



## AFTER CONSECRATION – PART 1

So, you've made your consecration to Divine Mercy (your Offering to Merciful Love). Now what? Of course, you're going to want to continue to live the Little Way by doing the three things we learned about on Day 11:

(1) Keep recognizing the darkness of your littleness and brokenness. (2) Keep trying to grow in holiness and do little things with great love.

(3) Keep trusting and believing that God will satisfy your desires for holiness.

But there's something else. You'll want to learn to see through the lens of mercy. Let me begin to explain this by saying something about a seemingly unrelated topic: conscience.

**Conscience.** One of the great gifts of the Second Vatican Council is the emphasis it gave to conscience, that "voice of God" that speaks to our hearts about loving, doing good, and avoiding evil. Now, unfortunately, since the Council, there's been a lot of confusion about this topic. For instance, while it's true that we should always follow our conscience, sometimes that's all people ever hear about it. But there's more to the story.

Yes, it's true that we should always follow our conscience, but we also have a responsibility to form our conscience properly. In other words, what we think is right and wrong may not actually be what's truly right and wrong. In fact, if most of our moral education comes from Hollywood and CNN and not from Sacred Scripture and Church teaching, then we've not formed our consciences properly, and what our conscience tells us will likely be wrong. Now, yes, we would still be obligated to follow our conscience under such circumstances. However, we'd also be guilty of doing wrong because we hadn't taken the time and made the effort to form our conscience properly. So, in a sense, the foundation of the entire moral life comes down to properly forming our conscience.

Alright, so how do we properly form our conscience? Again, we should do it through Scripture and Church teaching.

Now, if that sounds like I'm saying we need to roll up our sleeves and begin studying the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church — I am. Or we at least need to be properly taught from them. But that's actually where things start to get interesting.

The Freedom of Conscience. Did you know you that the Church gives us a lot of

freedom regarding how we properly form our conscience? Now, of course, it doesn't give us freedom to choose when it comes to something like the Ten Commandments.

There, we need to accept all 10, without exception. Still, we do have a lot of freedom regarding how we approach the truths of the moral life, which things we'll emphasize, and which truths we'll especially choose to live by.

We see this kind of freedom, for example, in the saints — particularly in those who gifted the Church with major spiritualities. Take St. Francis of Assisi. Of course, while he certainly embraced all the truths of Scripture and Church teaching, he chose to emphasize poverty. That was the lens through which he saw Christ, and so he became poor himself, and poverty colored his walk with Christ.

Francis' choice of poverty affected the way his conscience judged him. In other words, because the ideal of poverty held such a high place in Francis' conscience, his conscience would convict him of sin regarding things that probably wouldn't convict us. For instance, Francis would have certainly felt it sinful for him to accept a family inheritance of a mansion. After all, such a luxury would have gone against his ideal of following the poor Christ, who had "nowhere to lay his head." (Of course, for others, accepting such an inheritance would not necessarily be sinful.) So, we do have a lot of freedom regarding the way we choose to follow Christ and which truths of the Gospel will loom largest in our heart and conscience. In fact, this freedom of choice is part of the beautiful diversity of the Christian life, and it's something that St. Therese very much appreciated. For instance, we read the following in the introduction to her autobiography:

[Jesus] set before me the book of nature; I understood how all the flowers He has created are beautiful, how the splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the Lily do not take away the perfume of the little violet or the delightful simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose her springtime beauty, and the fields would no longer be decked out with little wild flowers.

And so, it is in the world of souls, Jesus' garden.

So, the diversity of authentic spiritualities within the Church is pleasing to Jesus. But according to St. Therese, there's one path that particularly attracts him, one path, more than others, that allows God to manifest "His infinite grandeur": It's the way of mercy. (Or, as Therese would put it, it's the "Little Way" of mercy.) The Way of Mercy. In the same introduction to her autobiography from which we

just read, St. Therese describes the way of mercy in relation to other paths: I understood, too, that Our Lord's love is revealed as perfectly in the most simple soul who resists His grace in nothing as in the most excellent soul; in fact, since the nature of love is to humble oneself, if all souls resembled those of the holy Doctors who illumined the Church with the clarity of their teachings, it seems God would not descend so low when coming to their hearts. But he created the child who knows only how to make his feeble cries heard; He has created the poor savage who has nothing but the natural law to guide him. It is to their hearts that God deigns to lower Himself. These are the wild flowers whose simplicity attracts Him. When coming down in this way, God manifests His infinite grandeur. Did you catch the revolutionary thinking that's hidden in this passage? It's no less a revolution than the Gospel message that the greatest are the least (see Lk 9:48). It's the idea that God lowers himself more to give himself to little souls than to the great souls. And so, "in this way, God manifests His infinite grandeur." In other words, when the Lord stoops down to little souls, it makes his glory shine even more. And that's a big deal.

Look at it like this: From our perspective, the great souls are, well, the great souls! They're the important and accomplished people. From God's perspective, though, the truly great souls are the little souls, because they allow God's greatest attribute, his mercy, to shine forth most fully. And if we exist simply to glorify God, then it seems that little souls enable God to manifest his glory even more so than other souls. After all, "the nature of love is to humble itself." And so, the Little Way is, in a certain sense, the best path for giving God the greatest glory.

Ah, but that's not fair to the big souls! Wrong. Anyone can become a little soul at heart, just as even the materially rich can be poor in spirit. Simply put, the Little Way is a choice. It's a choice that forms our conscience. It's a choice to be little. It's a choice to see ourselves as little. It's a choice to walk the path of spiritual childhood.

Saint Therese describes this choice in the following paragraph, which, in my opinion, is the best description of what it means to be a "little soul": To remain little is to recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God (as a little child expects everything from its father; it is to be not too distressed by its faults). Finally, it is to be worried about nothing, and not to be set on earning our living. Even among the poor, as long as the child is very little, they give him whatever is necessary; but as soon as he grows up, his father no longer wants to

feed him and says: “Work now! You can take care of yourself.” Very well, it was so as not to hear this that I never wanted to grow up, feeling that I was incapable of earning my living, the eternal life of heaven! (I have always remained little, therefore, having no other occupation but that of gathering flowers, the flowers of love and sacrifice, and of offering them to God in order to please Him).

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Jesus: “My Love, which the Sun symbolizes rises in the midst of all souls like a majestic Sun. There is no mind that is not irradiated by my Light; there is no heart that does not feel my warmth; there is no soul that is not embraced by my Love. My love is more than a Sun in the midst of men’s souls. But, alas, how few souls pay attention to Me! I remain almost ignored in the midst of them. I receive nothing in return, but I continue to give light, heat and love. If a soul pays attention to Me, I go mad, but without fanfare, because my Love is not subject to weaknesses, being firm, fixed and sincere. I would like your love for Me to be just like that, and if it were so, you would also become a Sun for Me and for all souls, since true Love possesses all of the Sun’s qualities.

On the other hand, a love which is not firm, fixed or sincere is symbolized by earthly fire, which is subject to constant change. Its light is not capable of illuminating everyone—it is a very gloomy light, mixed with smoke. Its heat is limited, and if it is not fed with wood, it dies down and turns into ash—while if the wood is green, it sputters and smokes.

Such are the souls who do not live completely for Me, as my true lovers. If they do any good, their good deeds produce more noise and smoke than light. If they are not fed by some human concern—even under the guise of holiness or conscience—they fade and become colder than ash. Inconstancy is their identifying mark: now fire, now ash.

## **Volume 11**

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I added: “My Love, tell me, what is your temperament?” And Jesus said: “One who lives in my Will loses her temperament and acquires mine. That is why the soul who lives in my Will finds in herself a pleasant, attractive, penetrating, dignified temperament, and a child-like simplicity. In short, she looks like Me in

everything. Moreover, she keeps her temperament under control and uses it as she wants and as it's needed. Since she lives in my Will, she takes part in my Power, so she exercises dominion over all things as well as herself. Depending on the circumstances and on the people, she deals with, she takes my temperament and expresses it.”

And I asked Him, “Tell me, will you give me the first place in your Will?” And Jesus smiled and said: “Yes, yes, I promise you. I will never let you out of my Will, and you will have and do whatever you want.”

“O Jesus, I want to be poor, poor, and little, little. I don't want anything, not even your things. It is better if You keep them. I want only You, and You will give me things as I need them, won't You, O Jesus?”

And Jesus answered: “Brava, Brava, my daughter! Finally, I have found someone who does not want anything. Everyone wants something from Me—but not the All, that is Myself alone; but by wanting nothing, you want everything—and this forms the delicacy and the wisdom of true love.”

I smiled and He disappeared.

August 17, 1912

Thinking of oneself and thinking of Jesus.

As I was praying, my blessed Jesus told me: “My daughter, the thought of oneself makes the soul smaller, and from her littleness she measures my greatness, almost wanting to limit Me. On the other hand, one who does not think of herself but thinks of Me becomes greater within my immensity and renders Me the honor due to Me.”