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DAY 18

No Purgatory?

Yesterday, we learned that the Offering to Merciful Love heals our hardened hearts, making them more sensitive and compassionate. One result of that heightened sensitivity is a deeper feeling of longing for God. And guess what: That's a lot like purgatory. Really. Saint Faustina once had a vision of purgatory (that place of suffering for the souls of those who die in a state of grace but who are still in need of purification), and she asked the souls there what their greatest suffering was.

They all replied in unison, "[L]onging for God."

All right, so does the Offering to Merciful Love make this life into purgatory? Well, in a certain sense, yes, because it increases our longing for God. But don't worry. In this life, it's a sweet longing and a particularly good thing. It's especially good because it not only opens our hearts to deeper prayer and can make life more joyful, but it also keeps us from having to go to the real purgatory in the next life. In fact, St. Therese believed that for little souls who live the Little Way and make the Offering to Merciful Love, purgatory can easily be avoided. And by that, I certainly don't mean it's easy to avoid because it's easy to go to hell! Rather, I mean it's easy to bypass purgatory and go straight to heaven, like the saints do. Let's let Therese herself explain this amazing point.

The saint of the Little Way believed that after she made her Offering to Merciful Love, she no longer needed to fear purgatory. She describes the reason to her sister Pauline (Mother Agnes), who had given her permission to make the Offering: "You permitted me, dear Mother, to offer myself in this way to God, and you know the rivers or rather the oceans of graces that flooded my soul. Ah! Since that happy day, it seems to me that Love penetrates and surrounds me, that at each moment this Merciful Love renews me, purifying my soul and leaving no trace of sin within it, and I need have no fear of purgatory. I know that of myself I would not merit even to enter that place of expiation since only holy souls can have entrance there, but I also know that the Fire of Love is more sanctifying than is the fire of purgatory. I know that Jesus cannot desire useless sufferings for us, and that He would not inspire the longings I feel unless He wanted to grant them."

Does this sound like someone who regrets having offered herself to Merciful Love? Of course not. And, in fact, the line that follows this paragraph makes it even clearer: "Oh! How sweet is the way of Love!"

Yes, it's sweet because love is sweet, and it's also more effective at making us holy: "[T]he Fire of Love is more sanctifying than is the fire of purgatory." In fact, for Therese, love is "the chief plenary indulgence" that can keep us from purgatory. Moreover, she explains, "God who is all gentleness would moderate to excess the temporal punishment due to sin, because of our love."

So, love carries us along the way, making everything, in a certain sense, easy. It's the way our loving and merciful God intended for us. But when we get too "big" — in other words, when we don't fully and confidently abandon ourselves to God in this life — then we have to endure "useless sufferings," we have to endure "the fire of purgatory." But

Therese wants us to avoid it, and she believes that God wants us to avoid it, too. Actually, according to Therese, God doesn't just want us to bypass purgatory; he wants us to stop talking about it as if it were nearly impossible to avoid. In fact, she believed that such talk hurts the Lord. For instance, after hearing some of the other nuns talking about how they'd probably end up in purgatory, Therese responded, "Oh! How you grieve me! You do a great injury to God in believing you're going to purgatory. When we love, we can't go there." And as for one of her novices who told her, "I fear purgatory," Therese had this to say: "You do not have enough trust. You have too much fear before the good God. I can assure you that He is grieved over this. You should not fear purgatory because of the suffering there, but should instead ask that you not deserve to go there in order to please God, Who so reluctantly imposes this punishment. As soon as you try to please Him in everything and have an unshakable trust He purifies you every moment in His love and He lets no sin remain. And then you can be sure that you will not have to go to purgatory."

How can we be sure that we "will not have to go to purgatory"? Therese's advice is something we've already heard: Keep trying ("As soon as you try to please Him in everything."). And she also said something else that's familiar: Keep trusting ("... and have an unshakable trust"). So, when we keep trying and keep trusting, God "purifies [us] every moment in His love and He lets no sin remain."

Okay, so that covers two of our "three things" for living the Little Way that we learned on Day 11: Keep trying and keep trusting. But where's the third thing? Where's the call to "recognize the darkness of our littleness"? We find that part of Therese's teaching in her response to one of her novices, Sr. Marie of the Trinity, who was concerned about her chances of avoiding purgatory.

Sr. Marie had asked St. Therese, "If I fail even in the small things, may I still hope to get straight to heaven?" Now, Therese knew the young nun's weaknesses very well, and yet she still responded with beautiful words for little souls: "Yes! God is so good. He will know how He can come and get you. But despite this, try to be faithful, so that He does not have to wait in vain for your love."

Yes, God is so good to little souls who recognize their weakness. So, let's try to be faithful, and let's trust in God's promise of mercy.

Today's Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, fire of mercy.

Help me to live my life so I'll go straight to heaven when I die.

Volume 11

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The Divine Will centers all its goods and Its Divine Work in those who live in It. The value of one single instant in the Divine Will. All that the soul who lives in the Divine Will experiences belongs not to her, but to Jesus within her. One who lives in the Divine Will cannot go to Purgatory.

As I continued in my usual state, my always adorable Jesus kept speaking to me very often about his Most Holy Will. I will relate the little I remember. As I was not feeling well, blessed Jesus came and told me: "My daughter, the soul who lives in my Will can

say of all that I do: "All this is mine." This is because the will of the soul who gives herself to Me is so identified with my Will that everything my Will does she does as well. As she lives and dies in my Volition, she bears every blessing within herself, since nothing good exists outside of my Will. My Will forms the life of all the good that souls do. That is why the soul that dies to this life carries within her all the Masses being celebrated, and all the prayers and good works that are being done, since they are all the fruits of my Will. This is still very little, compared to the work of my Will which the soul carries within her as her own. One instant of the work of my Will is enough to surpass all the work of all creatures, past, present and future.

As the soul dies in my Will, no beauty, height, wealth, sanctity, wisdom or love can equal her--nothing. Nothing can be compared to her—nothing equals her. And when the soul who dies identified with my Will enters the Heavenly Fatherland, not only will the gates of Heaven open to her, but the whole heavenly court will bow to welcome her into her celestial home, to honor the work of my Will in her. How can I describe the rejoicing and astonishment of all the Blessed on seeing this soul entirely shaped by the work of my Divine Will; or on seeing that all that this soul did during her whole life—having done everything in my Volition—each word, work, thought and action—are so many Suns that adorn her—each one different from the others in light and beauty? How can I describe the surprise of the Blessed on seeing in this soul many divine streams which will inundate all the Blessed and flow over the earth for the benefit of pilgrim souls since Heaven cannot contain them? Ah, my daughter, my Will is the wonder of wonders. It holds the secret to light, sanctity and riches; It holds the secret to all good things—but it is not yet intimately known, and therefore cannot be appreciated or loved as It deserves! But I want You to appreciate It, to Love It, and to make It known to souls whom you find open to receive."

Another day, when I was suffering, I felt as if I couldn't do anything; so I felt oppressed. And Jesus came to me, hugged me, and said to me: "My daughter, do not trouble yourself. Try only to be abandoned in my Will, and I will do everything for you. One single instant in my Will is worth more than all the good you could ever do in your entire life."

I also remember that another day He told me: "My daughter, one who really does my Will interiorly in everything—in her soul and body, in all that she feels and suffers—can say: 'Jesus suffers; Jesus is oppressed.' Indeed, everything that creatures do to Me reaches Me in the soul who does my Will—in whom I dwell. That is why if the coldness of creatures reaches Me, my Will feels it. And, since my Will forms the life of that soul, the soul feels it, too. So, instead of worrying about this coldness, as if it were her own, she should stay close to Me to console Me and to atone for the coldness that other creatures send Me. In the same way, if she feels distractions, oppression and other such things, she must stay near Me to relieve Me and make reparation, as if they were not her things, but mine. That is why the soul who lives by my Will will experience many different pains, according to the offenses I receive from creatures, but in a sudden and almost instantaneous way. On the other hand, she will also experience indescribable joys and consolations. And if she must take care to console Me and repair for the offenses, she must also delight in the joys and consolations. Only then does my Will

achieve its purpose—otherwise, It remains sorrowful and incapable of fulfilling its purpose.”

Another day He told me: “My daughter, by no means can the soul who does my Will go to Purgatory, because my Will purges the soul of all her defects. After guarding her jealously in my Volition during her life, how could I allow the fire of Purgatory to touch her? At the most she may need some clothing, but my Will, before unveiling the Divinity, will clothe her with all that she needs. And then I will reveal Myself.”

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Effects of the “I love you” of Jesus.

As I continued in my usual state, my always beloved Jesus appeared to me momentarily—but suffering so much that it moved one to pity. I said to Him: “What is it, Jesus?” And He answered: “My daughter, astonishing things will arise and occur suddenly; revolutions will break out everywhere. O how much worse things will get!” All afflicted, He remained silent. And I said: “Life of my life, tell me another word.” And Jesus, as though breathing on me, said: “I love you”; and it seemed as if everyone and everything would receive new life from that “I love you.” I repeated: “Jesus, one more word.” And He said: “I could not tell you a more beautiful word than ‘I love you.’ This ‘I love you’ of Mine fills Heaven and earth. It flows through the Saints, and they receive new glory; it descends into the hearts of the pilgrim souls, and some receive the grace of conversion, some of sanctification. It penetrates into Purgatory, and rains upon the poor souls like beneficent dew, and refreshes them. Even the elements feel imbued with new life in growth and fruitfulness. All perceive the ‘I love you’ of your Jesus. And do you know when the soul attracts one of my ‘I love you’s’? When, fusing herself in Me, she assumes the divine attitude and, dissolving herself in Me, she does all that I do.” And I said: “My Love, it is often difficult to maintain this divine attitude.” And Jesus answered: “My daughter, what the soul cannot always do with her present acts in Me, she can make up for with her attitude of good will. I will be so pleased with her that I will become the vigilant sentry of each one of her thoughts, words, and heartbeats, placing them within Me and around Me as my cortege, looking at them with great love, as the fruit of the creature’s good will. Then, when the soul fuses herself in Me and does her present acts with Me, I feel so much drawn toward her that I do what she does with her, transforming her work into divine work. I take everything into account, and I reward everything, even the tiniest things. Not a single act of good will that a soul does will go unrewarded.”