



THERESIAN  
ANNIVERSARIES  
2023-2025

**Reading the writings of Therese of the Child Jesus  
Theresian anniversaries 2023-2025  
2024: Manuscripts B and C**



Text 3:  
**Nothing but confidence**  
(LC 170 and LT 197)



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Nothing but confidence (LC 170 and LT 197)**

Suggestion for the community meeting:

1. Read the text together
2. One of those present, having prepared a contribution in advance, discusses the text using the commentary (and other aids, if necessary).
3. Community dialogue on the text.

It would be helpful to have made individual readings and reflections on Therese's text before the community meeting.

*Preliminary remark: these two texts are letters exchanged between Marie of the Sacred Heart and Therese. They represent the high point of Manuscript B, which is why we are choosing to present them now, rather than during the third year of the series.*



## Letter to Therese 170 and Letter from Therese 197

From Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart to Therese (LC 170)

17th (?) September 1896

Jesus

Dear little Sister, I have read your pages burning with love for Jesus. Your little godmother is very happy to possess this treasure and very grateful to her dear little girl who has revealed the secrets of her soul in this way. Oh! What should I say about these lines marked with the seal of love. - Simply one word concerning myself. Like the young man in the Gospel, a certain feeling of sadness came over me, in view of your extraordinary desires for martyrdom. That is the proof of your love; yes, you possess love, but I myself! No, never will you make me believe that I can attain this desired goal, for I dread all that you love.

This is a proof that I do not love Jesus as you do. Ah! You say you are doing nothing, that you are a poor weak little bird, but your desires, how do you reckon them? The good God looks upon them as works.

I cannot speak to you any longer. I began this note this morning, and I have not had a minute to finish it. It is five o'clock. I would like you to tell your little godmother, in writing, if she can love Jesus as you do. But only briefly, for what I have is sufficient for my joy and my sorrow. For my joy, when I see to what a degree you are loved and privileged ; for my sorrow, when I have a foreboding of the

desire that Jesus has to pluck His little flower ! Oh! I wanted to cry when I read these lines that are not from earth but an echo from the Heart of God . . . Do you want me to tell you? Well, you are possessed by God, but what is called . . . absolutely possessed, just as the wicked are by the devil.

I would like to be possessed, too, by the good Jesus. However, I love you so much that I rejoice when seeing you are more privileged than I am.

A little word for your little godmother.



## To Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart (LT 197)

J.M.J.T.

Jesus

17th September 1896

My dearest Sister, I am not embarrassed to reply to you . . . How can you ask me if you can love the Good God as much as I love Him? . . .

If you had understood the story of my little bird, you would not have posed that question. My desires for martyrdom are nothing; they are not what give me the unlimited confidence that I feel in my heart. My desires of martyrdom are nothing; they are not what give me the unlimited confidence that I feel in my heart. It is spiritual riches, to tell the truth, that make one unjust, when one rests in them with complacency and when one believes they are some-

thing great . . . These desires are a consolation that Jesus grants at times to weak souls like mine (and these souls are numerous), but when He does not give this consolation, it is a grace of privilege. Recall those words of Father: 'The martyrs suffered with joy, and the King of Martyrs suffered with sadness.' Yes, Jesus said: 'Father, let this chalice pass away from me.' Dear Sister, how can you say after this that my desires are the sign of my love? . . . Ah, I really feel that it is not this at all that pleases God in my little soul ; what pleases Him is that He sees me loving my littleness and my poverty, the blind hope that I have in His mercy . . . That is my only treasure, dear GODMOTHER, why would this treasure not be yours ? . . .

Are you not ready to suffer all that God will desire? I really know that you are; so if you want to feel joy, to have an attraction for suffering, it is your consolation that you are seeking, since when we love a thing the pain disappears. I assure you, if we were to go to martyrdom together in the dispositions we are in now, you would have great merit, and I would have none at all, unless Jesus was pleased to change my dispositions.

Oh, my dear Sister, I beg you, understand your little girl, understand that to love Jesus, to be His victim of love, the weaker one is, without desires or virtues, the more suited one is for the workings of this consuming and transforming Love . . . The desire alone to be a victim suffices, but we must consent to remain always poor and without strength, and this is the difficulty, for: 'The truly poor in spirit, where do we find him? You must look for him from afar,' said the psalmist . . . He does not say that you must look for him among great souls, but 'from afar', that is to

say in lowliness, in nothingness . . . Ah ! Let us remain then very far from all that sparkles, let us love our littleness, let us love to feel nothing, then we shall be poor in spirit, and Jesus will come to look for us, and however far we may be, He will transform us into flames of love . . . Oh! How I would like to be able to make you understand what I feel! . . . It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love . . . Does not fear lead to Justice? . . . Since we see the way, let us run together. Yes, I feel it, Jesus wills to give us the same graces, He wills to give us His heaven gratuitously.

Oh, my dear little Sister, if you don't understand me, it is because you are too great a soul . . . or rather, it is because I am explaining myself poorly, for I am sure that God would not give you the desire to be POSSESSED by Him, by His merciful Love, if He were not reserving this favour for you . . .or rather He has already given it to you, since you have given yourself to Him, since you desire to be consumed by Him, and since God never gives desires that He cannot realise.

Nine o'clock is ringing, and I am obliged to leave you. Ah, how I would like to tell you things, but Jesus is going to make you feel all that I cannot write . . .

I love you with all the tenderness of my GRATEFUL little childlike heart.

Therese of the Child Jesus  
rel. carm. ind.



## Introduction to the text:

‘It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love’ (LT 197): for Therese confidence is a vital faith in the love which is absolute, infinite, eternal; the Merciful Love of God that accepts all human weakness. Jesus Christ demonstrated it in lowering Himself to human littleness, in lowering Himself to her, Therese. Because Therese knows she is a little soul infinitely loved by God.

‘I have not had a minute to finish it, it is five o’clock’ (LC 170): the time of evening prayer, which would be immediately followed by a meal (supper, during a time of fasting, at 6 o’clock). Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart wants Therese to find this note before the end of her free time – the recreation period from 6.45pm to 7.40 pm (from which Therese was dispensed, being on retreat), and the evening silence. She would therefore be able to reply in writing, as Marie had asked, before finishing her retreat on the morning of Friday, 18th September 1896.

‘Remember the word of the Father’ (LT 197) : this refers to Father Pichon, the citation coming from a conference on the 7th day (13th October 1887) of a retreat preached at the Carmel of Lisieux, when Therese had written out this passage on a piece of paper in 1889.

‘Understand that to love Jesus, to be His victim of Love’ (LT 197): after Therese and Celine, Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart was the third to make her offering to Merciful Love during the summer of 1895. During a conversation with Therese, the latter told her ‘that she understood me very well, but that to offer oneself as a victim to God’s Love was not at all the same thing as to offer oneself to justice, and that I would not suffer more, that it was to be able to love God better, on behalf of those who didn’t want to love Him.’



‘God never gives desires that He cannot realise.’ (LT 197): at the beginning of Therese’s Scripture notebook, Celine had written out this thought of Saint John of the Cross: ‘The more God wants to give us, the more He increases our desires . . . God so much approves the hope of a soul that is constantly turned towards Him, that never lowers its eyes elsewhere, that one can say with certainty and truth, that soul will obtain as much as it hopes for . . .’

## For the community dialogue:

1. *What is the text saying?* Understanding the content and initial meaning of Therese's text
2. *What does the text say to us today?* Discern the present-day relevance (social, ecclesial, spiritual. . .) of the text.
3. *What does the text say to me/us?* Consider the personal and community relevance of the text.

The purpose of this process is to allow Therese to speak to us herself, to question and encourage us, and to open us up to her clarifying and confirming our own personal and community path. The questions suggested are only indicative, and could perhaps be used in individual meditation and community sharing.

### *Questions:*

1. Notice how much the theme of the letter uses structural elements of the little way. Which ones? Is there one that seems to be missing here?
2. To what spiritual conversion does this letter invite us? To what extent should this be seen in perspective? What should we love in ourselves? On what are we invited to depend above all?
3. 'We have to consent to remain poor and without strength, and here is the difficulty.' What does this mean concretely for us?





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