorous tone. With compassion, caresses, embraces, and kisses, she accompanies Jesus in all his sufferings. Moreover, she offers herself continually as an innocent, substitute victim, devoutly placing herself, as much as she can, in the place of the grieving Beloved, and taking upon herself his pains, as if to spare the Highest Good, now for then, from his cruel torments.

For this contemplative soul there is no past, present, or future: everything is an eternal now. She reproduces the scenes of the Passion with as strong an impression as if they were actually present to her sight. In an excess of compassion and love for her Beloved, she kisses his eyes, Face, mouth, hands, feet, and Heart, asking Him to return her kisses with a confidence never before known save in a very few enamored souls. She is the spouse of the Canticle of Canticles, exclaiming, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”

We cannot doubt that the Most Holy Heart of Our Lord loves reverent fear as well as filial, tender faith. And how couldn't we have faith in Him who, to show how much He loved us, wanted to feel such piercing torments and such violent sufferings, when it would have been enough for Him to shed but one drop of his most Precious Blood to save us? Is it really too much to ask kisses of Jesus, when He gave and keeps giving us all of Himself? Why should our sins prevent us from having great faith in the love of Jesus, when we have been purified by penance and humility? Is it not true that the Father of the Prodigal son, when he saw his child coming, was moved with compassion and, running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him? (Luke: 15:17) And wasn't the little sheep on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd kissed and caressed? Isn't it true that St. Agnes, another angelic soul enamored of Jesus, used to say, "The more I love and touch Him, the more chaste and pure I become?"

How loving this confidence really is! It leaves a humble heart aimed at stealing the Heart of God! This is the true way to become as little children, as Our Lord taught us when He lovingly set a little child on his lap and said, "to such as these belongs the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:2).

Such is the trust that transpires from every page of the HOURS OF THE PASSION. All souls using this book as a guide to this pious exercise shall little by little find themselves partaking of the same feelings, compassion, love, and confidence, which have inspired this book.

### **Volume 33**

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Jesus: "My daughter, all the acts of My Humanity possess the generative power. That is why the mind thinks and generates holy thoughts, thinks and generates light, insight, wisdom, divine knowledge, and new truths, and while It generates It pours again in torrents into the minds of men, without ever ceasing to generate. Indeed, every soul has in her mind the secret repository of these mental children of Mine, generated from My Mind—except that some souls hold them in honor, court them, and give them the freedom to let them bring forth the goodness that they possess, while others neglect them and stifle them. My eyes generate glances of love, compassion, tenderness, and mercy—I never lose sight of anyone. My glances multiply for everyone. And O the power of My glances—how mercifully they pour themselves out upon men's miseries. The outpouring is so

great that to place the soul in safety, it encloses her in My pupil—to keep her protected and surrounded by such inexpressible affection and tenderness that it amazes all of Heaven. My tongue speaks and it generates words that give life, sublime teachings. It generates prayers; it speaks and generates wounds and arrows of love to give the generation of My ardent love to everyone, and to make Me loved by everyone. My hands generate works, wounds, nails, blood, and embraces, to make Me work in each one—as balm to sweeten their wounds, as nails to wound and purify them, as blood to wash them, and as hugs to embrace them and carry them in triumph in My arms.

My whole Humanity constantly generates so as to reproduce Itself in each and every soul. Our divine love consists exactly in this: Reproducing Itself in each and every soul. And if We did not have the generative power, it would not be a reality, but a figure of speech—while for Our part We first do the deeds, and speak only to confirm what We have done. And this is all the more true because My Humanity is inseparable from the Divinity that possesses, by nature, the generative power, and which hovers over souls like a Mother with her arms open, generating Its life within them in a wonderful way. But do you know who receives the effects—the complete fruit—of this continuous generation of Mine? It is the soul in whom My Will reigns—who not only receives the generation of My acts, but who reproduces them in an admirable way.

## **Volume 12**

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Effects of the Passion of Jesus.

I was praying for a dying soul with some fear and anxiety, when my beloved Jesus came and told me: "My daughter, why are you afraid? Don't you know that for each word about my Passion—for each thought, for each compassionate gesture, for each reparation, and for each remembrance of my pains—I open as many channels of electric communication between the soul and Me; and that is why the soul keeps enhancing her beauty in so many different ways? She has done the Hours of my Passion, and I will receive her as a daughter of my Passion, clothed with my Blood and adorned with my wounds. This flower has grown within your heart, so I bless it and I receive it into my Heart, as a chosen flower." And while He was saying this, a flower came out of my heart, and flew toward Jesus.

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Finding myself in my usual state, I was meditating on the Passion of Our Lord; and while I was doing this, He came and told me: "My daughter, I feel great comfort when someone meditates on my Passion with sorrow and compassion for Me. I feel also recompensed for all that I suffered during my Passion. By always meditating on it, the soul keeps preparing divine food. This food contains many different spices, each of them enriching her dishes with distinctive flavors and benefits.

So, if in the course of my Passion my enemies tied Me with ropes and chains, the compassionate soul releases Me and gives Me freedom. If my enemies despised, dishonored, and spat on Me, this soul cleans Me of that spittle, and honors Me. If they stripped Me of my clothes and scourged Me, she clothes and cures Me. If they crowned Me with thorns, mocking Me as king, embittering my mouth with gall, and crucifying Me, she crowns Me with glory, and honors Me as King, filling my mouth with sweet and delicious food—the remembrance of my own works. Also, by meditating on all my pains, this soul un-nails Me from the Cross, and makes Me rise again in her heart.

And every time she does so, I shall give her a new life of grace as recompense—she shall become my food and I shall become her food. A continual meditation on my Passion is indeed the thing that pleases Me the most."