

Reading the writings of Therese of the Child Jesus
Teresian Anniversaries 2023-2025
2025: Prayers and other writings

Text 4:
Why I love You, O Mary! (Poem 54)

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.

Why I Love You, O Mary !

JMJT

May 1897

(Air: Why did you deliver me the other day, oh my Mother)

1. Oh! I would like to sing, Mary, why I love you
Why does your name so sweet make my heart leap
And why the thought of your supreme greatness
Could not inspire fear in my soul.
If I contemplated you in your sublime glory
And surpassing the brilliance of all the blessed
That I'm your child I couldn't believe
O Mary, in front of you, I would lower my eyes!...

2. It is necessary for a child to cherish his mother
May she cry with him, share his pains
O my dear Mother, on the foreign shore
To attract me to you, how many tears you shed!....
By meditating your life in the Holy Gospel
I dare to look at you and approach you ;
Believing me your child is not difficult for me
For I see you mortal and suffering like me...

3. When an angel from Heaven offers you to be the Mother
Of the God who shall reign for all eternity
I see you prefer, O Mary, what a mystery!
The ineffable treasure of virginity.
I understand that your soul, O Immaculate Virgin
Is dearer to the Lord than the divine abode
I understand that your soul, Humble and Sweet Valley
Can contain Jesus, the Ocean of Love!...

4. Oh! I love you, Mary, saying you are the servant
Of the God whom you ravish by your humility.
This hidden virtue makes you all-powerful.
It draws the Holy Trinity into your heart.
So the Spirit of Love overshadowing you
The Son equal to the Father in you became incarnate....
Of his sinning brethren great will be the number
Since we must call him: Jesus, your firstborn!...

5. O beloved Mother, despite my smallness
Like you I have in me the Almighty
But I do not tremble when I see my weakness:
The mother's treasure belongs to the child
And I am your child, oh my dear Mother,
Your virtues, your love, are they not mine?
Also when in my heart descends the white Host
Jesus, your Sweet Lamb, believes that he rests in you!...

6. You make me feel it, it's not impossible
To follow in your footsteps, O Queen of the elect,
The narrow way to Heaven, you made it visible
By always practising the humblest virtues.
With you, Mary, I like to stay small,
Of the grandeurs of here below I see the vanity,
With Saint Elisabeth, receiving your visit,
I am learning to practise ardent charity.

7. There I listen delighted, Sweet Queen of Angels
To the sacred song that springs from your heart.
You teach me to sing divine praises
To glory in Jesus my Saviour.
Your words of love are mystical roses,
Which must embalm the centuries to come.
In you the Almighty has done great things,
I want to meditate on them, in order to bless him.

8. When the good Saint Joseph knew not the miracle
That you wished to hide in your humility,
You let him cry near the Tabernacle
Which veils the divine beauty of the Saviour!...
Oh ! that I love, Mary, your eloquent silence,
For me it's a soft and melodious concert
That tells me of the greatness and omnipotence
Of a soul that awaits help only from the Heavens...

9. Later in Bethlehem, O Joseph and Mary!
I see you shunned by all the locals
No one wants to receive in his hotel
Poor foreigners, the place is for the big ones....
The place is for the big ones - and it's in a stable
That the Queen of Heaven must give birth to a God.
O my dear Mother, how lovable I find you
How great I find you in such a poor place!....

10. When I see the Lord wrapped in swaddling clothes
When from the Divine Word I hear the faint cry
O my dear Mother, I no longer envy the angels
For their Mighty Lord is my beloved Brother!...
How I love you, Mary, you who on our shores
Have made this Divine Flower bloom!.....
How I love you listening to the shepherds and the Magi
And guarding with care all things in your heart!...

11. I love you mingling with the other women
Who towards the holy temple directed their steps,
I love you presenting the Savior of our souls
To the blessed Old Man who presses him in his arms,
At first smiling I listen to his song,
But soon his accents make me shed tears.
Gazing prophetically into the future
Simeon offers you a sword of sorrows.

12. O Queen of martyrs, until the evening of your life
This painful sword will pierce your heart,
Already you have to leave the soil of your homeland
To avoid a king's jealous fury.
Jesus sleeps in peace under the folds of your veil
Joseph comes to ask you to leave at once
And your obedience is immediately revealed
You leave without any delay and without reasoning.

13. In the land of Egypt, it seems to me, O Mary
Your heart remains joyful in poverty,
For is not Jesus the most beautiful Homeland,
What does exile matter to you, you own the Heavens?...
But in Jerusalem, a bitter sadness
Like a vast ocean comes to flood your heart
Jesus, for three days, hides from your tenderness,
So that is true exile in all its rigour!...

14. Finally you see him and joy transports you,
You say to the beautiful Child who charms the doctors:
"O my Son, why do you act like this?"
"Here are your father and I who were looking for you in tears."
And the Child God answers (oh what a deep mystery!)
To the dear Mother who stretches out her arms towards him:
"Why were you looking for me?... For the works of my Father
"I have to work; don't you know that?"

15. The Gospel teaches me that growing in wisdom
To Joseph, to Mary, Jesus remains submissive
And my heart reveals to me with what tenderness
He always obeys his dear parents.
Now I understand the mystery of the temple,
The hidden words of my Lovable King.
Mother, your sweet Child wants you to be the example
Of the soul that seeks Him in the night of faith.

16. Since the King of Heaven wanted his Mother
Plunged into the night, into the anguish of the heart;
Mary, is it therefore good to suffer on earth?
Yes, to suffer while loving, it is the purest happiness!...
Everything He gave me Jesus can take it back
Tell him never to bother with me...
He may well be hiding, I agree to wait for him
Until the day without sunset when my faith will be extinguished....

17. I know that in Nazareth, Mother full of graces
You live very poor, wanting nothing more
No raptures, miracles or ecstasies
Embellish your life, O Queen of the Chosen!....
The number of little ones is great on earth
They can raise their eyes to you without trembling
It is by the common way, incomparable Mother
That you like to walk to guide them to Heaven.

18. Waiting for Heaven, O my dear Mother,
I want to live with you, follow you every day
Mother, contemplating you, I immerse myself with delight,
Discovering in your heart abysses of love.
Your maternal gaze banishes all my fears
It teaches me to cry, it teaches me to rejoice.
Instead of despising the pure and holy joys
You want to share them, you deign to bless them.

19. Seeing the concern of the newly-weds of Cana
That they can't hide, because they're running out of wine,
To the Saviour you tell it in your solicitude,
Hoping for help from his divine power.
Jesus seems at first to push back your prayer
"What does it matter," He replies, "woman, to you and to me?"
But deep in his heart, he calls you his Mother,
And his first miracle, He works it for you...

20. A day that sinners are listening to the teaching
Of Him who would like to receive them in Heaven,
I find you with them, Mary, on the hill.
Someone tells Jesus that you would like to see him,
So your Divine Son in front of the whole crowd,
Of his love for us shows the immensity
He said, "Who is my brother and my sister and my Mother?
"If not he who does my will?"

21. O Immaculate Virgin, the most tender of mothers,
Listening to Jesus, you don't get sad
But you rejoice that He makes us understand
That our soul becomes his family here below
Yes, you rejoice that he gives us his life,
The infinite treasures of his divinity!...
How not to love you, oh my dear Mother
Seeing so much love and so much humility?

22. You love us, Mary, as Jesus loves us
And you consent for us to distance you from Him.
To love is to give everything and to give oneself
You wanted to prove it by remaining our support.
The Savior knew your immense tenderness

He knew the secrets of your maternal heart,
Refuge of sinners, it is to you that He leaves us
When He leaves the Cross to wait for us in Heaven.

23. Mary, you appear to me at the top of Calvary
Standing by the cross, like a priest at the altar
Offering to appease the justice of the Father
Your beloved Jesus, sweet Emmanuel...
A prophet said so, O desolate Mother,
"There is no pain like your pain!"
O Queen of Martyrs, remaining in exile
You lavish on us all the blood of your heart!

24. The house of Saint John becomes your only asylum
The son of Zebedee is to replace Jesus.....
This is the last detail that the Gospel gives,
Of the Queen of Heaven it no longer speaks to me.
But his deep silence, oh my dear Mother
Does it not reveal that the Eternal Word
Wants Himself to sing the secrets of your life
To charm your children, all the Elect of Heaven?

25. Soon I will hear this sweet harmony
Soon in the beautiful Heaven, I'll go to see you
You who came to smile at me in the morning of my life.
Come and smile at me again... Mother... It is the evening now!...
I no longer fear the brilliance of your supreme glory
With you I suffered and now I want
To sing on your lap, Mary, about why I love you
And say forever that I am your child!.....

Little Therese

Introduction to the Text

Therese, already very sick, confides to her sister Celine: 'I still have something to do before I die. I have always dreamed of writing a song to the Holy Virgin that would express all that I think of her.' (*Apostolic Process*, Rome, 268). It is her last poem, like a will. Therese signs it with a failing hand, a humble and moving finale to her entire poetic work.

In May 1897, she had begun to realize that her writings, including her poetry, would probably be diffused. She considered her thoughts on Mary to be an integral part of the significant work under preparation, perhaps the crowning achievement. Therese will give here the reasons for her filial love for Mary. In gathering together here her thoughts on the Virgin, she is not giving a list of ideas, but the fruit of her meditation and of her personal relationship with the Virgin Mary.

The request that Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart makes of her along the same lines therefore anticipates an extremely deep desire of Therese herself. Sister Genevieve was right to note that Therese composed this swan-song 'by herself, in every sense of the word'.

It is in prayer that this long poem should be received. It is a sort of liturgical hymn of 200 alexandrines, composed during the month of May, 1997 (4 months before her death).

With regard to the Virgin Mary, the only thing that concerns her is her real life, rather than her life as imagined! She instinctively turns to the Gospels, her only source of inspiration from then on.

Her heart-based understanding had been refined in recent months in a thousand ways, but especially in two areas: the mystery of suffering, under the mill-wheel of trial; and the extent of the requirements of charity, resulting in special lights. The whole being wrapped in silence.

Her eyes fixed on Mary, Therese made silence the great rampart of her whole contemplative life. It was stronger than ever in the night of faith.

In the last stanza, number 25, we can see hope being pointed to in the heart of her great suffering. We see all the themes of her filial love resumed in the single: 'She is my Mother!' On 8th July, 1897, on transferring downstairs to the infirmary, Therese finds the Virgin of the Smile there to welcome her. An hour before her death on 30th September, she gazed at her for a long time.

For community discussion:

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. This last poem of Therese (May, 1897) is also one of the longest. It was difficult to select just a few parts. After reading it, and after a time of prayer with the Virgin Mary and Therese, what is the principal tenor of the relationship between Therese and the Virgin Mary?
2. 'The mother's treasure belongs to the child': is it in this spirit that we experience our relationship with the Virgin Mary? What above all depends on us in our relationship with the Virgin Mary?
3. How should we live out our trials, our sufferings, our wounds with Mary? What is the principal acceptance that is nourished by our relationship with Mary?
4. 'The Holy Virgin . . . Ah! What could I tell you? She's my Mother!!!' (RP, 8, 5). 'How could I be afraid of someone that I love so much?' (CJ, 7.7.1). We could share with each other on the place held by the Virgin Mary at the heart of our daily life.