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**DAY 33**

Putting It All Together

For the last four days, we've been reviewing the last four weeks of our retreat. During those days, we've not only been reviewing the material, but we've also begun to put together all that we've learned. I say we've "begun" to put it all together.

By that, I mean we're probably not yet at a point where we can grasp the Little Way and the Offering to Merciful Love "in a single gaze," as St. John Paul II put it. To get to that point, a unifying statement to summarize the main points of what we've learned may be helpful.

Actually, I think we need more than just a statement. We need a prayer — something we can frequently repeat, even every day, something that not only reminds us of the meaning of the Offering to Merciful Love but that also allows us to make it.

Now, of course, as we learned on Days 20 and 21, St. Therese has already composed such a marvelous prayer. And that may be the text you'd like to use and pray with, even daily. However, while I do recommend privately praying Therese's actual prayer at least once (preferably on your consecration day), I dare say that there are two difficulties with using it under other circumstances: (1) It's rather long, and so it may not be practical for everyone to use as a daily prayer. (2) It doesn't clearly highlight all of the teachings we've covered during this retreat. Alright, well, because we're looking for a unifying statement, something that can summarize the main points of what we've learned, it may be helpful to have something more. Okay, so here we seem to have a case where "less" is "more." In other words, it may be better to have something that's shorter (less) than Therese's text of Offering and that will also summarize all the main teachings we've covered during this retreat (more). Alright then, without any further ado, here's such a prayer — the Prayer of Consecration to Merciful Love:

"Merciful Father, relying on the prayers and example of Abraham and Mary, my father and mother in faith, and of St. Therese, my sister in the way of humble confidence, I, \_\_\_\_\_, choose, this day, with the help of your grace, to strive with all my heart to follow the Little Way. And so, I firmly intend to fight discouragement, do little things with great love, and be merciful to my neighbor in deed, word, and prayer.

I aim to keep before my eyes my poverty, weakness, brokenness, and sin, trusting that my littleness and contrite heart will attract your Merciful Love.

I choose to remain always little, not relying on my own merits but solely on yours, dear Lord, and those of the Blessed Mother.

Finally, I believe, my God, that you can and will make me into a saint, even if I won't see it, even if I have to struggle all my life against vice and sin, even if I have to wait until the very end. This blind hope in your mercy, O Lord, is my only treasure.

And now, to confirm my resolve and to console you for so much rejection of your mercy, I OFFER MYSELF, THROUGH THE HANDS OF MARY IMMACULATE, AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, asking you to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of infinite tenderness shut up within you to overflow into my soul, and that I may thus become a martyr of your love, O my God, and a gift of mercy to so many others. I ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen."

So, there you have it: A compact prayer that expresses both the essence of Therese's Offering and the other main ideas of this retreat. For instance, do you see the essence of the Offering reflected in the last main paragraph? And can you make out the other main ideas in the middle paragraphs?

Great. But maybe you're looking for something even more compact. I mean, we've got the very long option (Therese's actual text), but what about a very short option? What about something that we can easily memorize and pray anytime during a busy day? Thankfully, Therese herself gives us such an option through a prayer she asked a dearly beloved friend to pray for her during the last months of her life. I'm adapting it slightly, particularly so we can pray it in the first person. Here it is:

"Merciful Father, in the name of our lovable Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and all the Saints, I ask You to set me on fire with Your Spirit of Love and to grant me the grace of making You deeply loved."

I love that prayer. Unfortunately, though, it doesn't count for your consecration day. For that, I'm only giving you two options: Therese's actual text or the Prayer of Consecration to Merciful Love. (Of course, you can certainly pray both.)

Actually, if you're making the consecration at home with your family, there's one more option. It's called the Family Offering to Merciful Love, and Appendix Two (See below) will tell you all about that.

Anyway, whichever prayer you choose for your day of consecration, make sure

you spend some time today meditating on it (or on “them,” if you decide to pray both prayers tomorrow). Also, you might want to peek ahead to the second section of tomorrow’s reading, “Before Consecration.” (Don’t worry. It’s short. See below.)

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## **APPENDIX TWO**

How to Make the Invitation (Offering). Making the Family Offering to Merciful Love is rather simple. First, for the purpose of consoling the Heart of Jesus, invite the Lord to give you and your family the mercy that other families reject. Then, each member of your family should strive to accept this rejected mercy and share it with others. It’s that simple. Also, don’t worry if your family is not perfect. In fact, it’s perfect if you’re not perfect! After all, Jesus said, “The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy.” Well, these words also apply to families, so one could say, “The more sinful the family, the more right it has to God’s mercy.” So, no matter how much a family struggles with sin, the members can still make the Family Offering to Merciful Love. They simply need to try sincerely to turn away from sin, invite the Lord into their home, and receive and share his Merciful Love.

I suggest the following formula for making a Family Offering to Merciful Love, which begins with Jesus’ words to St. Faustina, who, like St. Therese, lived this spirituality to the full:

**LEADER:** Jesus, you said to St. Faustina: “The flames of mercy are burning me. I desire to pour them out upon human souls. Oh, what pain they cause Me when they do not want to accept them! You, at least, come to Me as often as possible and take these graces they do not want to accept. In this way you will console My Heart. Oh, how indifferent are souls to so much goodness, to so many proofs of love! My Heart drinks only of the ingratitude and forgetfulness of souls living in the world. They have time for everything, but they have no time to come to Me for graces. My daughter, take the graces that others spurn; take as many as you can carry. I want to give myself to souls and to fill them with My love, but few there are who want to accept all the graces My love has intended for them. My grace is not lost; if the soul for whom it was intended does not accept it, another soul takes it.”

**ALL:** Lord Jesus, if you want to pour out your mercy on souls, how much more must you desire to pour it out on whole families, especially in our time when so many families reject you. Therefore, Jesus, we the \_\_\_\_\_ Family, offer ourselves to your Merciful Love and ask for the grace and mercy that

other families refuse. We ask this so as to console your Heart and because we need your mercy. Fill us with your mercy, Lord. Please forgive us our sins. We're sorry for our sins, and we ask for the grace to be merciful to one another in our deeds, words, and prayers.

Merciful Savior, may the rays of mercy that go forth from your Heart reign in our home and in our hearts. Please make our home a place where your mercy can rest and where we, too, can find rest in your mercy. Bless us with your mercy when we leave our home and bless us again when we return. Bless everyone we meet with the mercy you pour into our hearts. Especially bless those who visit our home — may they experience your mercy here.

Mary, Our Mother of Mercy, help us to faithfully live our Offering to God's Merciful Love. We give ourselves to you and ask you to share with us your Immaculate Heart. Help us to accept your Son's mercy with your own openness of heart at the Annunciation. Help us to be grateful for God's mercy with your own joyfulness of heart at the Visitation. Help us to trust in God's mercy, especially during times of darkness, with your own steadfast faith at Calvary. Finally, Mary, protect and preserve our family in love, so that one day, we may rejoice together with you and all the saints in the communion of the eternal Family of Love — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

L: St. Joseph, - A: Pray for us.

L: St. Faustina, - A: Pray for us.

L: St. Therese, - A: Pray for us.

I recommend that a family make such an offering (or renew it) on one of their favorite Marian feasts, on St. Joseph's feast day (March 19), or on one of the "Mercy feasts" such as the memorial of St. Therese of Lisieux (Oct. 1), the memorial of St. Faustina (Oct. 5), Divine Mercy Sunday (the Second Sunday of Easter), or Trinity Sunday, which is the day St. Therese first received the inspiration to offer herself to Merciful Love.

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### **Before Consecration:**

Before Consecration. Okay, now get ready — actually, you already are ready. You've been faithfully preparing for this moment for the last 33 days. So here are just three things I recommend by way of final preparation: (1) If possible, make a good Confession. But if you don't have time to do so before the consecration, then from your heart, tell the Lord you're sorry for your sins, and make a resolution to go

to Confession as soon as you reasonably can. (2) Write out or print up the Prayer of Consecration to Merciful Love or Therese's own text so you can sign it after you've recited it — if you'd like, you can visit [ShopMercy.org](http://ShopMercy.org) for a certificate or prayer card with the Prayer of Consecration to Merciful Love. (3) Get a Divine Mercy Image to put up in your room as a reminder of your consecration — or at least get a small prayer card to put in your wallet or purse. Again, these three things are recommendations. They're not essential to the consecration.