

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

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## DAY 3:

On June 14, all those years ago this week, Therese Martin went into retreat to prepare for the descent of the Holy Spirit into her soul in the "Sacrament of love" (St. Therese), the Sacrament of Confirmation. She "awaited with joy the coming of the Holy Ghost", when her forehead would be "marked forever with the mystic cross drawn there by the bishop as he administers this Sacrament". (St. Therese)

She relates that she "felt no rushing wind when the Holy Ghost descended" but "on that day I acquired the strength to suffer. The martyrdom of my soul was soon to start". (St. Therese)

Who is this HOLY GHOST, this HOLY SPIRIT? What is His power as the Third Person of the Sacred Trinity? How do we address Him, pray to Him, the One Who has no name other than "RUAH" , the One Who "brooded mysteriously over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2) when the earth was waste and void?

If on that day of her Confirmation Therese "acquired the strength to suffer and the martyrdom of her soul" had begun, we turn our minds and our hearts over now to Him and we seek His Wisdom because "within the Trinity, all works of love are attributed to the Holy Spirit". (Pere Jacques) The Holy Spirit is the "breath of God", and He "sows the seeds of life, and life is a work of love..... Within the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the living, limitless prayer of God, the Love that unites the Father and the Son". (Pere Jacques)

This is the Force of supernatural Love Who endlessly breathes into our soul and gives us life. When we give Him permission to draw our souls ever deeper into the Heart of the Trinity, we are also giving Him permission to hollow out our fallen nature through purification. His mystical scalpel cuts with deep precision.

**"The Fire that purifies is an intelligent Fire. It regulates the violence of its Flame according to the effect it wants to produce". (Pere Marie-Eugene).**

And the silent rush of the Flame of God immediately set to work in Therese at her Confirmation just as He did and does still in our souls. Perhaps we did not and do not permit Him the same access but His tools for our soul's refinement are the same as those experienced by Therese on her way into perfection and the depth of union with God that He desires of each soul. "The purification of the Spirit is not a surgical feat done in a clinic ....the Divine Wisdom does not place in a hothouse all the souls it wills to purify....the action of Wisdom is ordinarily merged with daily life and hidden under the veil of most ordinary events". (Pere Marie-Eugene)

At all times, Divine Wisdom will not act in our souls without our co-operation. And He was given full access to enter into the yearning soul of St. Therese. In her profound desire to enter Carmel, Therese obediently waited for a letter of permission from the

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Bishop and her obedience was grasped by the Ruah of God and in His Wisdom, He delayed the reply. "Under the veil of a most ordinary event", He stretched her soul almost to breaking point. She felt that Jesus was leaving "His little ball lying on the ground and never even gave it a glance" Therese's Carmelite faith was being formed into a patience that "doubles the value" of prayer and merits to win the souls of others for God. In times of trial, we often ask God for the pain, sorrow to end, to tell Him that we're not a great saint.

At such times of purification, we remember the teaching of Pere Marie-Eugene...we are being re-shaped by an Intelligent Flame and when we say our FIAT to the trials, the prize might be the soul of a great, great grandchild or hurting nephew. In danger of being lost to God. Would the grace in this hope encourage me to allow the Divine Fire to continue to burn, full flame, within my soul? Can we take Therese as our model again and long "to be re-born under the painful assailing of the Flame that wonderfully tortures it...because God, Who is all perfection, wars against all the imperfect habits of the soul....and the Flame of the Spirit is leading the combat...and the Flame is God". (Pere Marie-Eugene)

Ever docile to the actions of the Flame of Divine Wisdom, Therese found herself struggling with human passions when one day, she was sent to weed the garden. On her way, she met with Mother Marie of Gonzaga who charged her with, "This child does absolutely nothing! What kind of a novice is one that has to be sent for a stroll every day?" Therese recognized the treasures in such misunderstandings, embracing them as opportunities for growth in virtues, and to allow the Flame to purify her into total self-emptiness: "...in order for love to be fully satisfied it must descend to nothingness and transform that nothingness to living fire". (St. Therese)

We may often ask of ourselves, when I have nothing to give Him, can I give Him my nothing. Like St. Therese, have I been given the grace to be "zealous for the better gifts" (St. John of the Cross)

We recognize in St. Therese the incisive actions of the Holy Flame of Love, utilizing all small events and meetings and incidents as His tools.

His gifts "are like supernatural powers, grafted onto the soul. They enable the soul to soar up, to meet and to savor God...stirring up movements of grace such as a generous impulse to accept something disagreeable, like a nasty comment". (Pere Jacques)

This Breath of God breathed into Therese on her Confirmation day, the "martyrdom" of her soul began and her mission was underway, to love.....her desire was that "the Good God would grind down every single particle of her being until she became His wheat" (Hans Urs Von Balthasar) so that she could say with intensity:

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“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 ". (St. Therese)