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Thoughts of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus

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LOVE OF GOD

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JESUS! . . . I would so love Him! Love Him as never yet He has been loved. . .

IV LETTER TO MÈRE AGNÈS DE JÉSUS (Her sister Pauline.)

THE science of love! Sweet is the echo of that word to the ear of my soul. I desire no other science. *Having given all my substance for it,* like the spouse in the Canticles, *I think that I have given nothing.* [1]

HISTOIRE D'UNE AME, CH. VIII

WITHOUT love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. VIII

ONE evening, at a loss for words to tell Jesus how I loved Him and how much I wished that He might be everywhere served and glorified, I reflected with pain that not one act of love would ever mount upwards from out of the depths of hell. Then I cried out that willingly would I consent to see myself plunged into that place of torment and blasphemy, in order that He might be loved there eternally. That could not really glorify Him since He desires only our happiness, but love makes one want to say a thousand foolish things. If I spoke thus, it was not that I did not long for heaven; but

then, my heaven was none other than *Love*, and in my fervour I felt that nothing could separate me from the Divine object of my love. . .

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. V

SEEING the eternal recompense so disproportionate to the trifling sacrifices of this life, I longed to love Jesus, to love Him ardently, to give Him a thousand proofs of tenderness while yet I could do so. . .

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. V

THE love of God reveals itself in the very simplest soul who resists His grace in nothing, as well as in the most sublime. Indeed, the characteristic of love being to humble itself, if all souls resembled those of the holy Doctors who have enlightened the Church, the good God would not seem to descend low enough in coming to them. But He has created the infant who knows nothing and can only wail; He has created the poor savage who has but the natural law for guidance, and it is even unto their hearts that He deigns to stoop.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. I

IN order that Love may be fully satisfied it must needs stoop to very nothingness and transform that nothing into fire.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. XI

IN times of aridity when I am incapable of praying, of practising virtue, I seek little opportunities, mere trifles, to give pleasure to Jesus; for instance a smile, a pleasant word when inclined to be silent and to show weariness. If I find no opportunities, I at least tell Him again and again that I love Him; that is not difficult and it keeps alive the fire in my heart. Even though this fire of love might seem to me extinct I would still throw little straws upon the embers and I am certain it would rekindle.

XVI LETTER TO HER SISTER CÉLINE

ON the day of my conversion Charity entered into my heart and with it a yearning to forget self always; thenceforward I was happy.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. V

I DO not will that creatures should possess a single atom of my love; I wish to give all to Jesus, since He makes me understand that He alone is perfect happiness. All shall be for Him, all! And even when I have nothing to offer Him I will give Him that nothing.

II LETTER TO MÈRE AGNÈS DE JÉSUS

OUR Lord is more tender than a mother, and well do I know more than one maternal heart! I know a mother is ever ready to forgive the little involuntary failings of her child.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. VIII

I KNOW of one means only by which to attain to perfection: LOVE. Let us love, since our heart is made for nothing else. Sometimes I seek another word to express Love, but in this land of exile *the word which begins and ends* ^[2] is quite incapable of rendering the vibrations of the soul; we must then adhere to this simple and only word: TO LOVE.

But on whom shall our poor heart lavish its love? Who shall be found that is great enough to be the recipient of its treasures? Will a human being know how to comprehend them, and above all will he be able to repay? There exists but one Being capable of comprehending love; it is Jesus; He alone can give us back infinitely more than we shall ever give to Him.

LETTER TO HER COUSIN MARIE GUÉRIN

THERE is one ONLY THING to do here below: to love Jesus, to win souls for Him so that He may be loved. Let us seize with jealous care every least opportunity of self-sacrifice. Let us refuse Him nothing—He does so want our love!

VI LETTER TO HER SISTER CÉLINE

WHEN we really love, we rejoice in the happiness of the loved one and make every sacrifice to procure it for him.

COUNSELS AND REMINISCENCES

TRUE love is nourished by sacrifice, and the more the soul denies itself natural satisfactions, the stronger and the more disinterested becomes its tenderness.

COUNSELS AND REMINISCENCES

THE good God does not need years to accomplish His work of love in a soul; one ray from His Heart can, in an instant, make His flower bloom for eternity. . .

VI LETTER TO HER SISTER CÉLINE

LOVE can supply for length of years. Jesus, because He is Eternal, regards not the time but only the love.

V LETTER TO MÈRE AGNÈS DE JÉSUS

I DESIRE no sensible consolation in loving; provided Jesus feel my love that is enough for me. Oh! to love Him and to make Him loved . . . how sweet it is. . .

V LETTER TO MÈRE AGNÈS DE JÉSUS

O JESUS, I ask of Thee only Peace! . . . Peace, and above all LOVE—love without bound or limit. Jesus, let me for Thy sake die a martyr; give me martyrdom of soul or body. Ah! rather give me both the one and the other!

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. VIII

I HAVE no longer any desire unless it be to love Jesus even to folly! Yes, LOVE it is that draws me. I can say these words of the canticle of our Father, St. John of the Cross:

In the inmost cellar
Of my Beloved have I drunk; and when I went forth

Over all the plain
I knew nothing,
And lost the flock I followed before.
My soul is occupied
And all my substance in His service;
Now I guard no flock,
Nor have I any other employment:
My sole occupation is love.

(Spiritual Canticle, Trans. D. Lewis.)

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. VIII

OH! if souls weak and imperfect as mine, felt what I feel, not one would despair of reaching the summit of the mountain of Love, since Jesus does not demand from us great deeds, but only self-surrender and gratitude.

I have no need, saith He, of the goats of thy flocks . . . If I were hungry I would not tell thee . . . Offer unto God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. [3]

See then, all that Jesus asks of us! He has not need of our works but only of our *love*. This very God who declares that He needs not to tell us if He were hungry, did not hesitate to *beg* of the Samaritan woman a little water . . . He thirsted!!! But in saying: "*Give me to drink*," ^[4] it was the love of His poor creature that the Creator of the universe besought. He thirsted for Love!

And now, more than ever is Jesus athirst. He meets with none but the ungrateful and the indifferent among the disciples of the world; and amongst *His own* disciples He finds, alas! very few hearts that surrender themselves without any reserve to the tenderness of His infinite Love.

Since ever I have known Love's mighty power Thus hath it wrought its work within my soul—Whate'er it findeth there, or good or ill, It turneth all to gain; its living flame Transforms my soul into its very self. [5]

HOW sweet is the way of Love! True, one may fall, one may not be always faithful, but Love, knowing how to draw profit from all, very quickly consumes whatsoever may displease Jesus, leaving naught but humble and profound peace in the innermost soul.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. VIII

THINKING one day of those who offer themselves as victims to the Justice of God in order to turn aside the punishment reserved for sinners by taking it upon themselves, I felt this offering to be noble and generous, but I was far from feeling moved to make it.

"O my Divine Master," I cried in the depths of my heart, "shall Thy Justice alone receive victims of holocaust? Has not Thy Merciful Love also need of them? On all sides it is ignored, rejected . . . the hearts on which Thou wouldst lavish it turn to creatures, seeking happiness in miserable and fleeting affections instead of casting themselves into Thine arms, into the ineffable furnace of Thine Infinite Love.

"O my God, must Thy Love—disdained—remain within Thy Heart? Methinks that if Thou shouldst find souls offering

themselves as victims of holocaust to Thy Love, Thou wouldst consume them rapidly; that Thou wouldst be glad not to restrict the flames of infinite tenderness pent up within Thee.

"If Thy Justice—the Justice which Thou dost exercise on earth—be pleased to find voluntary victims on which to discharge its weight, how much the more must Thy Merciful Love also desire its victims, since *Thy Mercy reacheth even to heaven*. ^[6]

"O Jesus, that happily I may be that holocaust consume Thy little victim in the fire of Divine Love."

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. VIII

AH! since that day love penetrates me and surrounds me; this *Merciful Love* each moment renews and purifies me, leaving in my heart no trace of sin. No, I cannot fear Purgatory; I know that I do not merit even to enter with the Holy Souls into that place of expiation, but I know too that the fire of Love is more sanctifying than the fire of Purgatory, I know that Jesus cannot will needless suffering for us, and that He would not inspire me with the desires I feel if He were unwilling to fulfil them.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. VIII

TO offer oneself as a Victim to Divine Love is not to offer oneself to sweetness—to consolation; but to every anguish, every bitterness, for Love lives only by sacrifice; and the more a soul wills to be surrendered to Love, the more must she be surrendered to suffering.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. XII

IN order to love Jesus, to be His victim of love, the more weak and miserable we are, the more fitting are we for the operations of this consuming and transforming Love . . . The sole desire to be victim suffices; but we must consent to remain always poor and without strength, and there lies the difficulty, for where shall be found the truly poor in spirit? He must be sought afar off, [7] saith the author of the Imitation . . . He did not say that we must seek him amongst great souls, but afar off, that is to say in lowliness, in nothingness . . . Oh! let us keep afar off from all that glitters, let us love our littleness, and be satisfied to feel nothing, then shall we be truly poor in spirit, and Jesus will come to seek us how far soever we may be; He will transform us into flames of Love! . . .

VI LETTER TO SŒUR MARIE DU SACRÉ-CŒUR (Her sister Marie.)

TO be truly a Victim of Love requires absolute self-surrender. The soul is consumed by Love only in so far as she surrenders herself to Love.

COUNSELS AND REMINISCENCES

IT appears to me that for Victims of Love there will be no judgment, but rather, that the good God will hasten to recompense with eternal delights His own Love, which He will see burning in their hearts.

COUNSELS AND REMINISCENCES

AT any cost I will cull the palm of Saint Agnes; if not by shedding my blood then it must be by Love. . .

IV LETTER TO MÈRE AGNÈS DE JÉSUS

O MY God, Thou knowest I have never desired but to love Thee alone. I seek no other glory. Thy Love has gone before me from my childhood, it has grown with my growth, and now it is an abyss the depths of which I cannot fathom.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. XI

LOVE attracts love, mine rushes forth unto Thee, it would fain fill up the abyss which attracts it; but alas! it is not even as one drop of dew lost in the Ocean. To love Thee as Thou lovest me I must borrow Thy very love—then only, can I find rest.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. XI

JUST as a torrent sweeps along with it unto the depths of the sea whatsoever it encounters on its course, even so, my Jesus, does the soul which plunges into the boundless ocean of Thy Love draw after her all her treasures. Lord, Thou knowest that for me these treasures are the souls it has pleased Thee to unite to mine.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. XI

CHARITY gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that the Church being a body composed of different members, the most essential, the most noble of all the organs would not be wanting to her; I understood that the Church has a heart and that this heart is burning with love; that it is love

alone which makes the members work, that if love were to die away apostles would no longer preach the Gospel, martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. I understood that love comprises all vocations, that love is everything, that it embraces all times and all places because it is eternal!

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. XI

O MY Well-Beloved! I understand to what combats Thou hast destined me; it is not on the battle field that I shall fight . . . I am prisoner of Thy Love; freely have I riveted the chain which unites me to Thee and separates me for ever from the world. My sword is LOVE; with it I shall chase the stranger from the kingdom, I shall make Thee to be proclaimed King in the souls of men.

HIST. D'UNE AME, APPENDIX

LOVE! . . . that is what I ask . . . I know but one thing now— to love Thee, O Jesus! Glorious deeds are not for me, I cannot preach the Gospel, shed my blood . . . what does it matter? My brothers toil instead of me, and I, the little child, I keep quite close to the royal throne, I love for those who fight.

HIST. D'UNE AME, CH. XI

HOW shall I show my love since love is proved by deeds? Well,—the little child will strew flowers . . . she will embalm the Divine Throne with their fragrance, will sing with silvery voice the canticle of love.

Yes, my Beloved, it is thus that my life's brief day shall be spent before Thee. No other means have I of proving my