



TERESIAN  
ANNIVERSARIES  
2023-2025

**Reading of the writings of Therese of the Child Jesus  
Theresian anniversaries 2023-2025  
2023: Manuscript A**



Study guide 5:  
**Father's illness ad Therese receives the habit**  
(Ms A, 71r-73v)



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Proposal for the Community meeting:

1. Reading of the text.
2. One of the participants, who has already prepared his contribution, presents the text with the help of the reading schedule (and other supports, if necessary).
3. Community dialogue on the text.

It would be good if the community meeting was preceded by a personal reading and meditation on the text of Therese.

## MANUSCRIPT A, 71r-73v

[ICS pp. 151 – 157]

The little flower transplanted to Mount Carmel was to expand under the shadow of the cross. The tears and blood of Jesus were to be her dew, and her Sun was His adorable Face veiled with tears. Until my coming to Carmel, I had never fathomed the depths of the treasures hidden in the Holy Face. It was through you, dear Mother, that I learned to know these treasures. Just as formerly you had preceded us into Carmel, so also you were first to enter deeply into the mysteries of love hidden in the Face of our Spouse. You called me and I understood. I understood what *real glory* was. He whose Kingdom is not of this world showed me that true wisdom consists in “desiring to be unknown and counted as nothing,” in “placing one’s joy in the contempt of self.” Ah! I desired that, like the Face of Jesus, “my face be truly hidden, that no one on earth would know me.” I thirsted after suffering and I longed to be forgotten.

How merciful is the way God has guided me. *Never* has He given me the desire for anything which He has not given me, and even His bitter chalice seemed delightful to me.

After those beautiful festivities of the month of May, namely, the Profession and taking of the Veil [71v<sup>o</sup>] of our dear Marie, the *oldest* in the family being crowned on her wedding day by the *youngest*, we had to be visited by trial. The preceding year, in May, Papa was seized with a paralytic stroke in the limbs and we were greatly disturbed. But the strong character of my dear King soon took control and our fears disappeared. However, more than once during the trip to Rome we noticed that he easily grew tired and wasn’t as cheerful as usual. What I noticed especially was the progress he was making in perfection. He had succeeded, like St. Francis de Sales, in over-

coming his natural impetuosity to such an extent that he appeared to have the most gentle nature in the world. The things of earth seemed hardly to touch him, he easily surmounted contradictions, and God was *flooding* him with *consolations*. During his daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament his eyes were often filled with tears and his face breathed forth a heavenly beatitude. When Léonie left the Visitation, he was not disturbed and made no reproaches to God for not having answered the prayers he offered up to obtain his daughter's vocation. It was even with joy that he left to go and bring her home.

Here is the faith with which Papa accepted the separation of his little Queen, announcing it to his friends in these words: "My dear Friends, Thérèse, my little Queen, entered Carmel yesterday! Only God could demand such a sacrifice. Don't sympathize with me, for my heart is overflowing with joy."

It was time that such a faithful servant receive the reward of his works, and it was right that his wages resemble those which God gave to the King of heaven, His only Son. Papa had just made a donation to God of an *altar*, and it was he who was chosen as victim to be offered with the Lamb without spot.

[72r<sup>o</sup>] You are aware, dear Mother, of our bitter sufferings during the month of June, and especially June 24, 1888. These memories are too deeply engraved in the bottom of our hearts to require any mention in writing. O Mother! how we suffered! And this was still only the *beginning* of the trial.

The time for my reception of the Habit had arrived. I was accepted by the conventual chapter, but how could we dream of any kind of ceremony? Already they were talking of giving me the Habit without my going outside the cloister, and then they decided to wait. Against all expectation, our dear Father recovered from his second attack, and the Bishop set the ceremony for January 10. The wait had been long, but what a beautiful celebration it was!

Nothing was missing, not even the *snow*! I don't know if I've already told you how much I love snow? When I was small, its whiteness filled me with delight, and one of the greatest pleasures I had was taking a walk under the light snowflakes. Where did this love of snow come from? Perhaps it was because I was a *little winter flower*, and the first adornment with which my eyes beheld nature clothed was its white mantle. I had always wished that on the day I received the Habit, nature would be adorned in white just like me. The evening before, I was gazing at the gray skies from which a fine rain was falling every now and again, and the temperature was so mild I could no longer hope for any snow. The following morning the skies hadn't changed. The celebration, however, was wonderful. The most beautiful, the most attractive flower of all was my dear King; never had he looked so handsome, so *dignified*. Everybody admired him. This was really his day of *triumph* and it was to be his last celebration on this earth. He had now given all his children to God, for Céline, too, had confided her vocation to him. He had *wept tears of joy*, and had gone with her to thank Him who "bestowed such honor on him by taking all his children."

[72v°] At the termination of the ceremony the Bishop intoned the Te Deum. One of the priests remarked to him that this hymn of *thanksgiving* was usually sung only at Professions, but, once begun, it was continued to the end. And indeed it was fitting that the feast be thus completed since in it were united all the others.

After embracing my dear King for the last time, I entered the cloister once more, and the first thing that struck my eye was the statue of "the little Jesus" smiling at me from the midst of flowers and lights. Immediately afterward, my glance was drawn to the snow, the monastery garden was white like me! What thoughtfulness on the part of Jesus! Anticipating the desires of His fiancée, He gave her snow. Snow! What mortal bridegroom,

no matter how powerful he may be, could make snow fall from heaven to charm his beloved? Perhaps people wondered and asked themselves this question. What is certain, though, is that many considered the snow on my Clothing Day as a little miracle and the whole town was astonished. Some found I had a strange taste, loving snow!

Well, so much the better! This accentuated even more the *incomprehensible condescension* of the Spouse of virgins, of Him who loves *Lilies white as SNOW!*

The Bishop came into the cloister after the ceremony and was very kind to me. I believe he was very proud I had succeeded and told everyone I was "*his little girl.*" He was always kind to me on his return trips to the Carmel. I remember especially his visit on the occasion of our Father St. John of the Cross's Centenary. He took my head in his hands and gave me a thousand caresses; never was I so honored! At the same time, God reminded me of the caresses [73r<sup>o</sup>] He will bestow on me in the presence of the angels and saints, and now He was giving me only a faint image of this. The consolation I experienced at this thought was very great indeed!

January 10, as I have just said, was my King's day of triumph. I compare it to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on the day of the palms. Like that of our Divine Master, Papa's glory of a *day* was followed by a painful passion and this passion was not his alone. Just as the sufferings of Jesus pierced His Mother's heart with a sword of sorrow, so our hearts experienced the sufferings of the one we cherished most tenderly on earth. I recall that in the month of June, 1888, at the moment of our first trials, I said: "I am suffering very much, but I feel I can still bear greater trials." I was not thinking then of the ones reserved for me. I didn't know that on February 12, a month after my reception of the Habit, our dear Father would drink the *most bitter* and *most humiliating* of all chalices.

Ah! that day, I didn't say I was able to suffer more! Words cannot express our anguish, and I'm not going to attempt to describe it. One day, in heaven, we shall love talking to one another about our *glorious* trials; don't we already feel happy for having suffered them? Yes, Papa's three years of martyrdom appear to me as the most lovable, the most fruitful of my life; I wouldn't exchange them for all the ecstasies and revelations of the saints. My heart overflows with gratitude when I think of this inestimable *treasure* that must cause a holy jealousy to the angels of the heavenly court.

My desire for suffering was answered, and yet my attraction for it did not diminish. My soul soon shared in the sufferings of my [73v<sup>o</sup>] heart. Spiritual aridity was my daily bread and, deprived of all consolation, I was still the happiest of creatures since all my desires had been satisfied.

O dear Mother! how sweet our great trial was since [5] from our hearts came only sighs of love and gratitude! We were no longer walking in the way of perfection, we were flying, all five of us. The two poor little exiles of Caen, while still in the world, were no longer of it. Ah! what marvels the trial worked in my dear Céline's soul! All the letters she wrote at this epoch are filled with resignation and love. And who could express the visits we had together? Ah! far from separating us, Carmel's grilles united our souls more strongly; we had the same thoughts, the same desires, the same *love for Jesus* and *for souls*. When Céline and Thérèse were speaking together, never did a word concerning the things of the earth mingle in their conversations which were already in the heavens. As formerly in the *belvédère*, they dreamed about things of eternity. To enjoy this endless happiness as soon as possible, they chose as their lot here on earth both *suffering* and *contempt*.



## Introduction to the text:

« The depths of treasures hidden in the Holy Face » (Ms A, 71r), [ICS p. 152]. Devotion to the Holy Face developed in the 19th century following revelations made by Our Lord to sister Marie de Saint-Pierre, of the Tours Carmel. From the beginning of her religious life, Therese was initiated into this devotion by Sister Agnes of Jesus. She then deepened it in a very personal way, by using texts from the prophet Isaiah, mainly at the time of her father's illness. On January 10, 1889, the day she took the habit, she signed an image for the first time: «*Sister Therese of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face.*» She was the first at the Carmel of Lisieux to choose this title.

What should be known about her father, Louis Martin, is that he was going to suffer from a real disease. Indeed, in the spring of 1887, Louis' health experienced a first serious alert: an attack of paralysis in one leg. A year later, worrying symptoms appeared: memory loss, distractions, forgetfulness. He who was always impeccably dressed sometimes appeared in a neglected outfit. In June 1888, he left without warning and disappeared for several days: he was found in Le Havre four days later. Circulation problems caused screams, tears, and senseless words alternated with periods of remission when Mr. Martin made plans. Today, doctors agree that Louis Martin suffered from cerebral arteriosclerosis with a flare-up of uremia. He died on July 29, 1894.

« Papa had just made a donation to God of an *altar* » (Ms A, 71v), [ICS p. 153]: Mr. Martin himself paid for the high altar of Saint-Pierre Cathedral in Lisieux, when the first appeal was made for donations and he demanded secrecy about his gesture.

« Giving me the Habit without my going outside the cloister » (Ms A, 72r), [ICS p. 154]: on the day of receiving the habit, the postulant came out of the cloister dressed as a bride. She took part in the outdoor ceremony surrounded by her family.

« The statue of the little Jesus » (Ms A, 72v), [ICS p, 155] : this was a statue of a Child Jesus painted in pink that Therese was appointed to take care of and adorn until her death.

« Papa's glory of *a day* was followed by a painful passion » (Ms A, 73r), [ICS p. 156] : the linking of Mr. Martin's trial with the Passion of Christ would gradually become an identification with Isaiah's suffering Servant, whom Therese would discover the following year, that is to say in 1890.

« Our dear Father would drink the *most bitter* and *most humiliating* of all chalices. » (Ms A, 73r), [ICS p. 156] : On February 12, Mr. Martin was transferred to a nursing home in Caen, following hallucinations that had taken on a disturbing form for those around him.

« I was still the happiest of creatures » (Ms A, 73v), [ICS p. 157] : as often, Thérèse weaves here the most contradictory impressions to describe the state of heroic love that fills her heart.

### **For the community dialogue:**

1. *What does the text say?* Understanding the content and primary meaning of Therese's text.
2. *What does the text say to us today?* Grasping the relevance (social, ecclesial, spiritual...) of the text.
3. *What does the text say to me / us?* Making relevant and applying the text to personal and community life.

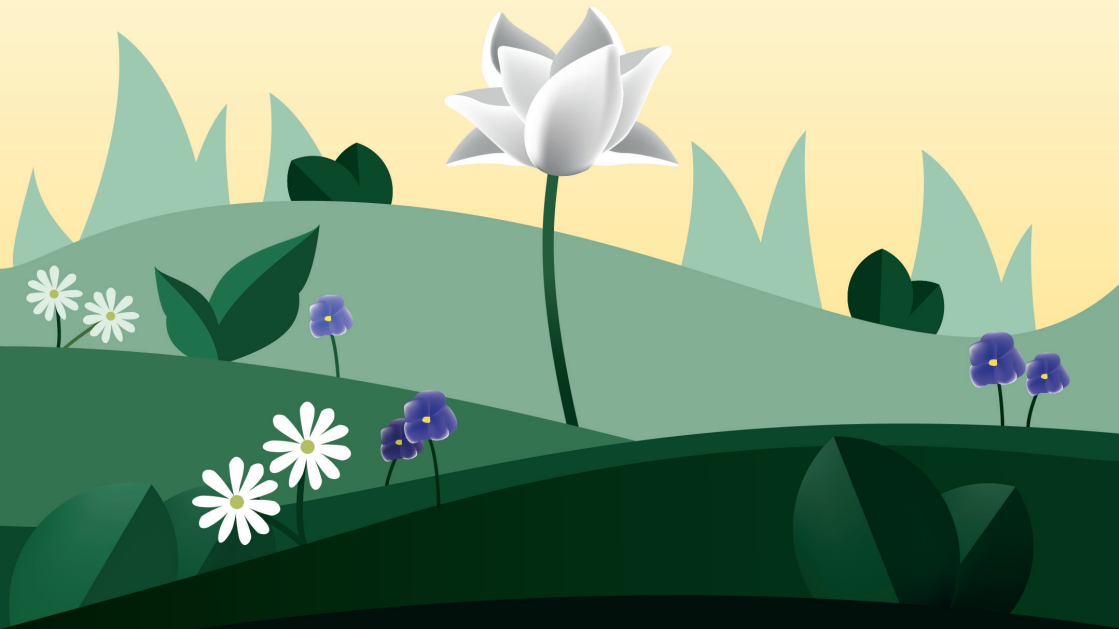
The purpose of doing things in this manner is to allow Therese to speak to us, to question us, to encourage us, and to welcome her to shed light upon and confirm our personal and community journey. The questions proposed are therefore only indicative and can possibly accompany personal meditation and community sharing.

## *Questions:*

1. The Holy Face: Therese is nourished by three dimensions that she connects together: a devotion (to the Holy Face), an experience (the sickness of her father) and the Word of God (the suffering servant of Isaiah). This triptych is really enlightening; Does the way she sets it out help us in our way of living through an ordeal and/or accompanying others in their ordeal?
2. Is contemplation of the Passion of Christ usually a support, a call when we are going through personal and/or community trials? Do we propose this contemplation to the people in the trial we encounter?
3. Suffering is a fact in Therese's entire life: affective trials (separations, ...), bodily and spiritual (scruples, trial of faith...). By desiring suffering, Therese expresses her will not to fight against it but, above all, she wants to join Jesus and use all reality (including suffering) to nourish her trust in Jesus' work in her and through everything. Above all, do we choose to believe in the active presence of Jesus no matter what we feel? How to propose this today in the culture of well-being that is ours?
4. In addition, parallel readings: Letter 108 and Prayer 12.



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