



TERESIAN
ANNIVERSARIES
2023-2025

**Reading the writings of Therese of the Child Jesus
Theresian anniversaries 2023-2025
2023: Manuscript A**



Initial Schedule:
Presentation

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In 2023 we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Therese of the Child Jesus (January 2nd, 1873), as well as the first centenary of her beatification (April 29, 1923) and, in 2025, the first centenary of her canonization (May 17, 1925). For this occasion, the General Chapter of the Discalced Carmelites, celebrated in Rome from the 30th of August to the 14th of September 2021, decided to propose to the Order a cycle of reading the writings of Saint Therese.

To make this decision a reality, the General Definitory has therefore prepared, in collaboration with the Paris Province, a program of reading and reflection on the Autobiographical Manuscripts and other writings of Therese. This will preferably be done in the context of a Community dialogue. The distribution is as follows:

- Year 2023 : Manuscript A
- Year 2024 : Manuscripts B and C
- Year 2025 : Prayers and other writings.

Each year, 8 selected texts will be proposed. They will be accompanied by a brief comment and some questions aimed at stimulating reflection and dialogue. The main objective is to make us aware of the relevance of the experience and message of Therese of the Child Jesus for us today.

It would be good if the community meeting were preceded by the reading and personal meditation on Therese's text. The meeting could take place as follows:

1. Reading of the text.
2. One of the participants, who has already prepared his presentation, introduces the text with the help of the reading schedule (and other supports, if necessary).
3. Community dialogue on the text, along these lines:
 - a. *What does the text say?* Understanding the content and primary meaning of Therese's text.
 - b. *What does the text say to us today?* Grasping the relevance (social, ecclesial, spiritual...) of the text.
 - c. *What does the text say to me/us?* Making relevant and applying the text to personal and community life.

This way of doing things is for the purpose of allowing Therese to speak to us, to question us, to encourage us, and for welcoming her to shed light upon and confirm our personal and communal journey. The questions proposed are therefore only indicative and can possibly accompany personal meditation and community sharing.

For 2023, the texts selected in *Manuscript A* are the following:

1. Singing the mercies of the Lord (Ms A, 2r-4r)
2. The smile of the Virgin (Ms A, 29v-31v)
3. The Christmas grace (Ms A, 44r-45v)
4. Prayer for Pranzini (Ms A, 45v-46v)
5. Her father's sickness and Therese's clothing (Ms A, 71r-73v)
6. On the waves of trust and love (Ms A, 80r-81v)
7. Death of her father and Celine enters Carmel (Ms A, 81v-83v)
8. The Offering to Merciful Love (Ms A, 83v-84v)

(For the texts of Therese, we use the Third Edition of *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, Translated From the Original Manuscripts by John Clarke OCD, Washington: ICS Publications 1997.)

General introduction: The origin of Manuscript A

One winter evening, while the four Martin sisters are gathered in the only heated room of the monastery, Therese recalled some childhood memories. Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart then suggested to Mother Agnes, then Prioress, to ask Therese to write her memoirs. Mother Agnes accepted and commissioned this account for her feast day, January 20, 1896.

In the Lisieux Carmel there were four Martin sisters: first of all the eldest, Marie, who took the religious name of Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart, born in 1860 and entered Carmel in 1886; then there was Pauline, Sister Agnes of Jesus, born in 1861, entered Carmel in 1882 and prioress for the first time in 1893; there was also Celine, Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face, born in 1869, entered Carmel after the death of her father in 1894; finally, there was Therese: Sister Therese of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, born on January the 2nd, 1873, in Alençon, entered Carmel at the age of 15 on the 9th of April, 1888. To these would be added a cousin: Marie Guérin, Sister Mary of the Eucharist, born in 1870 and entered Carmel in 1895. Therese was her Novice Mistress.

Therese, after having feared that writing her memoirs would distract her heart by too much concentration on herself, came to understand that this could be a providential invitation to “sing the mercies of the Lord”. At this time she was only twenty-two years old, but after seven years of life spent in Carmel she could already measure with wonder the whole journey travelled. In this same year 1895, this feeling of overflowing gratitude

led her to offer herself entirely to Merciful Love (June 9, 1895). Therese thus filled a small black notebook of 85 sheets, written on both sides (for the texts you will read we have Ms for Manuscript, then the name of the manuscript – A, B or C – and finally the corresponding page with the indication of r[ecto]/front or v[erso]/back), in which she narrates not so much the family memories that her sister had suggested to her, but the “mercies of the Lord” towards her.

On January 20, 1896, Teresa silently placed her first manuscript before her Prioress. This happened in the choir, before the hour of silent prayer began. Therese never solicited any impression on this work; for her part, Mother Agnes would no longer speak about it.

Manuscript A is Therese’s long thanksgiving for her childhood and youth, in the family and at Carmel. She completed it as she was entering her full spiritual maturity.



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