

# A Week with St. Therese: Prayer soars beyond place and time

Anna Rae-Kelly, OCDS



## DAY 2:

Carmelites have been described as "the navy seals of the Church". They've also been likened to a nuclear power house of prayer and through the hidden and sacrificial power of these prayers, when united to Christ's Passion and passed to God through the tender hands of Our Lady, miracles happen...spirits are uplifted, lives are changed, illnesses are healed, food is placed on empty and hungry tables, schools are built in far-off lands, souls of life-long sinners are grasped for God because sacrificial prayer soars beyond place and time.

This is the vocation of a Carmelite, the vocation of St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.

"Our mission as Carmelites is to form evangelical workers who will save thousands of souls". (St. Therese)

This too is the mission of all those called by God to be holy, as our Heavenly Father is Holy.

"God always prepares a soul to whom He wants to confide a great mission. Each one of us has been and will remain chosen by God. He has given us a special mission to be the saviors of the world". (Pere Jacques)

Like St. Therese, as Carmelites, as all people who yearn for God, we walk humbly behind our Queen of Carmel, Mary, the Mother of God and as we gaze at our Holy Mother, her Carmelite Heart begins to come into focus. In Our Mother, we recognize the shadows of those who would follow her and become giants of our Carmelite ancestry.....Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross, Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Pere Marie-Eugene, Pere Jacques, To allow a higher definition of the virtues of Our Lady lived by each of these Carmelites in the Carmelite vocation and by all whom God calls to holiness, we now turn our gaze totally to our Immaculate Queen of Carmel, the Virgin Mary, the one who teaches us again and again that "in order to find the fullness of God, we must hold on to nothing, absolutely nothing. Our fingers and hands must be free. God alone dwelled in the depths of her soul. A stupendous surge of supernatural grace swelled within her and made her worthy to be the mother of the Word made flesh" (Pere Jacques)

We are guided by reflections from the Carmelite heart of St. Therese into the Carmelite heart of the "WOMAN" (John 19 ) who was filled with self-emptiness...

"Love consumes us only in the measure of our self-emptiness" (St. Therese)

Where do we find Our Mother filled with self-emptiness?

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Therese tells us, "To remain a child before God means to recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God".

Where can we hear such words from our Queen of Carmel?

Therese continues to reveal the Carmelite vocation, a soul's call to holiness, when she teaches us that "holiness consists simply in doing God's Will and being just what God wants us to be... abandonment alone brings me into your arms, O Jesus".

When is Our Lady our model in following the Will of God and being totally abandoned to that Will?

We seek and find all of our answers to all of our questions in Sacred Scripture.

At the Annunciation, we hear the Angelic salutation,

"HAIL, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE". (Luke 1:28)

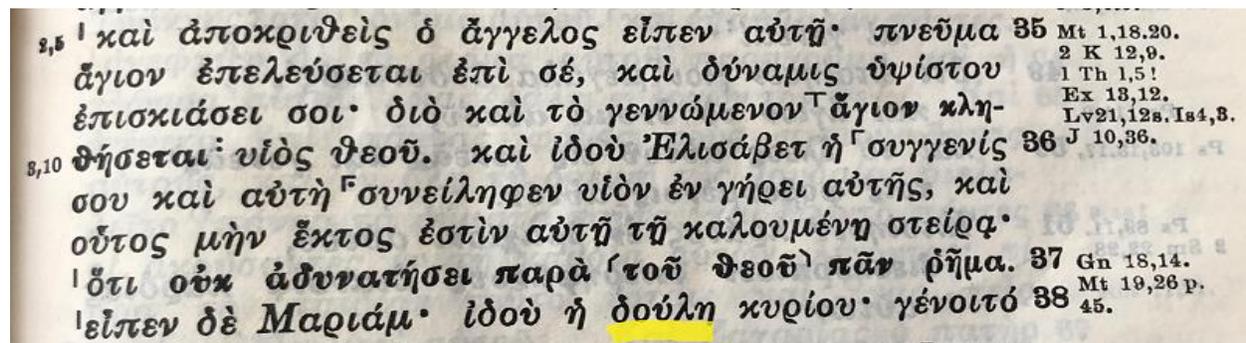
We meditate on this transformative moment in salvation history and we wonder in awe why the Heavenly Messenger did not address our Mother by her name.

We ponder on why in the entire Gospel of John, there is no mention of the name, "Mary". She is identified as "Mother of the Lord", (John 2:1-12) and as "Woman". (John 19:25-27)

Then suddenly Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, the Ark of the Covenant, the Gate of Heaven, directs our understanding in her choice of just one word in her reply to the Archangel Gabriel...

## δούλη (doulé)

"I AM THE HANDMAID (δούλη) OF THE LORD" (Luke 1:3)



The biblical meaning of δούλη at that time, and the word used by our Mother to describe her relationship with God, was "**bondslave**". A bondslave was one who had

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no identity of their own, one who had no will except the will of the one who owned them, no decision rights, totally dependent on their lord for even their life.

**AND MARY WAS TELLING ALL OF HEAVEN AND ALL OF HUMANITY FOR ALL TIME THAT SHE WAS THE WILLING BONDSLAVE OF THE LORD.**

She had to be filled with self-emptiness, fully cognizant of her nothingness, totally abandoned into the Will of the One Who owned her... **THE LORD, GOD.**

St. Therese embraced self-emptiness, total abandonment to God's Will, seeking a nothingness that would allow her to live her words...

"In the evening of life I shall appear before you WITH EMPTY HANDS". (St. Therese)

St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face was schooled in the vocation of Carmel by our Queen of Carmel herself.

"FOR A LONG TIME NOW I HAVE NOT BELONGED TO MYSELF; I HAVE GIVEN MYSELF ENTIRELY TO JESUS". (ST THERESE)

Our saint echoes the self-emptiness of our Mother at the Annunciation. Therese is declaring herself to be the **δοῦλη** of the Lord.

**What of us? Do we desire to seek such depths of holiness, self-emptiness, abandonment to the Will of God? Our greatly loved saint gives us the "how to...". She outlines for us the very blueprint which took her into the depths of Carmel, of Our Queen, of her Beloved Lord Jesus.**

Therese gave us the doctrine of "THE LITTLE WAY".

SELF-EMPTINESS: "BY HUMILIATION ALONE CAN SAINTS BE MADE" (St. Therese). When someone has wrongly accused us of being responsible of causing hurt to another, Therese teaches us to say nothing in our own defense **AND OUR HUMILIATION, UNITED WITH THE OUR LORD, NAKED ON THE CROSS, WINS THE SOULS OF LIFE-LONG SINNERS TO BE GRASPED BACK FOR GOD. OUR PRAYER HAS SOARED BEYOND PLACE**

**AND TIME AND WE HAVE BECOME A LITTLE MORE EMPTY OF OUR SELVES IN THE SACRIFICE.**

ABANDONMENT: "JESUS DOES NOT DEMAND GREAT ACTIONS FROM US, BUT SIMPLY SURRENDER AND GRATITUDE" (St. Therese) We may have been waiting for a particular letter concerning a financial matter with great anxiety and when it finally arrives, we leave it, unopened, for at least an hour, abandoning all it contains along with all the anxiety and fear at the foot of the Cross of the Savior **AND SCHOOLS ARE BUILT IN FAR OFF LANDS AND OUR WILL IS MADE SUBJECT TO GOD'S WILL.**

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**ONCE AGAIN, OUR PRAYER HAS SOARED BEYOND PLACE AND TIME AND OUR SMALL ACT OF ABANDONMENT HAS BROKEN OUR WILL AND SUBMITTED ANOTHER PART OF IT TO THE LORD.**

OUR SOULS ARE BEING RE-FORMED FOR GOD INTO THE **δούλη** OF MARY, AND THE **δούλος** Who was Christ and Who proclaimed:

"For I have come down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the Will of Him who sent Me". (John 6:28)