



**THERESIAN
ANNIVERSARIES
2023-2025**

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



Study guide 8:
The Offering to Merciful Love
(Ms A, 83v-84v)

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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 a good idea if the community meeting were preceded by personal reading and meditation upon Therese's text.

MANUSCRIPT A, 83v-84v

[ICS pp. 180 – 182]

O my dear Mother! after so many graces can I not sing with the Psalmist: "*How GOOD is the Lord, his MERCY endures forever!*" It seems to me that if all creatures had received the same graces I received, God would be feared by none but would be loved to the point of folly; and through *love*, not through fear, no one would ever consent to cause Him any pain. I understand, however, that all souls cannot be the same, that it is necessary there be different types in order to honor each of God's perfections in a particular way. To me He has granted His *infinite Mercy*, and *through it* I contemplate and adore the other divine perfections! All of these perfections appear to be resplendent with love; even His Justice (and perhaps this even more so than the others) seems to me clothed in *love*. What a sweet joy it is to think that God is *Just*, i.e., that He takes into account our weakness, that He is perfectly aware of our fragile nature. What should I fear then? Ah! must not the infinitely just God, who deigns [84r°] to pardon the faults of the prodigal son with so much kindness, be just also toward me who "am with Him always"?

This year, June 9, the feast of the Holy Trinity, I received the grace to understand more than ever before how much Jesus desires to be loved.

I was thinking about the souls who offer themselves as victims of God's Justice in order to turn away the punishments reserved to sinners, drawing them upon themselves. This offering seemed great and very generous to

me, but I was far from feeling attracted to making it. From the depths of my heart, I cried out:

“O my God! Will Your Justice alone find souls willing to immolate themselves as victims? Does not Your *Merciful Love* need them too? On every side this love is unknown, rejected; those hearts upon whom You would lavish it turn to creatures, seeking happiness from them with their miserable affection; they do this instead of throwing themselves into Your arms and of accepting Your infinite *Love*. O my God! Is Your disdained Love going to remain closed up within Your Heart? It seems to me that if You were to find souls offering themselves as victims of holocaust to Your Love, You would consume them rapidly; it seems to me, too, that You would be happy not to hold back the waves of infinite tenderness within You. If Your Justice loves to release itself, this Justice *which extends only over the earth*, how much more does Your Merciful Love desire to *set souls on fire since Your Mercy reaches to the heavens*. O my Jesus, let me be this happy victim; consume Your holocaust with the fire of Your Divine Love!”

You permitted me, dear Mother, to offer myself in this way to God, and you know the rivers or rather the oceans of graces that flooded my soul. Ah! since the happy day, it seems to me that *Love* penetrates and surrounds me, that at each moment this *Merciful Love* renews me, purifying my soul and leaving no trace of sin within it, and [84v^o] I need have no fear of purgatory. I know that of myself I would not merit even to enter that place of expiation since only holy souls can have entrance there, but I also know that the Fire of Love is more sanctifying than is the fire of purgatory. I know that Jesus cannot desire useless

sufferings for us, and that He would not inspire the longings I feel unless He wanted to grant them.

Oh! how sweet is the way of Love! How I want to apply myself to doing the will of God always with the greatest self-surrender!

Here, dear Mother, is all I can tell you about the life of your little Thérèse; you know better than I do what she is and what Jesus has done for her. You will forgive me for having abridged my religious life so much.

How will this “story of a little white flower” come to an end? Perhaps the little flower will be plucked in her youthful freshness or else transplanted to other shores. I don’t know, but what I am certain about is that God’s Mercy will accompany her always, that it will never cease blessing the dear Mother who offered her to Jesus; she will rejoice eternally at being one of the flowers of her crown. And with this dear Mother she will sing eternally the new canticle of Love.

Introduction to the text:

We arrive with this last text at the end of Manuscript A; it is a text profoundly marked by the Act of Offering, which we invite you to reread. Following the Act of offering to Merciful Love, Therese is flooded with streams of divine love. This is the time of maturity and self-sacrifice. Therese's being is unified. Her whole life revolves around the love of Jesus and the service of his mission.

“This year, June 9” (Ms A, 84r): Therese pronounced her “Act of offering to Merciful Love” (Prayer 6). Therese offered herself to Merciful Love on June 9, 1895, during Mass. While at that time pious souls offered themselves to “divine justice”, Teresa revolutionized the offering: what God wanted to pour out on earth was not vengeful justice, but the waves of his merciful Love. Therese would affirm several times that justice itself seemed to her to be “clothed in love”. Love must have the last word and it is at the level of love that the restoration of justice must take place. So let us go immediately to him, let us take the direct path, let us surrender ourselves to love.

“How will this ‘story of a little white flower’ come to an end” (Ms A, 84v): before the frightening trials of 1896 and the last year 1897, 1895 was a wonderful stage in Therese's life, a year of spiritual fullness in which she writes Manuscript A, writes three Recreations (Plays 3, 4 and 5) and composes ten Poems (Poetry 16 to 25), including “Living on Love” and “To the Sacred Heart of Jesus” she welcomed her cousin Marie Guérin (Sister Marie of the Eucharist) to Carmel and became godmother to her first spiritual brother, Fr Bellière.

“Or else transplanted to other shores” (Ms A, 84v): Therese began very early to think about leaving for the Carmel of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), founded by Lisieux in 1861. Now, at the time Teresa was writing, she was rather oriented toward the Carmel of Hanoi, which had just been founded in 1895.

“She will sing eternally the new canticle of Love” (Ms A, 84v): here we can quote from the Living Flame of Saint John of the Cross: “In the state of life so perfect, the soul always walks in festivity, inwardly and outwardly, and it frequently bears on its spiritual tongue a new song in great jubilation in God, a song always new, enfolded in a gladness and love arising from the knowledge the soul has of its happy state” (Living Flame S 2:36).

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 objective of this itinerary is to allow Therese to speak to us, interrogate us, encourage us, and welcome her to shed light upon and confirm our personal and community journey. The proposed questions are therefore only indicative and may eventually accompany personal meditation and community exchange.

Questions:

1. We can reread text 1 and note the reality that embraces the whole of Manuscript A: divine mercy in Therese's life. How do these texts seem complementary to us?
2. How can we make explicit the fruits of her evolution, in her relationship with herself, in her relationship with God? And for us, what would allow the true liberation of our own selves?
3. While Therese now experienced that divine mercy always accompanied her, what experience became for her the place of permanent welcome and consented to by divine power? What experience do we have of divine mercy?

In conclusion: Therese ends by evoking the fruits of her Offering to Merciful Love. This prayer is the expression of Therese's entire evolution. You are invited to reread it (Prayer 6) and to pray it together at the end of this first year of the journey.



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