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DAY 28

Therese's Darkness (Part Two)

Before yesterday, we may have thought that we couldn't relate to St. Therese because she lived in a convent and had no difficulties believing in God and heaven. We may have thought, "Well, she didn't live where I live. I mean, here it seems as if nobody believes in God, and living by faith is hard." But now we know that Therese also suffered the temptation to wonder whether there even is a God and a heaven. On top of that, she also felt rejected by God because of her sinfulness. And so, she bore both of those temptations, and not just for a day but for more than a year. Yet she "hoped against hope," trusting that God does exist and that he would make her into a great saint. But how did she do it? How do we do it? How do we persevere in faith, hope, and love in the midst of deep spiritual darkness? It's simple. Let me explain with an image that Therese herself used. All of us, at one time or another, have basked in the rays of God's love (called by St. Ignatius of Loyola "consolation"). For instance, maybe we felt it at Mass when we received Holy Communion, when we read a passage from God's Word, when we stood before a majestic sunset, or when we received the tender love of a spouse, parent, or friend. Whenever it was, we've all experienced God's love and how real that love is. We've "seen" the divine sun and have been warmed by its rays.

But the problem is we forget. Dark clouds creep in and cover up the sun (what St. Ignatius calls "desolation"). We stop feeling its rays. We wonder if the sun is still up there. And perhaps we begin to get discouraged as our faith and trust start to waver and change to doubt and distrust.

Now, the difference between many of us and St. Therese is that she clung to God's promises of mercy and the memory of his love (consolation), especially in the midst of darkness (desolation). She didn't give up. She kept trying. She kept trusting throughout the darkness. In short, she discovered her Little Way, and then her faith was tested, and then she passed the test — every day, to the very end. So, truly blessed is she who believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled! Truly blessed is she who clung to the memory of God's love in the midst of darkness! Truly blessed is she who provides us with such a personal and perfect example of trust!

And we know she was blessed. How do we know that? Well, read the following

account of her death from Mother Agnes, and realize that St. Therese didn't die of tuberculosis. No, she suffered from tuberculosis, but she died of love.

Her breathing suddenly became weaker and more labored. She fell back on the pillow, her head turned towards the right ... [S]he pronounced very distinctly her final act of love: "Oh! I love him ... " she said, looking at her crucifix.

Then a moment later: "My God ... I ... love you!"

We thought that was the end, when, suddenly, she raised her eyes, eyes that were full of life and shining with an indescribable happiness "surpassing all her hopes."

[That] sublime gaze ... lasted for the space of a "Credo."

Then she closed her eyes and the whiteness of her face, which had become more accentuated during the ecstasy, returned to normal. She appeared ravishingly beautiful and had a heavenly smile.

Remember that smile. Let it be a sign for you. As Abraham had the stars and Mary had the words of Elizabeth, you have Therese's smile. So, in times of darkness, when you're tempted to discouragement because of your own weakness, brokenness, and sin — remember that smile. In times of darkness, when you're tempted to think that God and heaven do not exist — remember that smile. In times of darkness, when you're tempted to think there's no way you can become a saint — remember that smile.

And, actually, Therese is smiling at you now. With her prayers, she's preparing your heart to accept the gift of the Offering to Merciful Love. She's telling you not to be afraid. She's saying, "I do not regret having offered myself to Love — and neither will you!" And she's asking you to let her do good for you and to fulfill her mission in you, a mission that she expressed shortly before her death: "I feel especially that my mission is about to begin, my mission to make God loved as I love him, to give my little way to souls. If God grants my desires, my heaven will be spent on earth until the end of time. Yes, I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth."

We know that God granted the desires of this "greatest saint of modern times." So, will you let her help you? Will you let her give you the gift of the Little Way and her Offering to Merciful Love?

Today's prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, fire of mercy.

Witness that I choose to accept St. Therese's help as I prepare to offer myself to Merciful Love.

Volume 12

August 6, 1917

The Divine Will makes the soul happy.

As I continued in my usual state, my ever beloved Jesus came; and since I was suffering greatly from his absences and because of the constant threat of worse chastisements, He told me: "My daughter, cheer up, do not lose heart too much. My Will makes souls happy, even in the midst of the fiercest storms. Moreover, my Will lifts the soul so high that storms cannot touch her, although she sees them and hears them. Storms cannot enter the place where she dwells. It is always serene with a smiling sun, because her origin is in Heaven, her nobility is Divine, and her holiness is in God—and she is kept there by God Himself. I am jealous of the sanctity of this soul who lives in my Will, and I keep her in my inmost Heart, and I say: 'Nobody touch her. My Will is intangible and sacred, and it must receive honor from every creature.'"

Volume 31

May 7, 1933

The will symbolizes the breath that either inflames or smothers. The Divine Will bears Its acts in the act of the soul who lives in It.

I continue my abandonment in the Divine Will, and many times my poor mind remains under the influence of two currents. In one current I receive the great blessing of the Divine Will that lifts the soul up above everything and carries her even into the arms of her dear Heavenly Father, where all is divine joy, feasting and smiles, as the inebriated soul forgets everything—the earth, the wretchedness—because in the Divine Will one cannot have even the memory of evil, or her joy would not be full. And in the other current I see the abyss of the human will that casts the soul into all kinds of miseries, and seems to carry her into the arms of the demon, so that he rules her as he pleases.

But while I thought this, my sovereign Jesus made Himself felt near me and He said to me: "My blessed daughter, as the soul enters into My Will, with Its dominion It tells her: 'Forget everything—even the house of your mother earth. Here one lives in Heaven—nor is there any room for miseries and unhappiness. My light destroys everything, and the evils change into goodness.' You ought to know that

the will is a symbol of the breath that has the power to inflame or to extinguish. If the will is inflaming, by blowing on a little spark it can ignite a great fire. If the will is extinguishing, blowing on it robs it of its life and reduces it to ashes.

Volume 35

January 2, 1938

In the Divine Will, miseries and weaknesses are changed into the most beautiful triumphs. All that is done in the Divine Will is first formed in Heaven. The entire heavenly court takes part, and these acts descend to bless the earth.

I continue to soar above in the Divine Will as I think to myself: “Living in the Divine Will is almost unbelievable. How can one live in It, when the miseries and the weaknesses that one feels—the encounters, the circumstances—are so many that even while one feels them, the Divine Will seems to want to clothe everything with Its light and to burn everything up with Its love, so that nothing but Its Will and love may exist between Itself and the soul?”

But as I was thinking of this, my dear Jesus, who is always on guard to spot anything taking place in me that is not His Will, said: “My good daughter, My jealous love for the soul who lives in My Will is so great that I do not tolerate one thought, one weakness or anything else that does not have life in It. You ought to know that to begin living in My Will requires a decision on God’s part, and a firm decision on the part of the soul, to live in It. Now, this decision is animated by a new life—a new divine strength—so as to make the soul unconquerable by any evils or circumstances of life. This decision is not subject to changes, because when We decide, We do not deal with children who play with their decisions, but with the soul whom We know must persevere. That is why We give of Ourselves so that she may not give up. She may feel the miseries, the evils and the weaknesses, but this means nothing, since these things die before the power and the sanctity of My Will. They feel the pain of death and run away—all the more so because their miseries are not born of the human will, which is buried within My Will—and that is why they cannot desire anything but what I want. Many times My Will even uses these miseries to make the most beautiful conquests; spreading Its life upon them, to establish Its Kingdom, to impose Its rule, and to change her weaknesses into victories and triumphs. To one who lives in My Will, all things must serve as an expression of the most beautiful love that the soul gives to the One who shapes her life—almost in the same way that stone, brick and even scrap

material can be used by a man who wants to build himself a beautiful house.

“You ought to know that before a soul enters to live in Our Will, We purify everything—We cover and hide everything inside Our love, so that We won’t see anything but love in this creature. Once Our love has hidden everything—even the miseries—she takes her place inside Our Will. What is more, every time she performs her acts, she is purified first, and then Our Will fills her, making of her whatever It wants.

“My daughter, in My Will there are neither judgments nor judges; so great and so full is the sanctity, order, purity and usefulness of Our ways, that all have to lower their foreheads and adore whatever We do. So, do not lose peace—do not think about your miseries and circumstances. Leave them to the mercy of My Will, so that It may make of them Its wonders of love.”

After this, He added: “My daughter, all that the soul does in My Divine Will is first formed in Heaven—and the eternal day that knows no night. The entire heavenly court is already aware that one earthly soul took refuge in her heavenly fatherland—which is already her own—but to do what? To enter into the center of the Fiat and to invoke Its power and Its creative virtue, to give It the opportunity to act in her act. O with how much love she is welcomed—not only by the Divine Will but also by the Most Holy Trinity! They set her in harmony with themselves; they anoint her act, and breathe into it their creative power, making such great wonders out of that act—making all of heaven feel such joy and happiness that they all make the heavenly realms resound with harmonious voices: ‘Thank You! Thank You! You have given us the great honor of being spectators of Your Will acting within man’s act!’

“Heaven is broadened by new joys and new happiness, so that all remain bound and grateful, calling her, all together—“We welcome you!” This more-than-heavenly creature feels loved by God with a double love—she feels flooded by new seas of grace. Just as she rises up to Heaven, bringing her acts and letting God work wonders within them, so she descends again, becoming the bearer of all that God worked within her act. She floods the earth and fills the whole Creation so that all may receive the glory and the joy of the wonders that the Divine Fiat worked within the act of the soul. She can give Us no greater homage, love and glory than to let Us do whatever We want in her acts.

“We can work the greatest wonders without anybody giving Us anything—and even without anybody telling Us anything—just as We did in

Creation. Nobody said anything to Us, but still, how many wonders We created! But then, nobody existed—no one who could give Us even a sigh as a pretext for Our love, and as a refuge where We could work Our creative wonders. But now, there are those who can tell Us and give Us the variety of their little acts—even the natural ones—since nature belongs to Us, too, and We can use anything to produce the greatest wonders in the soul. Our love gets more of a taste for it—Our power remains more exalted in doing Our greatest wonders within rather than outside the little circle of man’s act. After all, these are the usual pretexts of Our love which goes in search of the opportunity to do it, and to say: ‘She gave to me and I gave to her. It is true that she is small, but she didn’t keep anything for herself. That is why it is right that I give everything to her—even My very Self.’”

Fiat!!!