

TO GLORIFY GOD'S MERCY

Lent 2022 - Experiencing Divine Mercy with the Saints of Carmel

(Mt 6:1-18)

He began to speak, and taught [his disciples] saying, : « Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. (...) And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. »

Carmel and Mercy



Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897) once confided to one of the novices of the Carmelite monastery in

Lisieux: « ***we are not saints who weep over our sins; we rejoice in the fact that they help to glorify God's mercy.*** » (Conseils et Souvenirs of Marie of the Trinity, no. 40). She also exclaimed

in the last paragraph of her autobiography, a few months before she entered into eternal life on September 30, 1897: « *Dear Mother, now I would like to tell you what I understand by the odor of the ointments of the Beloved. Since Jesus has reascended into heaven, I can follow Him only in the traces He has left; but how luminous these traces are! how perfumed! I have only to cast a glance in the Gospels and immediately I breathe in the perfumes of Jesus' life, and I know on which side to run. I don't hasten to the first place but to the last;*



*rather than advance like the Pharisee, I repeat, filled with confidence, the publican's humble prayer. Most of all I imitate the conduct of Magdalene; her astonishing or rather her loving audacity which charms the Heart of Jesus also attracts my own. Yes, I feel it; **even though I had on my conscience all the sins that can be committed, I would go, my heart broken with sorrow, and throw myself into Jesus' arms, for I know how much He loves the prodigal child who returns to Him. It is not because God, in His anticipating Mercy, has preserved my soul from mortal sin that I go to Him with confidence and love.** »*
(Ms C 36v–37r)

Thérèse is of course recognized in the Church as the saint of Mercy.

She expresses it herself by saying: “*To me, He has granted His infinite Mercy.*” (Ms A 83v) Her mission has consisted for decades in making us know and love Mercy, so that we surrender ourselves to it more and more in the depths of our heart, in all circumstances of our daily life. In living this way, surrendering ourselves to the Mercy of God, we receive the grace of an open heart so that, through us, Jesus can reach our brothers and sisters.

Many other Carmelite figures also have testified to the power of Divine Mercy in their lives. During this Lenten retreat, we will listen to the testimony of six of them: St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, and St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, of course, but also St. Elizabeth of the Trinity and a saint who is less familiar to us: the little saint from Chile, Teresa of the Andes.

Listening to the Gospel of Saint Luke

In order to listen to these witnesses of Mercy, we will open our hearts to Sacred Scripture by meditating on the gospel texts proposed each Sunday during Lent. This year, it is through **the testimony of the painter of Mercy** par excellence, the evangelist Saint Luke, that we will be able to ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts more to the experience of Mercy.

For Luke, **the heart of Jesus is above all a heart of Mercy**. From his first chapter, Luke presents the manifestation of the Lord's mercy (1:58), a mercy that extends from age to age (1:50). Luke returns to this mercy five times in the first chapter—you are invited to read it again, stopping at verses 50, 54, 58, 72 and 78. One expression is very characteristic of Luke: literally, **the tender mercies of our God**. It occurs several times in the course of his gospel: in the song of Zechariah (1:72), with the widow of Nain (7:13), with the Good Samaritan (10:33), and of course at the heart of the parable of the Prodigal Son, or rather, of the merciful Father (15:20). The accounts of five miracles that are only found in the gospel of Luke are described by him much more as gestures of mercy than as manifestations of power. If you wish, you can look up these five miracles where Luke the artist paints for us images of tenderness: 7:11-17; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 17:12-19, and 22:50-51 during the Passion.

Of course, all the evangelists testify to God's mercy, but Luke insists on it particularly, as in 19:10: *“For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”* The verb *“to seek”* is unique to

Luke. Luke also relates four encounters between Jesus and sinners that are found only in his gospel: those with the sinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50); with Zacchaeus (19:1-10); in favor of his executioners (23:34); and above all, the final encounter with the good thief: “*today you will be with me in Paradise*” (23:43). Finally, at the heart of his gospel are three of Luke’s 42 parables in which **God’s joy in saving us is expressed** (Lk 15). We will come back to them during this Lenten season.

Entering into Prayer

Of course, on the first day of Lent we suggest that you enter into prayer as Christ invites us to do: « *But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* » (Mt 6:6)

What will our Father in Heaven give us, if not a more profound taste of His mercy offered to us in His Son Jesus? If we wish to experience what our Father wants to give us, **let us first ask him to awaken our deepest desire**, for, as Thérèse expressed it so well in her Offering to Mercy, « *the more you want to give, the more you make us desire.* » You can thus pray with the words of the Holy Father St. John Paul II when he dedicated the Basilica Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Krakow, Poland, on August 17, 2002:

God, merciful Father,
in your Son, Jesus Christ, you
have revealed your love
and poured it out upon us in the
Holy Spirit, the Comforter,
We entrust to you today the destiny
of the world and of every man
and woman.
Bend down to us sinners,

heal our weakness,
conquer all evil,
and grant that all the peoples of the
earth
may experience your mercy.

In You, the Triune God,
may they ever find
the source of hope.

Eternal Father,
by the Passion and Resurrection of
your Son,
have mercy on us
and upon the whole world!
Amen.

We can also pray with Thérèse, every day or every week of this Lent, the finale of her Offering to Merciful Love, into which we will delve deeper during Week 4:



In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I offer myself as a victim of holocaust to your merciful love, asking you to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of infinite tenderness shut up within you to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a Martyr of your Love, O my God! (...) May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear before you, finally cause me to die and may my soul take its flight without any delay into the eternal embrace of Your Merciful Love... I want, O my Beloved, at each beat of my heart to renew this offering to you an infinite number of times, until the shadows having disappeared I may be able to tell you of my Love in an Eternal Face to Face!...



The Lenten Program

THE FORMAT OF THE RETREAT

Throughout the weeks of Lent, Saint Luke and the Carmelite saints will introduce us to the mystery of Divine Mercy in preparation for the great Easter feast:

- 1st week: Never without the Holy Spirit! - with Teresa of Avila
- 2nd week: Drawn to prayer - with John of the Cross
- 3rd week: "Let's get started!" - with Lawrence of the Resurrection
- 4th week: Dare to be empty-handed - with Thérèse of Lisieux
- 5th week: "He has loved me exceedingly" - with Elizabeth of the Trinity
- Holy Week: Wait and watch - with Teresa of the Andes
- Easter: "Celebrating Divine Mercy"

PRACTICAL DETAILS

Each Friday of Lent, you will receive an e-mail with a 6-page document to download, or a podcast to listen to, comprised of:

- a meditation on the Sunday Gospel
- the discovery of a Carmelite figure inviting us to experience Mercy
- illustrated quotations and prayer starters to live each day with Scripture and the Carmelite saints

Have a good start to Lent !

fr. Denis-Marie Ghesquières (Paris convent)



Pray each day of the week with Edith Stein



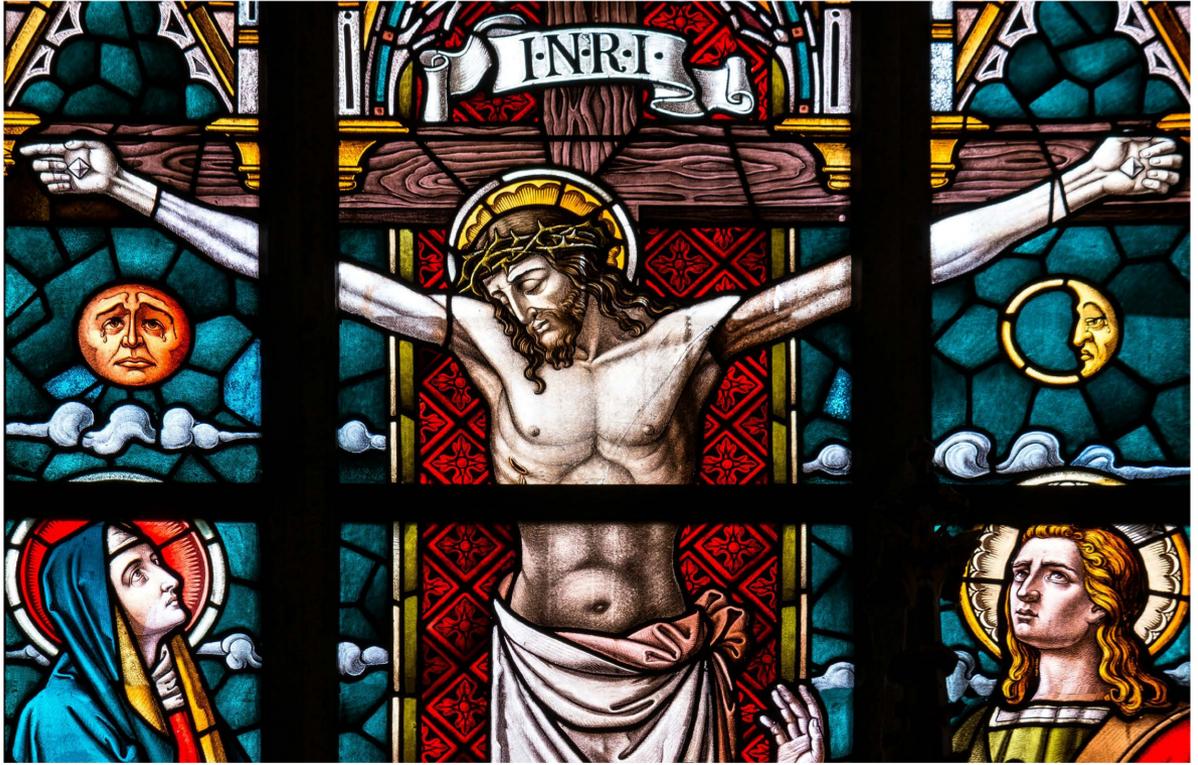
Thursday, March 3: to choose life

« ...those who lose their life for my sake will save it » (Lk 9:24)

« The soul is replenished by nature in so many ways that one thing always replaces another. (...) My first morning's hour belongs to the Lord. I will tackle the day's work which He charges me with, and He will give me the power to accomplish it. »

(Edith Stein, *Essays on Woman*, January 12, 1932)

I choose to take time every day to live this Lent with the Lord.



Friday, March 4: Hail Cross!

« The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit. (Ps 51)

« Look at the Crucified. If you are bound to Him...your being is precious blood. ...You can be at all fronts, wherever there is grief, in the power of the cross. Your compassionate love takes you everywhere, this love from the divine heart. »
(E. Stein, *The Hidden Life*, 'Ave Crux')

I turn to the cross of Christ to leave there the intentions that I carry.





Saturday, March 5: to be one with God

« ... if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday »
(Is 58:10)

« For the Christian, there is no stranger. (...) The love of Christ knows no limits. It never ends.... »

(E. Stein, *The Mystery of Christmas*)

Who do I need to become ?