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DAY 30

The Little Way

Three words summarize what we learned about the Little Way. Put differently, we just need to remember to do three things: (1) Recognize, (2) Trust, and (3) Try.

Recognize

To live the Little Way, we need to recognize the darkness of our littleness and our brokenness. Remember, the Little Way is based on St. Therese's deep rediscovery of the heart of the Gospel, namely, God's mercy for sinners, God's love that goes out especially to the weak, broken, and sinful. Therese simply realized that by recognizing her littleness and helplessness more and more, she would, thereby, be more and more ready for the cascading love pouring forth from the pierced Heart of Jesus.

In her Letter 197 she powerfully expresses this idea: [T]he weaker one is, without desires or virtues, the more suited one is for the workings of this consuming and transforming Love. [B]ut we must consent to remain always poor and without strength, and this is the difficulty. Ah! let us remain then very far from all that sparkles, let us love our littleness, let us love to feel nothing, then we shall be poor in spirit, and Jesus will come to look for us [and] He will transform us in flames of love.

Trust

Recognizing our weakness, brokenness, and sin can be a difficult thing. In the above quote, Therese even says, "This is the difficulty." And why is it difficult? It's difficult because the wound in each one of us, caused by original sin, makes us tend to doubt God's goodness and love. Indeed, we tend to think in a worldly, Jansenist way that says we must earn God's love by being perfect, strong, and without sin.

So, "the difficulty" is to reverse this tendency in ourselves and to trust. It's to ignore the "thieves of hope" and to believe in God's promise of mercy. It's to hope against hope that the Lord's Merciful Love goes out to us not because we're perfect, strong, and without sin, but because we're imperfect, weak, and sinful. In fact, it's to trust even beyond that. It's to trust the prophetic word of St. Therese of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church that God will satisfy our desires for holiness and

raise us to the heights of sanctity. It's to trust that he will make us into great saints, even if we don't see it happening, even if we struggle with the same sins day after day, even if we have to wait for the grace of great holiness until the very end of our lives. It's to believe Therese's word in Letter 197 that "it is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love." It's to trust the word of the greatest saint of modern times when she tells us in that same letter that her "only treasure" is "the blind hope that I have in [God's] mercy." It's to listen to her ask us, "Why can't that treasure be ours?" And it's to realize, "That treasure can be mine, if I cling to God's mercy with trust."

Try

So, to live the Little Way, we must recognize our weakness and trust in God's mercy — and we must also keep trying. Okay, but what does that mean? It means we have to keep striving to grow in holiness. For instance, it means going to Mass and Confession regularly, taking time to pray, and doing little things with great love. It means forgiving those who have hurt us. It means being sorry for our sins, making a firm resolution not to sin again, and never making a "truce" with sin. It means not settling for complacency or mediocrity or the attitude that says, "Well, that's just who I am." In other words, it means striving to be faithful to examining our consciences every day. Also, it means not giving in to discouragement or, God forbid, despair. It means that if we fall into discouragement or despair, we'll make an effort to get right back up, right back to trusting in God's mercy. It means trying to remember and keep before our eyes the infinite mercy of God who never tires of forgiving. It means striving to never tire of asking God for forgiveness.

Today's Prayer:

Spend the day pondering how to live the Little Way as it is summarized in these three words: Recognize, Trust, and Try.

Recognize:

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.”

Trust:

Volume 6

March 23, 1905

Glory and satisfaction of Jesus.

As I was in my usual state, blessed Jesus came for a brief visit, and I said to Him: “Lord, is my state your glory?” And He answered: “My daughter, all my glory and all my satisfaction lies solely in this—that I want all of you deeper in Me.” Then He added: “Everything depends on the soul’s distrust and fear of herself, and on her trust and confidence in God.” And, having said this, He disappeared.

Try:

Volume 18

25th December, 1925

This is why one so much needs the right dispositions, knowledge of the Gift, and respect, appreciation, and love for the Gift itself.

This is why the forerunner of the Gift that I want to give to the creature of My Will is the knowledge of It. The knowledge prepares the way. Knowledge is like the contract that I want to make for the gift that I want to give. For the more knowledge enters into the soul, so much the more is she moved to desire the Gift and to beg the Divine Writer to sign His final signature—so that the gift belongs to the soul as her own possession. So in these times, the sign that I want to give this Gift of My Will is the knowledge of It. That is why you must be attentive and you must try not to omit anything that I have told you about My Will—if you want Me to place My final signature on the Gift that I long to give to mankind.