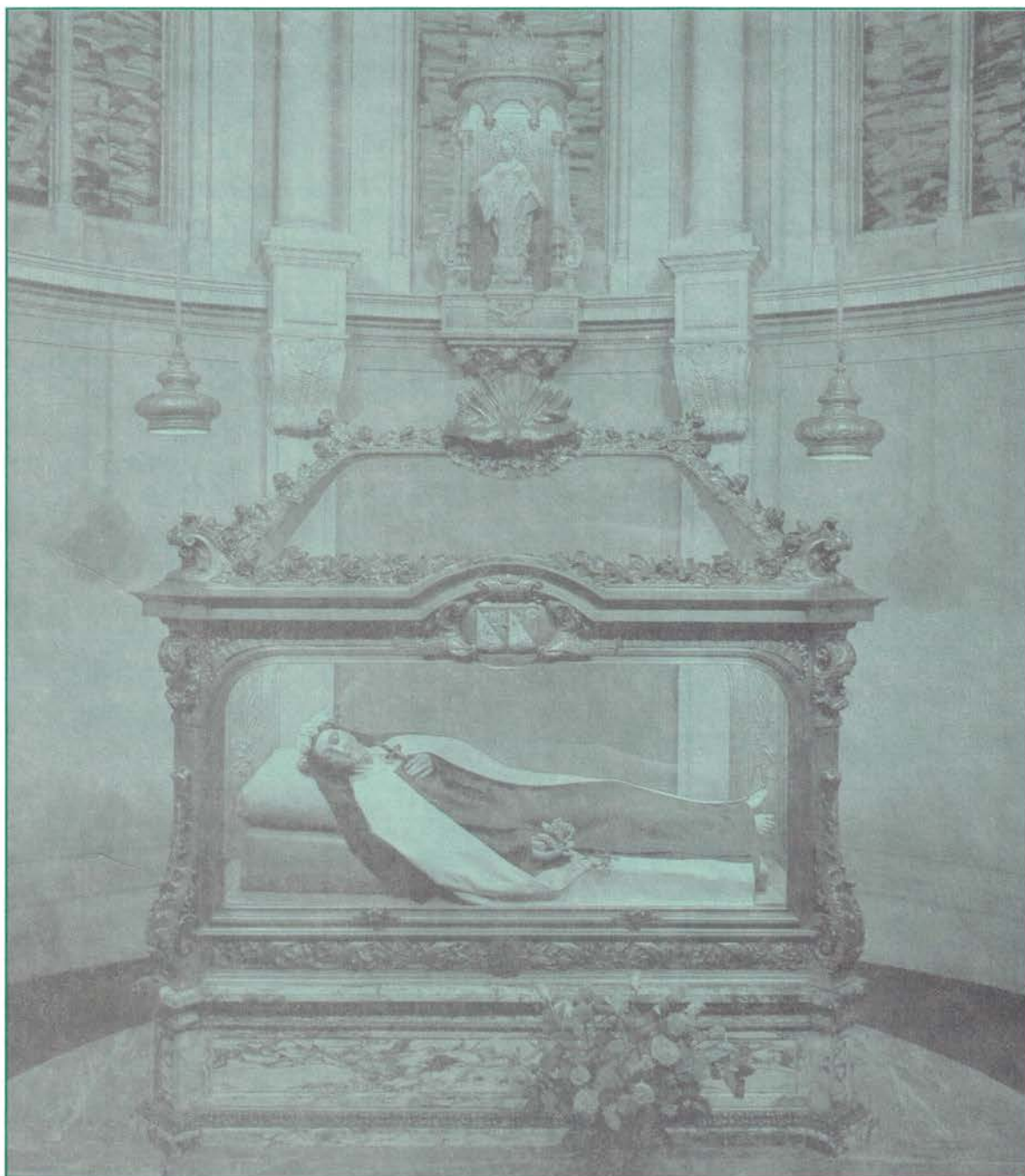


# CARMEL CLARION

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2008 VOLUME XXIV NO. 5



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*Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.*

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# Editorial

As you are well aware, on Mission Sunday, October 19th 2008 the Church will beatify the parents of St. Thérèse, Louis and Zelié Martin. Her father was one of the first adorers at the Church of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, where on December 7, 1848, Nocturnal Adoration was established. Remember, it was also there that her parents had a novena of Masses offered in order that the Virgin might cure the infant Thérèse in 1863. To commemorate this long awaited celebration we have reprinted an article by Anthony Beneitez about Thérèse's family and my editorial "A Remarkable Family" both from the May-June 2004 issue of the Clarion.

In the article on "Merciful Love" Fr. De Meester, describes the transformation of Thérèse's theology from 'justice' to 'mercy.' We must remember that she lived at a time in the history of the Church when satisfying God's justice was the important element of one's relationship with God. De Meester points out how Thérèse, through her 'little way', came to realize that it was not justice but merciful love that was the key to a loving relationship with Jesus.

On a more mundane subject, it is now October and we are beginning to prepare the Community Rosters. Liane and I personally thank those of you who returned the 2008 Roster, which is a reflection of information contained in the OCDS database and the source of the Clarion mailing list. We also appreciate that most of you sent a single community payment for Provincial Dues and Clarion Subscriptions with the individual member payments itemized. However, many of these were partial payments and the unpaid monies are still outstanding. At the present time, 23% of our OCDS members have not paid their 2008 financial obligation to the Order. This is impacting our ability to pay our bills. I would ask that each Community Council and Treasurer review the payment status of its individual members. All OCDS members should also check his/her individual payment records. If you have not paid your 2008 Provincial Dues of \$25.00 and \$10 Clarion Subscription, please do so immediately.

The hard work of the OCDS 2009 Congress Core Committee can be seen on our new website. I am very grateful for their ongoing efforts and the time they are taking out of their own busy lives to serve their Carmelite brothers and sisters. We extend a special thank you to our Webmaster who has transformed our collective ideas into an offering for God's Glory. It's exciting to think that in less than a year, we will all gather together near BWI airport on the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Please keep us in your prayers as we continue to plan for a successful Congress. We hope each community will begin to discuss and to plan how it can send a member to attend and then return to share the experience.

[www.ocds2009congress.org](http://www.ocds2009congress.org)

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In Carmel,  
Fr. Regis

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*The Statue of Our Lady of Victories*

# The Family of St. Thérèse Of Lisieux

*Anthony Beneitez*



The saint we venerate today as Thérèse of the Child Jesus came into the world as Thérèse Martin, the youngest daughter of a pious family of Alençon, France. It was a city of 16,000, the administrative capitol of Orne, Normandy. It was not by chance that Thérèse was born in Alençon in 1873, both her grandfathers were born in this district and had lived in that city since the end of their military careers.

## Her Paternal Grandparents

Pierre-François Martin (1777-1865) was born in Carrouges, that same place that P. Pichon, the Jesuit family friend and the spiritual director of Thérèse's sisters was born. He fought in the campaigns of Napoleon. While in Russia in 1813, he befriended a soldier from Paris and four years later married his sister Marie-Anna Boureau (1800-1883). She was called 'Fannie.' Thérèse inherited her baptismal name Marie-Françoise-Thérèse.

After the defeat of Napoleon, Thérèse's grandfather continued his military career in the army of the Borbones, reaching the rank of captain. He was part of the expedition of the "One Thousand Sons of St. Louis" that attacked Spain in order to replace Ferdinand VII. On his return he received a medal of the Order of St. Louis. When the Borbones were defeated in 1830 he retired and went to Alençon.

Although this marriage produced many children, Thérèse only knew two: her father, Louis and her aunt Fannie, mother of Adolfo Leriche, her cousin and godfather. Fannie lived until Thérèse was six years old, but they had little contact since Fannie lived in Paris.

## Thérèse's Maternal Grandparents

Isidore Guérin (1789-1868) was born in Saint-Denis-sur-Sarthon, near Alençon. At 19 he received his baptism of fire in Wagram, one of the principle Napoleonic battles. Thérèse recalled this episode with a scene of the battle many years later in Manuscript A, the first of the six notebooks she wrote. In memory of her grandfather she wrote on the picture, "Long live the God of the French."

After this first battle, Isidore remained at the front until 1813 and then he joined the police force. He served as a policeman for 30 years, retiring in 1843. He sold the property in his native town and bought a house in Alençon, across from the police station. It was in this house 30 years later that Thérèse was born.

Thérèse's maternal grandmother was Luise-Juana Macé (1805-1859). This marriage produced three children. The first was Marie-Luisa, who was called "Elisa" (1829-1877). At 29, she entered the Salesian convent at Le Mans in which she led an exemplary life. She was very devoted to the Sacred Heart. She was tested by sickness and received permission from her confessor to receive daily communion (something very extraordinary for those times). The second daughter was Azelia-Marie, called "Zélie" (1831-1877), Thérèse's mother. The third child was Isidore (1841-1909) who studied medicine in Paris and eventually practiced pharmacy in Lisieux. He married Elisa-Celina Fournet (1847-1900) and had two children: Joan, who married a doctor from Caen and Marie who was a Carmelite novice under Thérèse. Isidore had a strong personality; he became rich and was a leader of the traditional forces in Lisieux. Throughout 1888, when Thérèse's father was ill, Isidore was the one who directed the destinies of the family, including the nuns. Since he was the principal benefactor of the Lisieux Carmel, he had much to do during Thérèse's illness and later glorification.

## A Family at the Service of France

Thérèse's grandfathers were from Normandy, a region that was broken up by the French Revolution and was characterized by its religiosity. Moreover, the two grandfathers were part of the army after Napoleon; an army very conservative and monarchical. Thérèse's family, through all this, was always traditional and anti-liberal. When the Third Republic was born in 1870, which called for laicism, republicanism and freedom of the press, Thérèse's grandparents and uncles thought that the real France had been ruined. In Catholic circles there began an affirmation of their own positions and protests in the face of laicization. Pilgrimages to Lourdes and Rome, consecrations to the Sacred Heart multiplied and churches of expiation, such as Montmartre, were built. Thérèse's family was in agreement with this activity. One of the reasons



*Pierre Martin*



*Isidore Guérin*



*Thérèse's Mother Zélie,  
Uncle Isidore and Aunt  
Elisa*

for the move from Alençon to Lisieux was Louis Martin's desire to protect his daughters from the liberal contagion of Alençon. Her uncle Isidore Guerin financially supported a newspaper, called *Le Normand*, in which the traditional ideas, monarchical values and the Catholic religion were defended.

Although not interested in politics, Thérèse showed echoes of this way of thinking: her love for Joan of Arc is parallel to the fervor with which the conservative politicians presented Joan as a model of France.

### **Thérèse's Parents**

Louis Martin was born in Burdeos on August 22, 1823. When the family moved to Alençon, Louis studied as a Child of the Troop, at the expense of the army, of which he was always proud. The education he received at home was very severe and rigoristically moral.

The family lived in the suburb of San Peter of Montsort. Louis was a very pious and happy adolescent. He had many friends and with them he would spend the summer near Breton, where he made many other friends. In Breton, Louis wore the traditional clothes of the region and learned the language. This underlines his romantic, adventurous spirit, his love of the country and traveling, which characterized him.

At 22 he desired to give himself to the religious life. He thought of entering the Great St. Bernard Hospice. After a brief time of testing, the superior sent him home to study Latin. Louis gave himself to its study and eventually learned it (he also knew German), but he never returned to the Hospice.

Seeking work in accord with his character, he went to Paris where he learned watch making with Monsieur Mathey, who was then an eminent watchmaker in Strasburg.

Louis, with his habitual good nature, also made friends in Paris, such as Lange, who was an unbeliever. Nevertheless, Louis was very pious. He participated in works of piety and charity that were common in Paris in the middle of the 19th century, an age famous for creativity in Catholic circles. Louis joined the Catholic Circle and the seminars of St. Vincent de Paul. He was constantly at the Church of Our Lady of Victories, which in those years was famous through her miracles and being established in the center of the spread of the cult of the Heart of Mary. It was in that church that on December 7, 1848, Nocturnal Adoration was established. Louis was one of the first adorers in the world. The devotion remained rooted in the family: on two occasions novenas of Masses were offered in order that the Virgin might cure Thérèse when she was sick in 1863, as an infant, and in 1897 during her last sickness. When Thérèse visited Paris the only thing that impressed her in that beautiful city was that small church.

In 1850 Louis returned to Alençon. He bought a house at 15 Pont-Neuf



*Church of Our Lady of  
Victories, Paris*

Street and set up his watch making shop. He and his parents lived on an upper floor. Louis was tall and he soon grew a beard. His character shone through his joy. He had talents for the theater, and above all, as an imitator of human voices and animals. Thérèse also was a master in this regard. There was not a voice she could not imitate to perfection.

Louis had a romantic spirit, and was very sensible to everything that could be termed “picturesque.” He shared in the neoromanticism of the French bourgeoisie of the last third of the 19th century. He also had a great love of travel, especially to sites of natural beauty. If as a youth he had frequently gone to Breton, later on he traveled throughout Switzerland. In literature he was equally a romantic. He knew from memory large stanzas of *The Genius of Christianity* by Chateaubriand, as well as the poetry of Victor Hugo and Lamartine. From this last one, Thérèse took the metaphor of the little ship, which she heard recited by her father. For his private library Louis bought a local hexagonal tower, calling it “the Pavilion.” In it he had the statue of the Virgin of the Smile, which years later, was instrumental in Thérèse’s cure.

### Thérèse’ Mother

Zélie Guerin was born in Gandelain in 1831, where her father was a policeman. She and her older sister, Elisa, always very close, studied in the college of the religious of the Sacred Heart. At 18 she asked to enter the Sisters of Charity. She was a member of the community of this group, which ran the hospital at Alençon. However they sent her home telling her she did not have a vocation.

At 22 she began a business as a tailor. Soon she had expanded this into a needlepoint business. Alençon was world-famous for its needlepoint. She began this by herself, but soon she was able to employ workers. The business, though small, was very profitable.

Since she was very pious she had a spiritual director who encouraged her to receive the Sacraments, practice prayer and mortification. She entered the Third Order of St. Francis, which met in the Poor Clare convent in Alençon.

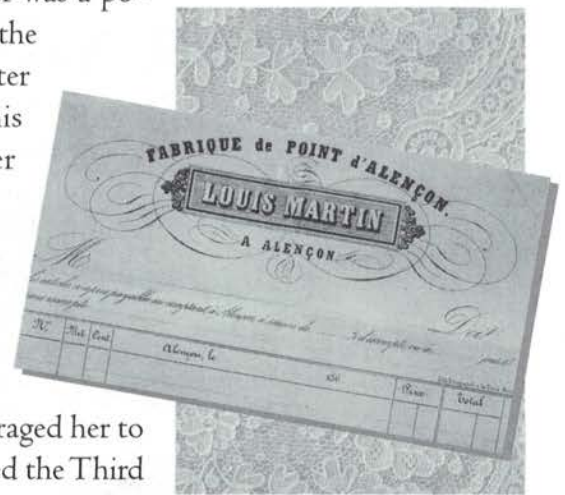
### The Marriage of the Two Servants of God

It was at a pious meeting that Louis Martin’s mother, worried that her son was not married at 35, fixed her sights on Zélie Guerin. The couple had much in common as far as piety and customs. Soon they grew to respect one another and then to love one another. Completely enamored they were married on July 13, 1858.

The newly married couple lived, at first, with his parents. In 1871 they moved to the Guerin house, across from the police station of Orne. That same year Louis sold his watchmaking shop to his cousin Adolfo Leriche, Thérèse’s godfather, and gave himself to directing the selling of the products of his wife’s shop. With true ease they succeeded; the shop directed by Zélie, grew in its profitability and Louis



*Watch Shop where Louis and his parents lived on the second floor*



*Love in marriage and partnership in business.*

made sure that the product received a very good price throughout France. Even so, they never speculated with the money, although they had many possibilities, it was an age of great investments.

They loved one another very much; in the letters, which have been saved, they show a love that was rarely found in bourgeoisie marriages of the 19th century. She wrote to him: "It would never be possible for me to love far from you." And when she entered into her final illness, he suffered indescribably.

An outstanding characteristic of this marriage was Louis and Zélie's charity toward others. They gave a substantial donation to the Propagation of the Faith each year for the missions. They also practiced local charity by feeding, clothing, and housing those less fortunate than themselves. Louis also sought work for the unemployed. Their own maids and workers were also treated justly and with great charity.

Both Louis and Zélie practiced heroic virtue. He had a sweetness, which totally dominated his character; while she possessed a serenity that resisted all adversities they underwent.

### A Family for God

Louis and Zélie had 9 children. The premature death or religious consecration kept all of them far from any kind of sin. If God tested their marriage with suffering, He gave them this desire: that their children would never offend God.

The oldest was Marie-Louise (1860-1940), Louis' favorite who he called the "Diamond and the Bohemian"; she was Thérèse's godmother. The second was Pauline (1861-1951), who Louis gave the nickname "Fine Pearl." Thérèse chose her as her "mother" when Zélie died. The third was Léone (1863-1941), called by Louis "the Good." The fourth was Hélène (1864-1870). The fifth was Joseph-Louis and the sixth Joseph Jean Baptist, both of whom died within two years (1866-1867). The seventh was Céline, who was always close to Thérèse. She was an artist, and the last to die. The eighth was Mélanie-Thérèse, who lived only a few months (1870). The ninth was Marie-Françoise-Thérèse, born January 2, 1873; entered Carmel on April 9, 1888 becoming St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and Holy Face.

The suffering of the four children was very great because of the premature death of their mother in 1877, after a very long bout with cancer. In 1888 Louis, their father, suffered a stroke which left him paralyzed and with a loss of lucidity for which he was committed to a mental hospital. After a lingering illness, he died in 1894. His illness and death was the cause of much suffering for Thérèse from April to September 1897.

But the results were spectacular: four daughters were Carmelites: Marie, Pauline, Céline and Thérèse; one was a Salesian: Léone.



*Thérèse's birthplace and room where Zélie died*



*Last family photo, taken after Louis Martin returned home with paralyzed legs in May of 1892*





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## OCDS 2009 Congress Update

The 2009 Congress will begin Thursday evening with the Liturgy for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, followed by a welcome reception. The Congress Registration Fee of \$325 (before February 28, 2009) and \$350 thereafter, which includes breakfast and lunch on both Friday and Saturday, Banquet Saturday night, and breakfast Sunday morning. In addition, after the Congress daytime sessions on Friday, one may relax and enjoy the hotel facilities, or consider an evening exploring Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Checkout time is noon on Sunday after Mass.

All Congress Program activities will be held at the Westin BWI Hotel. The cost is \$149 per night with a \$10 per night rebate provided by OCDS. (Stop by the Congress Registration table and complete the rebate form.) Hotel rooms are also offered at the Sheraton Hotel next door at a cost of \$139 per night. (With no rebate.) Singles, doubles, triples or quads are welcome. REGISTER NOW for this exciting event!

# A Remarkable Family

*Regis Jordan, O.C.D.*

*(Editorial from Clarion Volume XX No. 3 May – June 2004)*

At a time when Christian values, especially Christian family values are coming under such virulent attack, it is encouraging to reflect upon a family that lived at a time when the same kind of attacks were being made on Christian family life in France at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

When we read about the life of this extraordinary Christian family we can, if we are not careful, think that because they were so blessed by God that their family life must have been very different from our own. We tend to look from the successful end of its life to the beginning. I think that we should look at the life of this family the other way around, from the beginning to the end.

The life of the Martin family unfolded like the life of every family. Louis and Zélie Martin began their life together with all the uncertainty that any newly married couple experiences. They had no idea what the future held for them. What they both had was a deep faith in God, a faith that would sustain them through all the joy and suffering of their life together. Added to their faith in God was an intense and deep love for each other and for their children.

As the life of this family unfolded, Louis, Zélie and their five surviving children experienced all the ups and downs of every family. The family found great joy in the practice of their Catholic faith: in the baptisms, first communions and confirmations of each child; in the successes at school and finally in the entrance into religious life by all five girls.

Amid the joys, however, were many sorrows and sufferings. Louis and Zélie lost four children to early deaths, a devastating occurrence for any family. One of their surviving children, Leonie, was a problem child, a mystery to her mother, who tested the love and patience of her parents. One of the most difficult crosses the family had to bear was the early death of Zélie after a long painful battle with breast cancer. This left Louis to raise his five daughters as a single parent.

Louis then had to endure continuing separation from each of his daughters as one after the other entered the Carmel of Lisieux; the ultimate and most intense of the separations being that of little Thérèse, his favorite.

The final cross of suffering the family had to accept and bear was the mental illness of Louis, which gradually grew worse and eventually necessitated his commitment to a mental hospital for several months. Thérèse writes about how this affected her and her sisters.

As we can see, the Martin family lived out its life as any other family; not knowing what the future held, taking one day at a time, confronting each new situation and suffering as it came along. The secret of their being able to do this lay in their great faith and intense love of God. Each event, joy or sorrow was looked upon as an opportunity to deepen that faith and love.



*The four Martin sisters  
and their cousin Marie  
Guerin*

## Question of the Month

### **What are the 2009 OCDS Provincial Dues and Clarion Subscription costs going to be?**

Keeping costs down is becoming more and more difficult. The US Post Office has raised postage, the price of printing has increased, and we now have to pay for design layout of the Clarion. In addition, we continue to financially support our three Provincial Delegates, as well as the administrative requirements of 149 OCDS Communities.

We are sensitive to the current financial challenges we all face, so we have worked hard to keep the Provincial Dues for 2009 at the current rate of \$25.00. Further, an annual Clarion Subscription will continue to be \$10.00. Please help us by submitting your Community Dues early in January and making the accuracy of member information on the Community Rosters a priority.

Thank you in advance for your help.

# The Offering to Merciful Love

Conrad De Meester, O.C.D.

## Under the Light of Mercy

Since the discovery of her “little way,” the “mercy” of God had become for the young Carmelite the sunshine of her life! If the word “mercy” was up to that point absent in her vocabulary, henceforth it would emerge spontaneously and repeatedly. When Thérèse was asked to retell her childhood memories (Manuscript A of her autobiography) in January 1895, just months after the discovery of her “little way,” the central theme was readily apparent: “the Mercies of the Lord.” The three exclamation points that follow in Thérèse’s manuscript, like the ten suspension points, suggest how much these words spoke to her heart.

In the prologue of this autobiographical manuscript, Thérèse describes the gratuitous mercy of the Lord as “the mystery of my vocation, my whole life, and especially the mystery of the privileges Jesus showered on my soul,” the explanation of the “totally gratuitous gifts of Jesus,” the “preferences” of his mercy alone. “Since the nature of love is to humble oneself,” Thérèse writes, thus showing how much she was referring to a merciful love, God “would not descend so low” if he didn’t care deeply about the littlest ones. “By coming down in this way, God manifests His infinite grandeur,” “just as the sun shines simultaneously both on the tall cedars and on each little flower as though it were alone on the earth” (A 2r-3v; SOS, 3rd ed., I3-I5).



Age 3

The word “mercy” would have appeared even more often in her writings if Thérèse hadn’t understood some months later that the love of God is always and so essentially merciful that we can limit ourselves to the single word “love”, to add “merciful” would be redundant, saying in two words what can be said in one. And when Thérèse mentions her oblation or “Offering to Merciful Love” at the end of her Manuscript A, she refers to it very succinctly as an “offering to Love.”

## A Long Written Meditation

From January 1895 until the end of the year, Thérèse would regularly write about certain aspects of her past. Her “memories of childhood?” Of course! But in fact she spoke first about the role of her merciful Beloved in her life. She could then see the golden thread of his mercy running everywhere through the fabric of her life.



Age 8

Now she saw and understood. All was clear. To write was to pray, to see in depth, to sing God’s mercies, in thanksgiving. Her writing assignment was a long meditation that took hold deeply in her. And no doubt partly under the effect of this long written meditation, on June 9th 1895, the morning of the feast of the Holy Trinity, Thérèse received “the grace to understand more than ever before how

much Jesus desires to be loved" (A 84r; SOS, 3rd ed., 180). The passive form, to be loved, coincides in reality with the active form, to love: Jesus wants to love us mercifully, to flood us with "waves of His infinite tenderness." And Thérèse offered herself to him entirely.

Before entering into the details of her "offering," let us stop for a few moments to see the role that the image of her Papa, Louis Martin, played in this new vision.

We are all aware of the lasting bond that united father and daughter. Thérèse called him her "king," and he called her his "queen." We have mentioned the nameless suffering that Thérèse experienced when she saw her king fall prey to mental illness, which separated him from his family and put him in a psychiatric hospital in 1889. For Thérèse, when Monsieur Martin died in 1894, it was the end of a long period of mourning.

Three weeks after the death of her Papa, on July 29, 1894, she wrote to Celine: "How much these little delicacies make us feel that our dear father is close to us! After a death of five years, what a joy to find him once more always the same, seeking out ways to please us as he did in days gone by" (LT 169). And the next day, to her sister Leonie, who reentered the convent of the Visitation:

Papa's death does not give me the impression of a death, but of a real life. I am finding him once more after an absence of six years. I feel him around me, looking at me and protecting me.... Now ... we gaze on the heavens to find there a Father and a Mother who offered us to Jesus.... Soon their desires will be accomplished, and all the children God gave them are going to be united to Him forever. (LTI170)

Thérèse recalls this same vision of the future life-Papa and Mama reunited soon with all of their children for all eternity in heaven-at the beginning of her autobiography (A 3r-3v; SOS, 3rd ed., 14-15).

From the first line, Papa is present in this "springtime story of a little white flower": Thérèse named herself after the "little white flower" that she received from her father on the evening of Pentecost in 1887 when he gave her permission to enter Carmel. She then placed this little white flower-a symbolic gesture, and how suggestive!-in her Imitation of Christ, in the chapter entitled: "One must love Jesus above all things" (A 50v; SOS, 3rd., 108).

Thérèse "parents without equal" (A 4r; SOS, 3rd ED., 16) are present all through these childhood memories. What's more, Thérèse brought her personal memories to life again in rereading her mother's touching correspondence. In writing, Thérèse reflected on the heart of her father, who had died recently and who was then "watching over her and protecting her." "Our Father's very affectionate heart seemed to be enriched now [after Madame Martin's death] with a truly maternal love!" (A 13r; SOS, 3rd. 35). She unceasingly emphasized his shining pres-



Age 13

ence in the paternal home or during their long walks: “his handsome face said so much to me” (A 17v). Sitting “on Papa’s knees,” listening to “his handsome voice” when he sang or recited poetry or prayed, Thérèse had “only to look at him to see how the Saints pray” (A 18r). She vividly remembered how Papa, on the day of Pentecost 1887, “took my head and placed it on his heart,” then walked slowly with her in the garden “while still holding my head on his heart” (A 50r). Similar gestures spontaneously reminded Thérèse of “the caresses [God] will bestow on me” one day in heaven (A 73r; cf. B 2r).

In this existential context after the death of Monsieur Martin, who had reunited with his spouse in heaven and watched over Thérèse, we can better understand why the Carmelite was deeply touched, at the moment she discovered her “little way,” by the passage from Isaiah comparing God to a mother who carries her child on her knees and covers her with caresses.

Also, we better understand that, influenced by the remembrance of her father, Thérèse received on the following June 9 “the grace to understand more than ever before” how much the “Heart” of Jesus is rich in “waves of infinite tenderness,” happy to “lavish” them on those who dare to “throw themselves into [God’s] arms and accept [God’s] infinite Love” (cf. A 84r; SOS, 3RD., 180). By inextricable bonds and to an extent we cannot exactly define, the grace and light of God came through the recollection of all the blessings received during her lifetime, not least by means of her parents who were the image of divine goodness to her.

The posthumous life of Monsieur Martin played a great role during his daughter’s last years! As her Papa had been an image of God for Thérèse as a child, so, later, the humiliated face of her father had resembled the Holy Face of Jesus, the suffering servant of Yahweh. Thus the face and the memory of Papa who had entered into God’s glory became for Thérèse, more than before, a mirror where Jesus’ resplendent face and wonderful heart received a coloring still more human and concrete.



*Pictured at left, a Chasuble painted by Thérèse and made from a dress that had belonged to her Mother. The two roses at the bottom represent her parents. The five lilies surrounding the Holy Face are the five Martin daughters. (Thérèse identified herself with the lily on the left, half hidden by Veronica’s veil.) The four buds symbolize the four little siblings who died at a young age.*

In 1896, in her poem *Jesus Alone*, Thérèse wrote some words that gently echoed to the very happy and vital experience she had with her own father:

O You Who knew how to create the mother’s heart  
I find in you the tenderest of Fathers!  
My only Love, Jesus, Eternal Word,  
For me Your Heart is more than maternal. (PN 36).

Two weeks after her Offering to Merciful Love, in her poem *To the Sa-*

*(continued on page 18)*



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# Therese's Sisters in Carmel

## Sister Aimee of Jesus (1851-1930)

Marie-Leopoldine Feron, born on January 24, 1851, was from a family of rural origin. Robust and helpful, she always aimed for what was practical: she wanted potatoes, for example, to be planted around the Calvary in the cloister instead of rose bushes, which, according to her, were "good for nothing." The Martin sisters, with their "petite bourgeois" manners, got on her nerves. She was also opposed for a long time to Celine Martin's entrance into Carmel: "Carmel has no need of artists," she used to say, "it has a much greater need for good nurses and good menders."

Thérèse recounted how Sister Aimee's opposition suddenly ceased: "When the difficulties seemed insurmountable one day, I said to Jesus during my act 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 Celine's entrance or places no obstacle to it, this will be an answer that Papa went straight to You! . . . God... changed this Sister's dispositions. The first one to meet me after my thanksgiving was Sister Aimee, and she called me over to her with a friendly smile.... She spoke to me about Celine and there were tears in her eyes" (A 82v).

As infirmarian, she cared for her Sisters with devotion. In September 1897, when Thérèse was so weak that she had to be placed on a temporary bed while her own bed was being made, Sister Aimee lifted the little patient as though she were a light burden, without giving her the slightest jolt. Thérèse thanked her with such a smile of affectionate gratitude that it would be a compensation for her regrets at having been the only one not to hear the infirmary bell summoning the Sisters at the moment of Thérèse's death. Sister Aimee's own death was on January 7, 1930.

## Sister Teresa of St. Augustine (1856- 1929)

Julia-Maria-Elise Leroyer was born in La Cressoniere (Calvados) on September 5, 1856. She entered the Lisieux Carmel on May 1, 1875 and was very short in stature. Sister Marie of the Angels will testify of her, "she never lost any occasion to practice an act of virtue or fidelity to the smallest things." She loved Thérèse very much, who for her part, felt a strong antipathy for this stiff and virtuous Sister: "Frequently when I was not at recreation (I mean during the work periods) and had occasion to work with this Sister, I used to run away like a deserter whenever my struggles became too violent. As she was absolutely unaware of my feelings for her, never did she suspect the motives for my conduct and she remained convinced that her character was very pleasing to me. One day at recreation she asked in almost these words: 'Would you tell me, Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus, what attracts you so much towards me; every time you look at me, I see you smile?' Ah! What attracted me was Jesus hidden in the depths of her soul; Jesus who makes sweet what is most bitter. I answered that I was smiling because I was happy to see her (it is understood that I did not add that this was from a spiritual standpoint.')" (C 14r.).

Only a month before her death on July 22, 1929 did Sister Teresa of St. Augustine discover how tiresome she had been to the other Sisters and especially to Thérèse.



*Sister Aimee of Jesus*



*Sister Teresa of St. Augustine*

(continued from page 12)

cred Heart of Jesus, Thérèse revealed herself wonderfully human in her faith in the Incarnate Word as she confessed:

I need a heart burning with tenderness  
Who will be my support forever  
Who loves everything in me, even my weakness...  
And who never leaves me day or night.  
I could find no creature  
Who could always love me and never die.  
I must have a God who takes on my nature,  
and becomes my brother and is able to suffer! (PN 23)

### How Much Jesus Desires to Love Us

Never before had Thérèse experienced the love of Christ more deeply than on this spring like morning of June 9, 1895, the summit of light. In the early hours of the day (we don't know whether it was during the hour of silent prayer or during the Eucharist), she was suddenly seized by the reality and the beauty of the merciful love of the Trinity, of the Three Divine Persons, who in Jesus want to communicate with us to the point of inundating the depths of our being and our daily existence.

"You have loved me so much as to give me Your only Son as my Savior and my Spouse," she exulted, fascinated by the light that flowed from the summit of love who is Jesus (cf. A 83r-84r SOS, 3RD., 178-180; Pri 6; SS 276). On this feast of the Holy Trinity, her heart sounded the heart of God and she was completely renewed by it. Thérèse again experienced the grace she received as a privilege, a divine choice. "Love has chosen me as a holocaust, me, a weak and imperfect creature." "It is my weakness that gives me the boldness of offering myself as VICTIM of Your Love, O Jesus." (B 3v; SOS, 3RD., 195).

She then contemplated her Christ, who seeks the poor and sinners, and is consumed with love for all. And what did she see? So much indifference on the part of humanity! "On every side" the love of Jesus "is unknown, rejected," "disdained." "Seeking happiness," human beings "turn to creatures." Yet there is an "infinite love" that has "need" to "lavish" itself and "overflow" in a torrent of grace.

And the heart of Thérèse, the tender and faithful heart of a spouse, again experienced a poignant sorrow at the loneliness of Jesus, who was constrained, wanting to find open doors, but had to "hold back the waves of infinite tenderness" within himself. She longed to release them, "throwing [herself] into Your arms and accepting [Your] infinite Love."

But more than sorrow she again felt a holy inebriation in view of Jesus who "would be happy" finally to find a heart given without reserve and without restrictions. And the young religious of twenty-two wrote: "O my Jesus! Let me be this happy victim; consume Your holocaust with the fire of Your Divine Love!"



"Cote de Grace" in Honfleur

## The Offering

Thérèse was going to surrender herself entirely, as an “offering,” as a “victim” (to use her expressions). In an initial reflex, her spirit turned toward a form of “victimhood” familiar to her, particularly in relation to God’s “justice.” In the church and also at Carmel, souls offered themselves to this justice. In the same monastery where Thérèse lived, they had received on the eve of June 9th the obituary of one French Carmelite who died in suffering and terrible anguish after offering herself as a “victim” to the justice of God.

During Thérèse’s time, Christians were readily shaped by the fear of God as just judge, a God from whose eyes nothing escaped, who rewarded or punished according to merit and demerit, to whom one paid the price of heaven with the small change of good works, sacrifices, and prayers. Likewise, in order to pay ransom for others, certain souls - let’s listen to Thérèse - “offer themselves as victims of God’s justice in order to turn away the punishments reserved to sinners, drawing them upon themselves.”

Thérèse sincerely appreciated this offering. She found it “beautiful and very generous”: “beautiful” because the offering recognized God’s greatness and holiness, remembering all that his Son had suffered for us; “generous” because these souls laid themselves open to take on and expiate the consequences of sin.

Thérèse appreciated it, but kept her distance from this offering: “I was far from feeling attracted to making it.” She, so weak and small, who “felt her helplessness,” this helplessness that for more than seven years in Carmel she never stopped experiencing and probing, how could she take equal responsibility upon her fragile shoulders?

But it was not these negative considerations that were most decisive. On the spring like morning of the feast of the Holy Trinity, the light was all positive. It stirred her to “understand how much Jesus desires to be loved” -not out of fear. It is his immeasurable mercy, and not his exacting and severe justice, which comes to the fore. It is not divine justice that has the greatest “need” of comprehension and response, but God’s “infinite tenderness,” God’s “Merciful Love.” It is not a question of “drawing punishments upon herself,” but of letting herself be drawn by divine tenderness. Jesus didn’t want “to release” his justice, but to “set us aflame” with the fire of his love.

It had been eight months since Thérèse had discovered her “little way,” and at the beginning of her prayer of Offering she touched on the great points around which all else turned: the ideal of sanctity (“I desire, in a word, to be a saint”), the reality of her own helplessness (“but I feel my helplessness”), and the reconciliation of the ideal and the helplessness in her confident surrender to God’s sanctifying work within her (“and I beg you, O my God! to be Yourself my Sanctity!”). But on this morning she “understood more than ever” how intensely the Lord’s merciful love was searching, for her and for us, at the heart of our littleness. The Offer-



*Antechamber of Thérèse’s cell. Here, kneeling before the statue of Our Lady of the Smile Thérèse and Celine made their Offering.*

ing to Merciful of Love is situated, historically and by its very nature, within the perspectives opened by this “little way.” The Offering is the logical consequence of it, the prayerful expression and the ultimate consecration. The thesis of the desire of sanctity and the antithesis of helplessness are reconciled together in the synthesis of confident surrender to the work of the thrice holy God, Merciful Love.

Thérèse settled on the fundamentals of her confidence: 1) Through love of us, the Father gave us his Son: “His merits are mine. I offer them to You with gladness.” In a similar gesture, Thérèse offered “the Love and the merits” of Mary, and of the angels and saints; 2) the promise of Jesus that he hears our prayers (Jn 16:23); and 3) the presence of these great desires in her, a sign that these longings would one day be fulfilled.

Then she reformulated her initial supplication of sanctity: “It is with confidence I ask You to come and take possession of my soul.” She sought entire possession of such a “little host” similar to the Eucharistic host that becomes the Body of Christ! A little host, of which even the “weakness” and the “imperfections” would be “consumed” and “transformed” by the fire of divine love.

It was consequently to merciful love that Thérèse presented herself. The young Carmelite explained that there were “different types” of souls, but that it was her vocation, her vocation particularly, “to honor in a special way” the mercy of God and “through it to contemplate and adore the other divine perfections,” which all “appear to be resplendent with love.”

Oh no, she didn’t want to rely upon her own “merits” at all: she avoided the least appearance of pharisaic arrogance before God and depended solely on pure divine kindness, to which she would give praise for all eternity. Her “one purpose” was not to “lay up merits” but to “work for [God’s] love alone,” permitting him to “flood her soul with the waves of His infinite tenderness.”

Her goal was to comfort and relieve the heart of God and to make her own life a song of praise to the mercy of God, who, in her view, desired to be the hinge on which our sanctification turns - the whole New Testament testifies to this. Thus it would be God as Merciful Love who would realize her dream of love within her! Thérèse was going to “accept” love, “to receive from Love” her own “justice” and her “heaven.”

Thérèse qualified her position relative to mercy as an “offering.” What reverence there was in this offering! What total dependence on the goodness of Jesus that she anticipated unquestionably, having caught a glimpse in his heart of his strong desire to give of himself. For nothing in the world would Thérèse force Jesus to accept such an offering if she didn’t know that it was the same desire that God had: that she offer herself.

And, from this moment on, the offering became a true gift of self, a total commitment. Thérèse put all this faithfulness at the disposal of Jesus - this faithfulness that she was accustomed to living for a long time, as she tried to fulfill his



*Standard of the Sacred Heart  
on the door of Thérèse’s cell*

least desires. But this generosity would no longer be, like before, the money with which to assure herself of sanctity, but instead the living expression of her openness to Jesus' life within her.

What changed exteriorly in Thérèse's generosity after the discovery of her "little way" and her "Offering to Merciful Love"? Nothing and everything! Nothing, because she was going to continue like before to be very faithful to "strewing flowers," to "profiting by all the smallest things," to scattering her "nothings" with love (cf. B 3v-4r; SOS, 3rd ed., 194-195). And everything, because she did it solely as a sign of her care for the God of love, as an expression of her unceasing openness to his grace, to this "immensity of love ... which it has pleased You to give me freely, without any merit on my part" (C 35r; SOS, 3rd ed., 256).

She then fervently begged to be "consumed" and "transformed" by the fire of merciful love. With determination she wanted to throw all into the fire, to receive all from the fire. So she would say elsewhere: "To love is to give everything. It's to give oneself" (P 54). Since the feast of the Trinity in 1895 she understood, more than ever, that the gift of self is before all else the fruit of free and overflowing divine action: to love is to receive everything and to be received oneself by the mercy to which one opens oneself, to which one offers oneself.



*The chapter room where Thérèse pronounced her religious vows*

## Martyr of Love

Thérèse then articulated a sort of vow of spiritual poverty. "In the evening of this life, I shall appear before You with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works." After many years she had discovered that all our efforts are imperfect and bear "stains": good motives get easily entangled with more egoistical ones. But overall, Thérèse was inspired by the desire, indeed by the firm will ("I want ...I don't want at all"), to render all homage to the redeeming love of Christ. It wasn't she who would build her throne, her crown: Jesus would be her only "Throne" and her only "Crown." All praise would converge toward "You, O my Beloved!"

Therese offered herself as a "victim." The word generally refers to a situation in which one is unjustly subjected to violence and involuntary suffering. Unable to say it better, the young contemplative used this term of her era, but in a mystical and loving sense. Involuntary? Oh, how much Therese begged for it with all her being and opened all her freedom to it in order that love would come to "take possession of my soul." Completely open like Mary and following her example (it was to Mary that Thérèse chooses to "abandon my offering, begging her to present it" to her Son), she offered herself to be flooded with the "waves of infinite tenderness" and to become a "martyr" to the action of love in her, to which each movement of her being was offered.

If there is injustice here, it can only be the disproportion between our "helplessness," our "weakness," and the magnificence of the forgiveness and the work of

God. Such injustice, such selection as "victim," was the object of all Thérèse's desires: "O my Jesus! let me be this happy victim."

So Therese reached the decisive moment of her offering. She took the leap into the infinite tenderness of God who was going to realize her dream of sanctity: "in order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I offer myself."

"Perfect love," Thérèse dreamed only of that: "to accomplish Your Will perfectly," "sanctity." And all that "in one single act." A single one! Continuous! From morning to evening, and from evening to morning, all through the night. "Living on Love" (P 17)! "I sleep, but my heart keeps watch!" Because Therese gave a mission to her heart "O renew this offering at each beat." Her heart would be her delegate. So she would stay vigilant at every moment, hanging onto the heart of Jesus, who desires, oh "how much," to love us. She would be his "martyr of love."

### The Fire of the Spirit of Love

Thérèse qualified her state of being at God's disposal as like that of a victim "of holocaust." The word conceals the image of a consuming fire. The Carmelite was acquainted with the burning sacrifices of the Old Testament, but here she addressed herself to the "Fire" of Pentecost (in her time the feast of the Holy Trinity closed the octave of Pentecost), to the spiritual fire, that of divine love, by which she eagerly desired to be "consumed incessantly" until she was "transformed into [the Fire] itself." Some months earlier, in her poem *Living on Love* (P 17), Therese had expressly invoked this action of the Spirit in herself: "The Spirit of Love sets me aflame with his fire."



Offering herself to merciful love, Thérèse newly surrendered herself to the fire of the Spirit, plunging herself in the waves of love of the Holy Trinity who had flooded her soul on the day of her baptism. It is revealing that the Saint, quite exceptionally, signs her Offering with her religious name preceded by her baptismal names, "Marie Françoise Thérèse." To plunge herself knowingly in the fire of the Spirit of love, to open herself without reserve to the life of Christ in us, is the final consequence of her baptism and ours.

As another eloquent gesture, henceforth she would always carry on her heart the Gospel, the formula of her religious vows, and the text of her Offering (the autograph is all worn out and patched!): Christian baptism, religious profession, and the Offering to Merciful Love were symbolically united there.

As a "victim," she desired to be without defense before the fire of the Spirit of love and this divine flood, which nothing must curb. Thérèse offered herself, begging her Lord to "consume her incessantly," to "fill her soul to overflowing with the waves of infinite tenderness that are concealed within Him." As a torrent! Or as an ocean, which floods a shell, fills it, and carries it out to eternity.

### The Fruits

On the following Friday, July 14th 1895, while making her Way of the Cross,



the Carmelite experienced a “real flame that was burning her.” It was as if, in an exceptional manner, Love acknowledged the receipt of this Offering that, in faith, she knew to be so agreeable to him. Mother Agnes received Thérèse’s account of the experience:

I was beginning the Way of the Cross; suddenly, I was seized with such a violent love for God that I can't explain it except by saying that it felt as though I were totally plunged into fire. Oh! What fire and what sweetness at one and the same time! I was on fire with love, and I felt that one minute more, one second more, and I wouldn't be able to sustain this ardor without dying. I understood, then, what the saints were saying about these states, which they experienced so often. As for me, I experienced it only once and for one single instant, falling back immediately into my habitual state of dryness. (LC 77)

But if an extraordinary experience of this kind was infrequent, Thérèse experienced the very great benefits of her Offering in a more diffuse way. Six months later, she told of its wonderful impact on her life. “You know the rivers or rather the oceans of graces which flooded my soul. Ah! Since that 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” (A 84r; SOS, 3rd ed., 180). She was then “flooded with light” (A 32r; SOS, 3rd ed., 72). “I feel that [Jesus] is within me at each moment; He is guiding and inspiring me with what I must say and do” (A 83v; SOS, 3rd ed., 179). And we know very well that Thérèse became luminous and incandescent for those around her, a burning lamp in the whole church.

Indeed, since Easter 1896, after her first hemoptysis when she was certain she would die soon, she entered into a mysterious night concerning the hereafter. Although the simple and abundant light disappeared, how much Thérèse still felt sustained by merciful love to which she offered herself! Her faith remained unshakable, Jesus was very near: “At each new occasion of combat ...I run towards my Jesus.... Never have I felt before this ... how sweet and merciful the Lord really is, for He did not send me this trial until the moment I was capable of bearing it” (C 7r-v; SOS, 3rd ed., 213-214).

Now the merciful work of the Lord imbued all areas of her life. Her virtues, joy, interior freedom, humble truthfulness, patience; Thérèse had the feeling that she received these from the hand of God. When others complimented her on her patience, she answered: “I haven't even one minute of patience. It's not my patience! You're always wrong!” (LC 153).

As for her prayer? Formerly, it had been more of a wonderful communication from a “me” to a “You.” Now it was rather a communication, no less marvelous, from a “You” to a “me” full of confidence. Thérèse let Jesus live in her: “This is my prayer. I ask Jesus to draw me into the flames of His Love, to unite me so closely to Him that He lives and acts in me” (C 36r; SOS, 3rd ed., 257).



Her charity toward others? Thérèse would not stop “penetrating into the mysterious depths” (C 18v; SOS, 3rd ed., 229). “Yes, I feel it, when I am charitable,” she wrote, “it is Jesus alone who is acting in me; and the more united I am to Him, the more also do I love my Sisters” (C 12v; SOS, 3rd ed., 221). It is enough to run to him!

Her apostolate? “I felt that the only thing necessary was to unite myself more and more to Jesus and that ‘all these things will be given to you besides.’ In fact, never was my hope mistaken, for God saw fit to fill my little hand as many times as it was necessary” (C 22v; SOS, 3rd ed., 238).

Her unavoidable faults? “If I had committed all possible crimes, I would always have the same confidence; I feel that this whole multitude of offenses would be like a drop of water thrown into a fiery furnace” (LC 89).

She would cling to mercy. “I want, O my Beloved, with each beat of my heart to renew this offering to You an infinite number of times.” “Very often, when I am able to do so, I repeat my Offering to Love,” she said in her last sickness (LC 117).

On September 30th 1897, the last day of her life, in the afternoon, Thérèse said, “I am not sorry for delivering myself up to Love... Oh! no, I’m not sorry; on the contrary!” (LC 205).

Here, until the last moment, she remained faithful to the Lord of merciful love who accomplished her former dream of sanctity. Not in any way that she had contemplated in her youth, but better! She attained this sanctity by the work of the thrice holy God himself, to whom she offered herself in a radical way.



#### Abbreviations

A, B, C: Thérèse’s autobiographical manuscripts, ordinarily with indication of page number and recto (front) or verso (back) side (C 3v, for example, refers to the verso side of the third page of manuscript C.) This referencing system is incorporated into the ICS Publications third edition of SOS.

LC: Last Conversations, LT: Letters, SOS: Story of a Soul

## In Remembrance

**Winifred (Winnie) Brunsman, OCDS**, began eternal life on January 12, 2008 at the age of 95. She was a member of the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Community in Owensboro, KY and made her Vows on July 15, 2000.

The Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Community and St. Teresa of Jesus Community in Roxbury, MA lost two members:

• **Marie Blair, OCDS**, began eternal life on January 15, 2007

• **Catherine McCarthy, OCDS**, began eternal life on June 8, 2008.

**Amalia (Mollie) Lipchak, OCDS**, began eternal life on April 27, 2008. She was a member of Holy Spirit Community in Richmond, VA and made her vows on November 11, 1999.

**Jayne Flowers, OCDS**, began eternal life on June 6, 2008. She was a member of the Our Lady of the Paraclete Community in Detroit, MI and made her Definitive Promise on January 8, 2006.

# Thérèse Speaks:

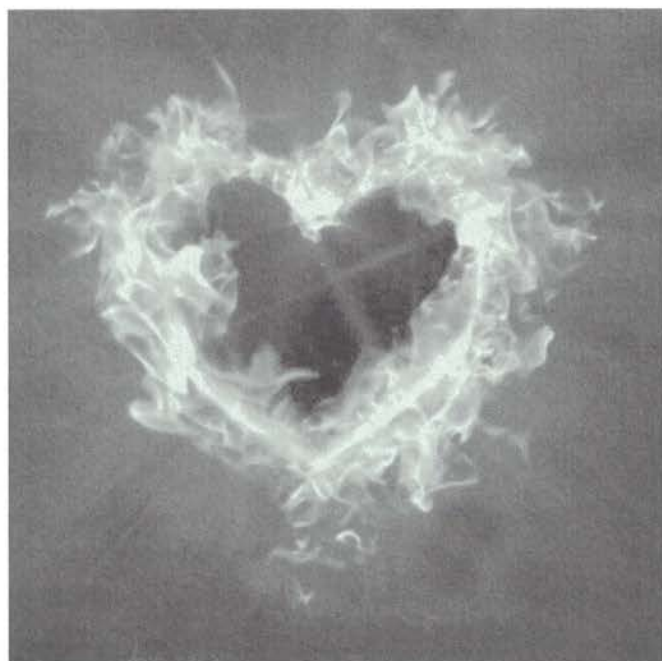
## To Sing the Mercies of the Lord

Ah! Brother, like me you can sing the mercies of the Lord, they sparkle in you in all their splendor . . . You love Saint Augustine, Saint Magdalene, these souls to whom “many sins were forgiven because they loved much.” I love them too, I love their repentance, and especially . . . their loving audacity! When I see Magdalene walking up before the many guests, washing with her tears the feet of her adored Master, whom she is touching for the first time, I feel that her heart has understood the abysses of love and mercy of the Heart of Jesus, and, sinner though she is, this Heart of love was not only disposed to pardon her but to lavish on her the blessings of His divine intimacy, to lift her to the highest summits of contemplation.

Ah! dear little Brother, ever since I have been given the grace to understand also the love of the Heart of Jesus, I admit that it has expelled all fear from my heart. The remembrance of my faults humbles me, draws me never to depend on my strength which is only weakness, but this remembrance speaks to me of mercy and love even more.

When we cast our faults with entire filial confidence into the devouring fire of love, how would these not be consumed beyond return?

I know there are some saints who spent their life in the practice of astonishing mortifications to expiate their sins, but what of it: “There are many mansions in the house of my heavenly Father,” Jesus has said, and it is because of this that I follow the way He is tracing out for me. I try to be no longer occupied with myself in anything, and I abandon myself to what Jesus sees fit to do in my soul, for I have not chosen an austere life to expiate my faults, but those of others. (LT 247 to P. Belliere, her missionary brother).



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## Reminders

### Transferring from one OCDS Community to another OCDS Community Within our Province

When the need for a Transfer arises, the following things have to be kept in mind:

1. The person must have a legitimate reason, i.e., moving to a new state or city too far to attend the meetings of their present community; the need to change one's meeting day because of a personal conflict. Dissatisfaction with the leadership of the Community is not a sufficient reason for transferring to another Community.
2. In preparation for a transfer, the OCDS member must present a Transfer Form (which may be downloaded from <http://www.ocdswashprov.org>) to the existing Community Council for verification of formation dates and release of the OCDS member from their Community.
3. If a person visits another Community with the intent of a possible transfer and does not present this form completed by their existing Community Council, the receiving Council must then require that page 1 of the Transfer Form (J) be completed.
4. It is recommended that the person transferring attend the new Community for at least one (1) year to discern if it is in the best interest of both the individual and the new Community to admit the person. Further, at some point, it is also recommended that a reference be obtained so the transferring member may be placed in appropriate initial or ongoing formation. At the end of that period, the admitting Council completes page 2 of the Transfer Form (J).
5. The original of the Transfer Form must be sent to the OCDS Main Office and a copy to the releasing Community. Only then will the person be moved from one Community Roster to another.