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DAY 21

The Offering (Part Two)

Yesterday, we covered the first four paragraphs of the text of the Offering to Merciful Love. Today, we'll read the remaining paragraphs, which begin with the topic of suffering:

(5) "I thank You, O my God! for all the graces You have granted me, especially the grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering. It is with joy I shall contemplate You on the Last Day carrying the scepter of Your Cross. Since You deigned to give me a share in this very precious Cross, I hope in heaven to resemble You and to see shining in my glorified body the sacred stigmata of Your Passion." Here, Therese speaks of suffering as a grace. That's because she understands that suffering can help unite us to our crucified Savior. But hers is not the unhealthy preoccupation with suffering that marked her early religious life. Rather, the focus in this paragraph is not on seeking out suffering but, rather, on accepting the suffering that God will choose for her.

Accepting such suffering becomes easier when we learn from Therese just how loving and tender God really is. For instance, she tells us that God "cannot desire useless sufferings for us" and that he even "shields his eyes" whenever we must endure it, because he doesn't want to have to see us suffer.

(6) "After earth's Exile, I hope to go and enjoy You in the Fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for Your Love alone with the one purpose of pleasing You, consoling Your Sacred Heart, and saving souls who will love You eternally."

As we learned earlier, Therese's way is not that of merit but of mercy and of love. In fact, we just read that her focus is on being merciful to Jesus and to her neighbor. In the next paragraph, it's clear why she doesn't worry about merits:

(7) "In the evening of this life, I shall appear before You with empty hands, for I do not ask You, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is stained in Your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in Your own Justice and to receive from Your Love the eternal possession of Yourself. I want no other Throne, no other Crown but You, my Beloved!"

So, not wanting to gather merits with downward-facing, grasping hands, Therese wants to appear before the Lord with upward-facing, poor, and empty hands that are ready to receive God's gift of himself. And, again, she's not worried. Even if, along with her empty hands, she's full of weaknesses and imperfections, she does not fear. Why not? Well, because she knows this about God:

(8) "Time is nothing in Your eyes, and a single day is like a thousand years. You can, then, in one instant prepare me to appear before You."

Yes, he can do it. Simply recall what Therese had told her novice, Sr. Marie of the Trinity, who had asked if even she could hope to get to heaven right away after dying. Therese had responded, "Yes! God is so good. He will know how He can come and get you." He can "get" Sr. Marie, St. Therese, and all little souls by preparing us "in one instant" to appear before him. And so, without any fear, Therese comes to the Offering itself:

(9) “In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, asking You to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of infinite tenderness shut up within You to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a martyr of Your Love, O my God!”

Ah, yes. In offering herself to Merciful Love and not justice, Therese opens herself to receive not waves of infinite harshness but “infinite tenderness.” Alright, but what does this have to do with living “in one single act of perfect Love?” We’ll learn more about that in Appendix One. For now, however, on to martyrdom...

(10) “May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear before You, finally cause me to die and may my soul take its flight without any delay into the eternal embrace of Your Merciful Love.”

Death and martyrdom? That sounds scary! Don’t worry. To die of love is a beautiful thing. It’s the way the Lord knows how he can come and “get” little souls at the end of their lives. Specifically, he’ll lift the veil of his glory and approach us at the end with such a beautiful radiance of love and mercy that we won’t be able to stand it. We’ll long for him so ardently at that moment that our souls will, so to speak, “pop” out of our bodies and fly directly and immediately, without having to go through purgatory, into the embrace of his love. That’s the martyrdom of love, a martyrdom that, according to St. John of the Cross, is “very gentle and very sweet, sweeter and gentler than [our] whole spiritual life on earth.” But until that blessed moment, Therese will continue to offer herself to Merciful Love:

(11) “I want, O my Beloved, at each beat of my heart to renew this offering to You an infinite number of times, until the shadows having disappeared I may be able to tell You of my Love in an Eternal Face to Face!”

Now, while I don’t yet have a method for renewing the Offering to Merciful Love “at each beat of my heart,” I can recommend an easy method for renewing it at each breath.

(See Appendix One.)

Alright, so, let’s spend today reflecting on the six paragraphs of the Offering that we covered today. Then, beginning tomorrow, we’ll spend one full week in an Advent-like time of hope-filled darkness before reviewing everything we’ve learned and then actually making the Offering.

Today’s Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, fire of mercy.

Fill my heart with a deeper and deeper longing for God, even unto the martyrdom of love.

Volume 1

No Date

Jesus ignited such a fire of love for sweet suffering in me that it has never gone out. In Holy Communion, I asked nothing more ardently than to suffer his pains. Sometimes He would hear me, and take one of the thorns from his crown, and thrust it into my heart. At other times, I felt Him take my heart in his hands and squeeze it so tightly that I almost fainted from the pain. For fear that people might notice, I begged Him, “My Jesus, have mercy on me. Allow me to suffer, but hide my sufferings from others.” For

a time, He granted my request. But, because of my sins, my sufferings later came to light.

Volume 7

October 16, 1906

Each good thing makes a distinct melody in Heaven.

Since I had neglected to write what follows, obedience commanded me to do it.

I seemed to be outside of my body, and there seemed to be a special feast in Heaven, to which I was invited. I appeared to be singing with the Blessed themselves, because, up there, there is no need to learn, rather one feels a sort of infusion in one's interior, and whatever the others sing or do, one is able to do as well. Now it seemed to me that each of the Blessed is a key, that is, a melody, of his own—but all are in harmony among themselves, although each one differs from the others. One sings notes of praise, another of glory; one sounds notes of thanksgiving, another of blessings. But all these notes reunite as one single note—and this note is Love. It seems as if one single voice reunites all those voices and ends with the word "Love." This cry, "Love," resounds so sweetly and strongly that it seems to extinguish all other voices in this canticle of "Love."

All of the Blessed seemed to be made ecstatic, drowsy, awake, or inebriated by this cry or chant of "Love." High, harmonious, and beautiful, it deafened the whole company of Heaven; and one could say that it made them participate in a new Paradise. But who were the blessed ones who cried out more loudly, who made this note, "Love," resound in everything, and who brought such great happiness into the very court of Heaven? They were the ones who had loved the Lord more when they lived on earth. Ah, they were not the ones who had done great things, such as penances, and miracles... Ah, no – never! Love alone surpasses everything, and leaves everything behind. So it is one who loves much, not one who does much, who will please God the most. It sounds as if I am speaking nonsense, but what can I do? It is the fault of obedience. And who doesn't know that the things of heaven cannot be spoken on earth? And so as not to speak anymore nonsense, I will stop here.

Volume 12

November 15, 1918

How one can live by the Sanctity of Jesus.

I was thinking: "What would be better—to think about sanctifying oneself, or to be occupied only with Jesus—making reparation to Him, and working with Him for the salvation of souls, no matter what the cost?"

And blessed Jesus told me: "My daughter, the soul who thinks only of making reparation to Me and saving souls lives by my Sanctity. Indeed, when I see that a soul wants nothing but to make reparation to Me, and that she echoes my burning heartbeats by asking me continually for souls, I see in her the attributes of my Humanity; and I feel crazy with love for her, so that I make her draw life from my Sanctity—from my desires, my Love, my strength, my Blood, my wounds, and all that belongs to Me. I can say that I place my Sanctity at her disposal, knowing that she wants nothing but what I

want. On the other hand, a soul who thinks only of sanctifying herself draws life from her own sanctity, from her own strength, and from her own love. O how wretched she will become! She will come to feel the full weight of her misery, and she will live in a continuous struggle with herself. But the life of the soul who lives in and by my Sanctity flows peacefully; and she will live in peace with herself and with Me. I will watch over her thoughts and over each fiber of her heart; and I will be jealous so that not a single fiber of her heart will be allowed to stop asking for souls. I will make sure that her whole being will always continuously pour itself into Me—to make reparation to Me.