

†
DAY 27

Therese's Darkness (Part One)

Yesterday, we focused on the world's darkness and the ways that we can help save the world through Divine Mercy. But perhaps we moved on too quickly from the world's darkness to the light of mercy. Perhaps we didn't stop long enough to get a good grasp on what the world's darkness is all about. Well, that's what we're going to do today. More specifically, we're going to reflect on the root of the world's darkness and how it affected St. Therese.

Of course, the root of the world's darkness is sin. But why is there sin? Going back to the beginning, back to Day 1, we learned that sin comes from a lack of trust in God's goodness, a lack of faith in God and his Word. So, that's the deep root of the world's darkness. It's where people live as if God did not exist, as if there's no heaven, as if this world is all there is.

Well, such an empty, faithless, cynical worldview dominated St. Therese's 19th century France and helped make atheism and godlessness more popular than ever before. Yet despite the fact that Therese lived behind the protective walls of a convent, God decided not to shield her from the dark and terrible sadness of the modern world.

Still, in his loving mercy, the Lord waited until she was ready. He waited until after she had discovered her Little Way and had offered herself to Merciful Love. In other words, he waited until her foundation on Divine Mercy was rock solid. Therese herself explains God's goodness in waiting: "Never have I felt before this ... how sweet and merciful the Lord really is, for He did not send me this trial until the moment I was capable of bearing it. A little earlier I believe it would have plunged me into a state of discouragement."

Okay, but what, specifically, was this trial that the Lord sent to Therese? The saint herself describes it as follows: "I was enjoying such a living faith, such a clear faith, that the thought of heaven made up all my happiness, and I was unable to believe there were really impious people who had no faith. I believed they were actually speaking against their own inner convictions when they denied the existence of heaven, that beautiful heaven where God, Himself wanted to be their Eternal Reward. During those very joyful days of the Easter season, Jesus made me feel that there were really souls who have no faith, and who, through the abuse of grace, lost this precious treasure, the source of the only real and pure joys. He

permitted my soul to be invaded by the thickest darkness, and that the thought of heaven, up until then so sweet to me, be no longer anything but the cause of struggle and torment.”

Clearly, Therese was dealing with a night of faith, a trial of faith. But the other key word of this trial is “heaven,” which is very interesting. After all, that cuts right to the heart of the Little Way, which is really all about heaven. I mean, as a “way,” it goes somewhere. But where? To heaven. Indeed, the goal of Therese’s way is heaven. Now, as we’ve learned, the threefold means to that goal involve trusting, trying, and recognizing. Recognizing what? Recognizing the darkness that comes from being little, helpless, and weak.

So, up to the time of her trial of faith, which she describes above, the darkness of Therese’s Little Way was really about recognizing her helplessness and feeling incapable of the works of holiness. But that darkness eventually became Therese’s joy, because she firmly believed and trusted that God would come down and raise her to the heights of heaven. After all, that’s what mercy does. It goes to the lowest place and raises up.

But with Therese’s trial of faith, the challenge of trusting became not just about her own darkness (the darkness of her littleness) but about a deeper darkness that attacked the very goal of her faith, hope, and love. I mean, it was no longer just about trusting in God’s promise that he would raise her to the heights. Rather, it had to do with simply trusting that there is a heights, that there is a God, and that there is a heaven. It was about trusting amid the darkness of not seeing the goal, not desiring the goal, and not feeling the slightest bit of joy at the thought of the goal.

Because Therese still trusted God, even in the face of this trial of double darkness — the darkness of her own helplessness and the darkness of temptations against God and heaven — she truly deserves the blessing given to Abraham and Mary. Indeed, she’s blessed because she believed in God’s promise of mercy that he would raise her to the heights of holiness, even though she was helpless and even though it seemed to her that there was no God and no heaven. She truly “hoped against hope,” and she kept on hoping, trusting, and believing until the very end, as we’ll see tomorrow.

Today’s Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, fire of mercy. Help me to trust even amid the double darkness of my weakness and temptations against God and heaven.

Volume 1

No Date

O Holy Spouse, look at me in your arms, and see how much darkness surrounds me—a darkness so thick that not even one ray of light can reach my soul. O, Jesus, my mystical Sun, illuminate my mind with your light and scatter this darkness, so that I may recall all the graces You have given me. Eternal Sun, shine a ray of your light into the secret places of my heart and cleanse it of the filth that covers it. In flame and consume it with your love, so that my heart, which has known the delicate touches of your love, may reveal them plainly to him to whom obedience obliges me to tell my secrets.

O Jesus, my Sun, shine one more ray upon my lips, that I may say the simple truth. Let me speak for the sole purpose of learning whether it is really your voice that speaks to me—or an illusion of the enemy. O Jesus, how dark and void of light I appear in your arms! Please, help me, You who love me so much, and embrace me with Your light. O Beautiful One, I want to plunge into the very center of Your Sun that I may be completely immersed in your pure light. O Divine Sun, may your light lead me, follow me, and surround me everywhere. May You penetrate the innermost recesses of my soul. May You consume my earthly being—and transform it completely in your Divine Being.

Volume 11

November 2, 1912

One who wants to know herself must know herself in Jesus, and she will find her true image in Him, placing herself entirely in the divine order.

As I continued to suffer, I said to myself: “I no longer recognize myself! Sweet Life of mine, where are You? What shall I do to find you again? Without You, my Love, I cannot find the Beauty that adorns me, the Fortitude that strengthens me, or the Life that animates me. I lack everything—everything is death for me. Without you, life itself is more harrowing than any death. Ah, it is a continual death! Come, O Jesus, I cannot take it anymore! O supreme Light, come—don’t make me wait anymore! You let me feel the touch of your hands and then, as I try to grab You, You run away from me. You let me see your shadow, and as I try to look at the majesty in your shadow—the beauty of my Sun Jesus—I lose both

shadow and Sun. Please, mercy! My heart is shredded, torn to pieces—I cannot live any more. Ah, if only I could die!”

As I was saying this, my always adorable Jesus came to me and said: “My daughter, I am here, inside of you. If you want to recognize yourself, come into Me, to recognize yourself inside of Me. If you come to recognize yourself in Me, you will put yourself in order, because in Me you will find your image, made by Me and similar to Me. Indeed, you will find everything you need to preserve and adorn this image. As you come to recognize yourself in Me, you will also recognize your neighbor in Me; and when you see how much I love you and your neighbor, you will rise to the degree of true Divine Love. Everything inside and outside of yourself will take on the true order—the Divine order.

But if you want to recognize yourself within yourself, first, you won’t really recognize yourself at all, because you will lack Divine light; second, you will find everything in disarray and contradiction—misery, weakness, darkness, passions, and all the rest. You will find all these things in disorder within and outside of yourself, trying to wage war not only with you, but also with themselves, to see which one can harm you the most. And you—imagine what kind of relations they will foster between you and your neighbor.

Not only do I want you to recognize yourself in Me but, if you want to remember yourself, you must come and do it in Me; otherwise, if you try to remember yourself without Me, you will do more harm than good.

Volume 12

September 28, 1917

Acts done in the Divine Will are suns which illuminate everyone, and which will save those who have a modicum of good will.

As I continued in my usual state, my sweet Jesus said to me: “My daughter, the darkness is dense and souls fall more and more deeply into it. What is more, in this darkness they are digging a pit for their destruction. Men’s minds have become blind, and they lack the light to see good — they see only evil. And this evil will overwhelm them and lead them to destruction. That is why, where they thought they would find safety, they will find death. Ah! My daughter! My daughter!”

Then He added: “Acts done in my Will are like suns that illuminate everyone; and as long as the soul’s act remains in my Will, so long does a new sun shine in blind

minds, giving those who have a bit of good will the light that they need to pull back from the precipice, while the others perish. That is why, in these times of dense darkness, the acts that souls do in my Will do tremendous good. Indeed, only by the power of those acts will other souls escape destruction.” And, having said this, Jesus withdrew.

Later, He came back again and added: “I tell you that the soul who does my Will and lives in It is my carriage, and she gives me control over everything. I hold the reins of her mind, of her affections, and of her desires—and I do not leave a single one of them in her power. I make myself comfortable enthroned on her heart, and I perfect my rule over her and I do whatever I want. Now I make the carriage run; now fly; now it brings Me to Heaven; now I ride around the earth; now I stop.

“O how glorious and victorious I am—I rule and I reign!

“But if the soul does not do my Will and lives by her human will, the carriage falls apart. She takes the reins away from Me, and leaves me powerless—like a poor king who has been thrown out of his kingdom. Then the enemy takes my place, while the reins remain at the mercy of her own passions.”