

**Reading the writings of Therese of the Child Jesus**  
**Teresian Anniversaries 2023-2025**  
**2025: Prayers and other writings**

**Text 2:**  
**Living on Love (Poem 17)**

Suggestion for the community meeting:

1. Read the text together
2. One of those present, having prepared a contribution in advance, discusses the text using the commentary (and other aids, if necessary).
3. Community dialogue on the text.

It would be helpful to have made individual readings and reflections on Therese's text before the community meeting.

**Living on Love**

1. On the evening of Love, speaking without a parable  
Jesus said: "If someone wants to love me  
All his life, let him keep my Word  
My father and I will come to visit it.  
And of his heart making our home  
Coming to him, we will always love him!  
Filled with peace, we want him to stay  
In our Love!..."

2. To live on Love is to keep yourself  
Uncreated Word, Word of my God,  
Ah! you know it, divine Jesus, I love you  
The Spirit of Love sets me ablaze with its fire  
It is by loving you that I attract the Father  
My weak heart guards it without return.  
O Trinity! you are a prisoner  
Of my Love!.....

3. To live on Love is to live from your life,  
Glorious King, delight of the elect.  
You live for me, hidden in a host  
I want to hide myself for you, O Jesus!  
Lovers need solitude  
A heart to heart that lasts night and day  
Your only look makes my bliss  
I live on Love!...

4. Living on Love is not on earth  
Set up your tent at the top of Tabor.  
With Jesus is to climb Calvary,  
It is to regard the Cross as a treasure!...  
In Heaven I must live of enjoyment  
Then the trial will have fled forever  
But exiled I want in suffering to  
Live on love.

5. To live on Love is to give without measure  
Without claiming wages here below  
Ah! without counting, I give being sure  
That when one loves, one does not calculate!...  
To the Divine Heart, overflowing with tenderness  
I gave it my all.... lightly I run  
I have nothing left but my only wealth  
Live on love.

6. To live on Love is to banish all fear  
Any remembrance of past faults.  
Of my sins I see no trace,  
In an instant love burned everything...  
Divine flame, O most sweet Furnace!  
In your hearth I fix my stay  
It is in your fires that I sing at my ease:  
"I live on Love!..."

7. To live on Love is to keep within oneself  
A great treasure in a mortal vessel  
My Beloved, my weakness is extreme  
Ah, I am far from being an angel from heaven!...  
But if I fall with each passing hour  
Picking me up you come to my aid,  
Every moment you give me your grace  
I live on Love.

8. To live on Love is to navigate ceaselessly  
Sowing peace, joy in all hearts  
Pilot Aimé, Charity urges me  
Because I see you in the souls my sisters  
Charity is my only star  
In its clarity I sail without detour  
I have my motto written on my sail:  
“Live on love.”

9. Living on Love, when Jesus sleeps  
Is rest on the stormy waves  
Oh! do not be afraid, Lord, that I will awaken you  
I wait in peace for the shore of heaven....  
Faith will soon tear its veil  
My hope is to see you one day  
Charity swells and pushes my sail  
I live on Love!...

10. To live on Love is, O my Divine Master  
Begging you to spread your fires  
In the holy and sacred soul of your Priest  
May he be purer than a seraph of heaven!...  
Ah! glorify your Immortal Church  
To my sighs, Jesus, don't be deaf  
Me, her child, I immolate myself for her  
I live on Love.

11. To live on Love is to wipe your Face  
It is to obtain forgiveness from sinners  
O God of Love! may they come into your grace  
And may they bless your name forever...

Until my heart resounds blasphemy  
To erase it, I always want to sing:  
“Your Sacred Name, I adore it and I Love it  
I live on Love!...”

12. To live on Love is to imitate Mary,  
Bathed in tears, in precious perfumes,  
Your divine feet, which she kisses delighted  
Wiping them with her long hair...  
Then rising, she breaks the vase  
Your Sweet Face it embalms in its turn.  
Me, the perfume with which I perfume your Face  
It's my love !....

13. “To live on Love, what strange madness!”  
The world tells me, “Ah! stop singing,  
Don't waste your perfumes, your life,  
Usefully know how to use them!...»  
To love you, Jesus, what a fruitful loss!...  
All my perfumes are yours without return,  
I want to sing out of this world:  
“I am dying of Love!”

14. Dying of Love is a very sweet martyrdom  
And it's the one I would like to suffer,  
O Cherubim! tune your lyre,  
Because I feel it, my exile will end!....  
Flame of Love, consume me ceaselessly  
Live for a moment, your burden is very heavy for me!  
Divine Jesus, realize my dream:  
Die of Love!...

15. To die of love is my hope  
When I see my bonds breaking  
My God will be my Great Reward  
I don't want to own anything else.  
Of his Love I want to be set ablaze  
I want to see Him, unite myself to Him always  
Here is my Heaven... here is my destiny:  
Live on love !!!...

## Introduction to the Text

One cannot fail to be struck by the note of gravity in the fervour of this poem of love, written the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1895, some months before her *Act of Oblation to Merciful Love*. This poem is spontaneous, not produced in response to a particular request or on the occasion of a liturgical feast or the feast of one of the community sisters.

‘Living on love – Dying of love’, this is the heart of this great meditation of Therese's at the time when she was beginning her manuscripts (*Manuscript A* was written in 1895, for the feast of her prioress and blood sister on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1896).

The poem is doubtless dominated by a fashion of the time, when romances would use and abuse the leitmotif : here ‘Living on love is . . .’ which is repeated over and over.

The poem ‘Living on Love’ was born in a single outflow during the long moments of adoration in the choir, in the presence of the Holy Sacrament exposed for the three days of Forty Hours (Sunday, Monday and Tuesday preceding Ash Wednesday). Two by two, the sisters replaced each other every hour before the monstrance. Only the sanctuary was illuminated, and it is in this context that this poem flowed from Therese’s soul.

While the first stanza is expressed in trinitarian mode, the second also brings in the three divine Persons, but in such a way that Jesus is at the heart of the Trinity. After that, nothing is said but of Jesus alone.

Stanza 4, from Tabor to Calvary, comes from an intervention by Sister Genevieve, who said to her sister Therese : ‘It’s beautiful, I say, but incomplete : you need a stanza on this theme : Living on Love is not to attach one’s tent to the summit of Tabor while on earth . . .’ Therese accepted this suggestion with good humour, even with gratitude.

Stanza 11 : ‘Wipe away blasphemy with love’ shows the image of Veronica wiping Jesus’ Face, symbolising the love which ‘wipes away’ blasphemy.

Stanza 12 takes us from Saint Veronica to Saint Mary Magdalen.

In Stanza 14, Therese is already hardly on earth any more, being completely oriented towards Heaven.

### **For community discussion:**

1. *What is the text saying?* Understanding the content and initial meaning of Therese’s text.
2. *What does the text say to us today?* Discern the present-day relevance (social, ecclesial, spiritual. . .) of the text.
3. *What does the text say to me/us?* Consider the personal and community relevance of the text.

The purpose of this process is to allow Therese to speak to us herself, to question and encourage us, and to open us up to her clarifying and confirming our own personal and community path. The questions suggested are only indicative, and could perhaps be used in individual meditation and community sharing.

### **Questions:**

1. Note the dynamic of the poem, totally based on the first stanza. Distinguish the two principal movements of the poem. What structure could one suggest for this poem?
2. What Gospel scenes come to mind when reading the stanzas of the poem?
3. How does Therese express in depth the Mysteries of faith and the dimensions of human existence (Eucharist, Pascal mystery, Reconciliation, Grace, Mercy, Mission of the Church, Liturgy, Suffering, Theological virtues . . .)?
4. What is the essential spiritual combat as seen in the light of this poem? What is the spiritual combat of our world of today? What can Therese say to our world?