



**THERESIAN
ANNIVERSARIES
2023-2025**

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



**Study guide 7:
The father's death and Celine enters Carmel
(Ms A, 81v-83v)**

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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, 81v-83v

There are other desires of another kind that Jesus was pleased to grant me, childish desires similar to the snow at my reception of the Habit.

You know, dear Mother, how much I love flowers; when making myself a prisoner at the age of fifteen, I gave up forever the pleasure of running through fields decked out in their spring-time treasures. Well, never in my life did I possess so many flowers as after my entrance into Carmel. It is the custom for fiancés to often give their fiancées bouquets and Jesus didn't forget it. He sent me in great abundance sheaves of cornflowers, huge daisies, poppies, etc., all the flowers that delighted me the most. There was even a little flower called corncockle that I had never found since our stay at Lisieux; I wanted very much to see it again, that flower of *my childhood* which I had picked in the fields of Alençon. And at Carmel it came to smile at me again and show me that in the smallest things as well as the greatest, God gives the hundred-fold in this life to those souls who leave everything for love of Him.

But the most intimate of my desires, the greatest of them all, which I thought would never [82r^o] be realized, was my dear Céline's entrance into the same Carmel as ours. This *dream* appeared to be improbable: to live under the same roof, to share the joys and pains of the companion of my childhood; I had made my sacrifice complete by confiding to Jesus my dear sister's future, resolved to see her leave for the other side of the world if necessary. The only thing I couldn't accept was her not being the spouse of Jesus, for since I loved her as much as I loved myself it was impossible for me to see her give her heart to a mortal being. I had already suffered very much when knowing she was exposed to dangers in the world which were unknown to me. Since my entrance into Carmel, I can say that my affection for Céline was a mother's love rather than a sister's. When she was to attend a party one day, the very thought of it caused

me so much pain that I begged God to *prevent her from dancing*, and (contrary to my custom) I even shed a torrent of tears. Jesus deigned to answer me. He permitted that His little fiancée *be unable to dance* that evening (even though she was not embarrassed to dance gracefully when it was necessary). She was invited to dance and was unable to refuse the invitation, but her partner found out he was totally powerless to make her dance; to his great confusion he was condemned simply *to walking* in order to conduct her to her place, and then he made his escape and did not reappear for the whole evening. This incident, unique in its kind, made me grow in confidence and love for the One who set *His seal* upon my forehead and had imprinted it at the same time upon that of my dear Céline.

Last year, July 29, God broke the bonds of His incomparable servant and called him to his eternal reward; at the same time He broke those which still held His dear fiancée in the world because she had accomplished her mission. Having been given the office of *representing us all* with our Father whom we so tenderly loved, she had accomplished this mission just like an angel. And angels don't remain [82v^o] on earth once they've fulfilled God's will, for they return immediately to Him, and this is why they're represented with wings. Our angel also spread her white wings; she was ready to fly *far away* to find Jesus, but He made her fly *close by*. He was content with simply accepting the great sacrifice which was very painful for little Thérèse. Her Céline had kept a secret hidden from her for *two full years*. Ah, how Céline herself had suffered because of this! Finally, from heaven my dear King, who never liked stragglers when he was still with us on earth, hastened to arrange Céline's muddled affairs, and she joined us on September 14!

When the difficulties seemed insurmountable one day, I said to Jesus during my act of thanksgiving: "You know, my God, how much I want to know whether Papa went *straight to heaven*; I am not asking You to speak to me, but give me a sign. If Sister A. of

J. consents to Céline's entrance or places no obstacle to it, this will be an answer that Papa went *straight to You.*" This Sister, as you are aware, dear Mother, found we were already too many with three, and she didn't want another of our family to be admitted. But God who holds the hearts of His creatures in His hand, inclining them to do His will, changed this Sister's dispositions. The first one to meet me after my thanksgiving was Sister Aimée, and she called me over to her with a friendly smile and told me to come up with her to your cell. She spoke to me about Céline and there were tears in her eyes. Ah! how many things I have to thank Jesus for; He answers all my requests!

And now I have no other desire except *to love* Jesus unto folly. My childish desires have all flown away. I still love to adorn the Infant Jesus' altar with flowers, but ever since He has given me the *Flower* I desired, my dear *Céline*, I desire no other; she is the one I [83r°] offer Him as my most delightful bouquet.

Neither do I desire any longer suffering or death, and still I *love* them both; it is love alone that attracts me, however. I desired them for a long time; I possessed suffering and believed I had touched the shores of heaven, that the little flower would be gathered in the springtime of her life. Now, abandonment alone guides me. I have no other compass! I can no longer ask for anything with fervor except the accomplishment of God's will in my soul without any creature being able to set obstacles in the way. I can speak these words of the Spiritual Cantic of St. John of the Cross:

In the inner wine cellar
I drank of my Beloved, and, when I went abroad
through all this valley
I no longer knew anything,
and lost the herd that I was following.
Now I occupy my soul

and all my energy in his service;
I no longer tend the herd,
nor have I any other work
now that my every act is LOVE.

Or rather:

After I have known it
LOVE works so in me
that whether things go well or badly
love turns them to one sweetness
transforming the soul in ITSELF.

How sweet is the way of love, dear Mother. True, one can fall or commit infidelities, but, knowing *how to draw profit from everything*, love quickly consumes everything that can be displeasing to Jesus; it leaves nothing but a humble and profound peace in the depths of the heart.

Ah! how many lights have I not drawn from the works of our holy Father, St. John of the Cross! At the ages of seventeen and eighteen I had no other spiritual nourishment; later on, however, all books left me in aridity and I'm still in that state. If I open a book composed by a spiritual author (even the most beautiful, the most touching book), I feel my heart contract immediately and I read without understanding, so to speak. Or if I do understand, my mind comes to a standstill without the capacity of meditating. In this helplessness, Holy Scripture and the [83v^o] Imitation come to my aid; in them I discover a solid and very *pure* nourishment. But it is especially the *Gospels* that sustain me during my hours of prayer, for in them I find what is necessary for my poor little soul. I am constantly discovering in them new lights, hidden and mysterious meanings.

I understand and I know from experience that: "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" Jesus has no need of books or teachers to instruct souls; He teaches without the noise of words. Never

have I heard Him speak, but I feel that He is within me at each moment; He is guiding and inspiring me with what I must say and do. I find just when I need them certain lights that I had not seen until then, and it isn't most frequently during my hours of prayer that these are most abundant but rather in the midst of my daily occupations.

Introduction to the text:

“This *dream* appeared to be improbable” (Ms A, 82r): the ecclesiastical superior of the Carmel of Lisieux (Canon Delatroëtte) who had already been opposed to Therese's entry, had sworn that a fourth sister would not be admitted to Carmel. Saint Teresa of Avila had written from Valladolid on 22nd July 1579 to Madre María de San José: “It isn't right that three sisters be together in one monastery...” [ICS LL Vol 2, L304 p. 212:5]. However, Therese's letters to Celine became more pressing during Mr. Martin's hospitalization in Caen, to prevent Celine, relieved of her responsibilities towards her father, from giving in to marriage proposals.

“The only thing I couldn't accept” (Ms A, 82r): Teresa shows herself adamant about Celine's virginity and her consecration to Christ; hence the emphasis, both resolute and pleading, of her letters to her sister. At that time, Celine did not always appreciate her sister's intransigence. She later agreed that the “vigilance of her angel” had been much needed for her.

“God broke the bonds of His incomparable servant” (Ms A, 82r): Mr. Martin died on Sunday, July 29, 1894, at the Chateau La Musse, near the Guérins (his in-laws).

“Her Céline had kept a secret hidden from her for *two full years*” (Ms A, 82r): the Jesuit Father Pichon, had set his sights on Celine for a missionary foundation in Canada, and had already spoken to her in

a letter of June 2, 1891. Father Pichon was director of Marie, then of Therese until her entry into Carmel and finally of Celine.

“If Sister A. of J. consents to Céline’s entrance” (Ms A, 82v): Therese is speaking here of Sister Amata of Jesus of the Heart of Mary. The latter had entered the Carmel of Lisieux on October 13, 1871, at the age of 20, and died there on January 7, 1930. The circular at her death reads: “The opposition she had expressed to the entry of Sister Gene-vieve of the Holy Face (Celine) was inalterable. (...) If she feared the influence of the four sisters in the one monastery, she feared above all the talents of Sister Genevieve. There was no need for artists in the community, you just had to focus on the practical aspects, and have good nurses, seamstresses, washerwomen, etc., nothing more”.

“Now I have no other desire except *to love* Jesus unto folly” (Ms A, 82v): Therese has reached a kind of peak, where her wishes had been granted, where she could “no longer ask for anything with fervor except the accomplishment of God’s will” (Ms A, 83r). Here Therese is in tune with the theology of desire of St. John of the Cross.

“How many lights have I not drawn from the works of our holy Father, St. John of the Cross!” (Ms A, 83r): rather unusual reading at the Carmel of Lisieux for such a young novice (seventeen years old). But Therese at Les Buissonnets (her home in Li-sieux) already knew the Doctor of Carmel, both through her two Carmelite sisters and through quotations. However, she would only read his works in Carmel.

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. We return to the same topic as in the previous text. We can begin by naming the nature of Therese's desires throughout the text and highlighting the mediations that help Teresa express them. But Therese goes further: beyond desires, their continuous deepening leads her to transcend them. How does Therese bear witness to this new spiritual maturity? Who is now the main protagonist?
2. What is now the most important thing for Therese in her relationship with Jesus? Could we, by echoing Therese's testimony, express in our community sharing something of our experience of desire as a place for deepening and an epiphany of a deeper desire to enter into communion with the life of Jesus?



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