

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**WAY
OF
MERCY**



WAY OF TRUST AND LOVE

Reflection and Prayer for Advent 2023 in the Jubilee Year in Honour of St Therese of Lisieux.

From The Readings

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;
through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth.
Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever,
that your truth is firmly established as the heavens ...
“You are my Father, my God, the rock who saves me.”

Psalm 88/89:1-2,26



In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

Luke 1:26-38

From Pope Francis and Saint Therese of Lisieux

Together with faith, Therese experienced a deep and boundless trust in God's infinite mercy: "confidence that must lead us to Love". Even in her darkness, she experienced the complete trust of a child that finds refuge, unafraid, in the embrace of its father and mother. For Therese, the one God is revealed above all else in his mercy, which is the key to understanding everything else that can be said of him ... This is one of the loftiest insights of Therese, one of her major contributions to the entire People of God. In an extraordinary way, she probed the depths of divine mercy, and drew from them the light of her limitless hope.

(Pope Francis, *C'est La Confiance*, 27)

Today my only guide is self-abandonment. That is my only compass. I no longer even know how to beg for anything except that the will of God be perfectly accomplished in my soul.

(Therese of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*)

I thought it better to speak to God than about him. There's often so much self-love in chatter about spiritual things!

(Therese of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*)

Jesus chose to show me the only path that leads to this divine furnace [of God's love]. That path is the abandonment of a little child who sleeps in his Father's arms without any fear.

(Therese of Lisieux, *Way of Trust and Love*, 100, 101)

I understand and I know from experience that "the kingdom of God is within us." Jesus does not need books or learned doctors to instruct souls. He who is the doctor of doctors teaches without any need of words ... I have never heard him speak, but I feel that he is in me, that at every moment he is guiding me, inspiring me with what I should say or do. Just when I need it I discover lights that I had not seen before. It is not usually during my prayer that they are most abundant, but rather amidst my daily occupations. (Therese of Lisieux, *Way of Trust and Love*, 86-87)

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- **What words or phrases stand out for you in these readings and insights of Pope Francis and Saint Therese?**
- **What insights might you take with you on your own journey?**

PRAYER

from the words of Saint Therese

God of Love and Mercy,
help us to accept
that we are imperfect
and in need of your mercy.
May our trust
in your infinite love and mercy,
be deep and boundless.
May trust lead us to greater love. Amen.

*(Adapted from: Pope Francis, C'est La Confiance, 27 and Saint Therese of Lisieux in: Carmelite of Boston:
www.carmelitesofboston.org/prayer)*



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Acknowledgements: Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *C'est La Confiance*, 2023; Phillippe, J. *The Way of Trust and Love*, US: Scepter Publishers Inc, 2012; Therese of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*. Therese of Lisieux, Carmelite of Boston: www.carmelitesofboston.org/prayer/prayers-of-our-carmelite-saints/prayers-of-saint-therese-of-the-child-jesus-and-the-holy-face.

