



## AFTER CONSECRATION – PART 2

To be little is also to not attribute to oneself the virtues that one practices, believing oneself capable of anything, but to recognize that God places this treasure of virtue in the hands of His little child, to be used when necessary; but it remains always God's treasure. Finally, it is not to become discouraged over one's faults, for little children fall often, but they are too little to hurt themselves very much.

These words speak for themselves. So, I will say no more, especially because we've already covered the heart of all this during the retreat, namely, the idea of recognizing our littleness. But here's something we didn't cover earlier, something that pushes us forward along the Little Way as a way of life, something that also forms our conscience: The choice to see through "the lens of mercy."

The Lens of Mercy.

Just as St. Francis chose to see Christ through the lens of poverty, so St. Therese chose to see him and everything else through the lens of mercy. She describes this reality in a passage we read earlier, a passage that now deserves a second read:

How GOOD is the Lord, his MERCY endures forever! It seems to me that if all creatures had received the same graces I received, God would be feared by none but would be loved to the point of folly; and through love, not through fear, no one would ever consent to cause Him any pain. I understand, however, that all souls cannot be the same, that it is necessary that there be different types in order to honor each of God's perfections in a particular way.

To me He has granted His infinite Mercy, and through it I contemplate and adore the other divine perfections! All of these perfections appear to be resplendent with love; even His Justice (and perhaps this even more so than the others) seems to me as clothed in love. What a sweet joy it is to think that God is Just, i.e., that He takes into account our weakness, that He is perfectly aware of our fragile nature. What should I fear then?

Again, Therese chose to see everything through the lens of mercy. That is the mystery she wanted to glorify, the main mystery that formed her conscience. She chose mercy, and so, "even God's Justice" seemed to her "clothed in love." But this was not the kind of justice that Sr. Fébronie sought.

Remember Sr. Fébronie? She was the sub-prioress in the Lisieux convent who

thought Therese was being presumptuous when she taught others to trust boldly in God's mercy so as to avoid the punishment of purgatory. In other words, Fébronie was perhaps like the "sons of thunder" in the Gospel, who wanted punishment and strict justice for sinners (see Lk 9:54). She was perhaps like some of us who see sins in the Church and the world, get angry, and want fire and brimstone to come down.

Well, an exasperated St. Therese said to Sr. Fébronie (and, perhaps, to us, too): "My sister, if you look for the justice of God you will get it." And Sr. Fébronie got it. According to Therese, she went to purgatory, where she was "delivered up to the full justice of God," which doesn't sound very comforting.

So, we have a choice: severe justice or tender mercy. Now, I don't know about you, but I choose mercy! I choose to see through the lens of mercy. So, what about you? What do you choose? Before you answer, I should repeat what we learned on Day 19, namely, that mercy is a double-edged sword. I say that because, as Scripture teaches, the measure with which we measure will be measured back to us (see Lk 6:38). So, to choose the path of mercy is also to choose to be merciful. After all, only the merciful will be shown mercy (see Mt 5:7, 18:21-35). So, if you want God to be strict with everyone, and if you yourself decide to be strict with others, then God will be strict with you. Again, I don't know about you, but I choose mercy and hope to live mercy. But what about you? What do you choose? The Work of Mercy. If you decide to choose mercy, that's great! But know that your decision is going to cost you some work. I mean, proper conscience formation and learning to see through the lens of mercy doesn't just happen. It takes effort.

Okay, so what do you need to do? Well, I have three recommendations.

**1:** Read the Mercy Saints. My first recommendation is to read books about mercy from people who have chosen the path of mercy, who have done the "work of mercy," and who saw through the lens of mercy. Now, first and foremost, in my opinion, would be to read the autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux, called *Story of a Soul*. But please don't get distracted by the sometimes flowery language. It's a masterpiece, especially the later chapters.

Second, I recommend the spiritual journal of St. Faustina, *Divine Mercy in My Soul: Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*. Like Therese, Faustina also chose to see everything through the lens of mercy. In fact, the two saints are amazingly similar

in their message and, in my opinion, are the best guides for helping people to see everything through a lens of mercy. They truly are the great apostles of mercy for our time.

**2: Get an Image of Divine Mercy.** They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and the Image of Divine Mercy is a thousand words of mercy. Knowing that we all have a distorted image of God as a result of original sin (see Day 1), Jesus wants to heal that distortion by giving us a true image of his mercy for our time. Specifically, he appeared to St. Faustina and told her to paint an image of himself with the words “Jesus, I trust in you” at the bottom. He promised to give great graces through the image, and it’s become a source of healing for tens of millions of people throughout the world. I can think of no better way to begin to see through the lens of mercy than by spending time each day gazing upon this image of Jesus.

Now, while Jesus’ promise of grace applies to every Image of Divine Mercy, I highly recommend the recently restored “Vilnius” version, which is the original image painted under St. Faustina’s careful direction. Also, if you do get an Image of Divine Mercy, you may want to consider enthroning it in your home. (See Appendix Two for more information.)

**3. Become a Marian Missionary of Divine Mercy.** The Marian Missionaries of Divine Mercy (MMDM) is for people who really want to get into mercy as a spirituality. It’s basically an organization for those who complete a thorough adult-faith formation program that goes through all aspects of a Divine Mercy spirituality. That program is called Hearts Afire: Parish-based Programs from the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception (HAPP<sup>®</sup>).

After completing HAPP, belonging to the MMDM organization as a Marian Missionary involves a minimal commitment of prayer and service, and includes opportunities for further formation from myself and our Divine Mercy team at the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

If you think you might be interested in becoming a Marian Missionary, you can order the free MMDM handbook, which is the official manual for Marian Missionaries and explains everything. Visit [MarianMissionaries.org](http://MarianMissionaries.org).

I hope you’ll find these three recommendations helpful for learning to see through the lens of mercy. Now, may I ask you to pray for me, my community (The Marian

Fathers of the Immaculate Conception), and all the Marian Missionaries of Divine Mercy? Specifically, would you pray the following prayer of St. Therese for us? “Merciful Father, in the name of our lovable Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and all the Saints, I ask You to set the Marian Fathers and the Marian Missionaries of Divine Mercy on fire with Your Spirit of Love and to grant them the grace of making You deeply loved.”

Thank you for your prayers. I will also pray this prayer for you, and I hope you enjoyed your retreat. May your Offering to Merciful Love (your consecration to Divine Mercy) bring you great gifts of happiness, peace, and joy. God bless you. +

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Jesus: “My daughter, as the soul calls My Will into her acts—in her prayer—My Will repeats that act with her, praying together with the soul. And since Its immensity extends everywhere, the creation, the sun, all of heaven, the angels and the saints feel within themselves the strength of that creative prayer—and all of them pray. The wonder of this prayer is omnipotent and it involves all, giving itself to all. Only those who are ungrateful and who do not want to receive It remain without Its effects. Indeed, My Will possesses the power of prayer. O how beautiful it is to see It praying in Its divine way, making everything pray with Its creative power, which imposes itself on everyone. This prayer imposes itself on Our divine attributes, making Us pour down showers of **mercy**, graces, forgiveness and love. It is enough to know that it is Our prayer, to say: “It can give everything.” Now, you ought to know that, whether the soul does or does not do Our Will—whether she lives in It or not—she already dwells in Its immensity; or better still, My Will is the life of her life and the act of her acts, and It constantly assists her with Its creative and preserving Act. That is why the soul who lives in My Will can feel Its life, Its power, and Its holiness—and how much I love her.