



## The Salvation of Souls

When the Angel of Peace appeared to the children of Fatima, he startled them by saying: “What are you doing? Pray and make sacrifices for the conversion of sinners!” The children had been playing when they were reminded by the Angel on his second visit that the Hearts of Jesus and Mary had “designs of mercy” on them.

When our Lady came to them on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917, she told them to make of everything they did a sacrifice for the conversion of sinners. The perfect penance is simply offering our daily duty as a sacrifice for sinners. The mission of the Blue Army is the very mission of the Church --- the salvation of souls.

When we signed the “Blue Army Pledge” we promised to wear the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. As we were enrolled in the Scapular, we became associates of the Order of Mount Carmel sharing in the spiritual works of the friars, nuns and tertiaries of the Carmelite Order.

Venerable Lucia dos Santos would become a Carmelite nun herself following the direction of Our Lady to enter her most ancient religious order to whom she made this promise: “Whosoever dies clothed in this garment shall never suffer eternal fire.”

As “Carmelites” let us learn from “the great saint of modern times,” St Therese of the Child Jesus, how to keep the Fatima message by making everything we do a sacrifice for the conversion of sinners. Her “Little Way” of becoming like children in the Arms of Jesus in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven, is the spirituality taught by the Angel of Peace and by Our Lady herself at Fatima. The “way” of the Little Flower is the way of Venerable Lucia and Saints Jacinta and Francisco.

What was the secret of the Little Flower, St Therese? “To love Jesus with passion.” Her devotion to His Incarnation, His Holy Name, His precious Blood, and His Holy Face caused her to write:

***“My only joy on earth is to be able to please You.”***

She consoled the Good Lord in the simplest gestures:

***“.....in order to console Jesus, He wants only a look, a sigh, but a look and a sigh that are for Him alone!”***

To be a Carmelite is to be a loving person Like St Therese. Six months before her death, and experiencing incredible suffering, she writes:

***“...for I shall desire in heaven the same thing as I do on earth: To love Jesus and to make Him loved.”***

She now spends her heaven doing good on earth, showering earth with roses, as she expressed it herself. Two words express St Therese in her entirety: "To live of love." Every Carmelite can walk her 'little way' because it consists in doing small things for the love of Jesus and winning little victories over self-love.

On Christmas Eve, 1886, St. Therese experienced her "conversion," (every bit as spectacular as the conversion of St Paul!) which opened her to a deeper intimacy with Jesus. She describes it in her "Story of the Soul":

***On that "night of light" the third period of my life began, the most beautiful of all, the one in which I received the most graces from heaven.....The work I had been unable to do in ten years was done by Jesus in one instant and He even was content just with my good will, which I always had plenty of. Like His apostles I could say to Him: "Master, I fished all night, but caught nothing." Even more merciful to me than He was to His disciples, He took the net Himself, cast it and drew it in filled with fish...He made me a fisher of souls. I experienced a great desire to work for the conversion of sinners, a desire I hadn't felt so intensely before....I felt charity enter into my soul, and my need to forget myself and to please others; since then I've been happy!"***

When you consider that up to that point St Therese had suffered from moodiness, sadness, touchiness, and outright depression (being healed on Pentecost Sunday, 1853 by the "Smile of the Virgin!) This Christmas Eve conversion is no small matter!

Shortly after this event, she describes another major event that brought her into a deeper relationship with the Crucified Jesus and a 'thirst' for souls:

***One Sunday, looking at a picture of Our Lord on the Cross I was struck by the blood flowing from one of the divine hands. I felt a great pang of sorrow when thinking this blood was falling on the ground in my prayer-book, the blood that was flowing from one of His Divine Hands shocked me; I experienced a great pain when I was thinking of the blood dripping on the floor and nobody would rush to collect it and I decided to stay at the foot of the Cross in order to receive the Divine dew which continued to flow. I understood that I needed to distribute it to souls...Jesus' cry on the Cross resounded continually in my heart: 'I thirst!'***

***These words ignited in me an unknown and very living fire...I wanted to give my Beloved to drink, and I felt myself consumed with a thirst for souls. As yet, it was not the souls of priests that attracted me, but those of great sinners: I burned with the desire to snatch them from the eternal flames.***

The ultimate work of the Church is the salvation of souls! It is also the very life of every member of the Church.

Pranzini, the condemned criminal, was the first soul saved by little Therese. She had Masses offered for him. She made numberless little sacrifices and offered many prayers so that Jesus would give her a sign of his repentance. She wrote in her manuscript:

***The day after his execution I found the newspaper "LaCroix". I opened it quickly and what did I see? Ah! My tears betrayed my emotion, and I was obliged to hide. Pranzini had not gone to confession. He had mounted the scaffold and was preparing to place his head in the formidable opening when suddenly, seized by an inspiration, he turned, took hold of the crucifix, the priest was holding out to him and kissed the sacred wounds three times! Then his soul went to receive the merciful sentence of Him Who declares that in heaven "there will be more joy over one sinner who does penance than over ninety-nine just who have no need or repentance!" (LK 15:7).***

How many souls since have found eternal salvation because of St Therese? only God knows! For every Carmelite, her simple and imitable "Little Way," is an inspiration of good and food for meditation. On that little way our limitations are not an obstacle, but the very means to take the "elevation of love" which St Therese experienced on the Arms of Jesus lifting us up to His Sacred Heart.

She compared our weaknesses and failures to children who, were not quite able to walk safely on their own and needed to be picked up after their occasional falls. St Therese understood the fear of so many people and she proposed the opposite: CONFIDENCE!

Her God was nothing but mercy:

***"My way in all confidence and love, I do not understand souls who fear a friend so tender."***

Even if she frequently fell asleep at prayer times, confidence had the last word:

***"I should be desolate for having slept (for seven years) during my hours of prayer and my thanksgiving after Holy Communion; still, I am not desolate...I remember that the little children are as pleasing to their parents when they are asleep as well as when they are wide awake."***

What was important for St Therese was to be open to receiving Jesus, this "Beggar of love"; to be like those who were unable to see and yet, through the grace of conversion, receive the ability to see like Zechariah, the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheas, and the Good Thief.

St Therese offered herself to Merciful Love to receive the overflow of tenderness, which is stored up in Jesus' Sacred Heart, because there are too few souls who allow God to love them as only, He can love.

**As "Carmelites" in the Blue Army, and living at every moment in the Divine Will, let us offer ourselves to Merciful Love in order to bring souls to Jesus, and to His Kingdom.**