

# *St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

## The Story of a Soul

- I am going to entrust the story of my soul to you...(19)
- Perfection consists in doing His will, in being that which He wants us to be. (20)
- I have now reached a stage in my life when I can glance back at the past, for my soul has matured in a crucible of inner and external trials. (21)
- But Jesus watched over me. He drew good from my faults, for, checked in good time, they served to make me grow in perfection. (25)
- I realized that to become a saint one must suffer a great deal, always seek what is best, and forget oneself. (26)
- I cried: "My God, I choose all. I do not want to be a saint by halves. I am not afraid to suffer for You. I fear only one thing---that I should keep my own will. So take it, for I choose all that You will." (26)
- I was so timid and easily upset that I didn't know how to look after myself. All I did was to cry and say nothing...I was not strong enough to rise above it all, and so I suffered terribly. (39)
- How can I express the agony I suffered. In a flash I understood what life was. Until then I had not seen it as too sad a business, but now I saw it as it really was---a thing of suffering and continual partings. I cried bitterly, for I knew nothing then of the joy of sacrifice. I was weak, so weak that I thought it a great grace that I could endure a trial which seemed so much beyond my strength. (41)
- My glory would consist in becoming a great saint! This desire might seem presumptuous, seeing how weak and imperfect I was and still am, even after eight years as a nun, yet I always feel the same fearless certainty that I shall become a great saint. I'm not relying on my own merits, as I have none, but I put my hope in Him who is goodness and holiness Himself. It is He alone who, satisfied with my feeble efforts, will raise me to Him, will clothe me with His infinite merits, and will make me a saint. I did not realize then how much one had to suffer to be a saint, but God soon showed me this through those trials I have already written about. (49)
- And I knew that all is fleeting that we cherish here under the sun. The only good thing is to love God with all one's heart and to stay poor in spirit. Perhaps Jesus wished to show me what the world was like, before He paid me His first visit, so that I might choose more willingly the path I should promise Him to follow. (50)
- Oh, how sweet the first kiss of Jesus was! It was a kiss of love. I knew that I was loved and

I declared: "I love You and I give myself to You for ever!" Jesus made no demand on me; He asked for no sacrifices. For a long time Jesus and little Thérèse had gazed at each other and they understood each other. On that day it was no longer a matter of gazing: it was union. There were no longer two of us. Thérèse had disappeared like a drop of water lost in the depth of the ocean. Only Jesus remained---as Master and King. For had not Thérèse begged Him to take away her freedom? Freedom frightened her, for she knew herself to be so weak and feeble that she wished to be united with the divine Power for ever. (52)

- I felt absolutely certain that Jesus had many, many crosses in store for me. My soul was flooded with such consolation that I regard it as one of the greatest graces of my life. I was drawn to suffering. It had about it a charm which delighted me, though I didn't really understand much about this charm, for until then I had suffered without loving suffering. But from that day I felt a deep, true love for it. I also had another longing: to love only God and to find no joy apart from Him. During my Communion I often repeated these words from, The Imitation of Christ: "O God, who art unutterable sweetness, turn to bitterness for me all the comforts of earth!" (54)
- There I remained before the Blessed Sacrament until Daddy came to take me home. There I found my sole comfort: Jesus, my only friend. I could talk only to Him. Talking to other people bored me, even when we spoke about religion. I felt it better to speak to God than about Him. There's often so much self-love involved in chatter about spiritual things! I went back to school only for the Blessed Virgin. sometimes I felt lonely, very lonely, but then peace and courage would come back to me if I repeated the line: "The world's thy ship and not thy home." (58-59)
- When I think of these things, my mind plunges into the infinite and I seem to stand already on the shore of heaven and to be embraced by Jesus. (59)
- I did not deserve the graces heaven showered on me. I had many faults. It's true that I longed to be good, but I had an odd way of going about it. (61)
- My extreme sensitiveness made me quite unendurable...I don't know how I dreamt of entering Carmel while I behaved as childishly as this. It needed God to perform a small miracle to make me grown-up in a second, and this miracle He performed on Christmas Day. Jesus, the Child then only an hour old, flooded the darkness of my soul with torrents of light. By becoming weak and frail for me, He gave me strength and courage. He clothed me with His weapons, and from that blessed night I was unconquerable. I went from victory to victory and began to run as a giant...Jesus wanted to free me from the faults of childhood, He also took away its innocent pleasures. He arranged matters so that Daddy was irritated at seeing my shoes in the fireplace and spoke about them in a way which hurt me very much: "Thank goodness it's the last time we shall have this kind of thing!" I went upstairs to take off my hat. Céline knew how sensitive I was. She said: "Thérèse, don't go downstairs again. Taking the presents out of your shoes will upset you too much." But Thérèse was not the same girl. Jesus had changed her. I suppressed my tears, ran downstairs, and picked up my shoes. I pulled out my presents with an air of great cheerfulness. Daddy laughed and Céline thought she was dreaming! But it was no dream. Thérèse had got back for good the strength of soul which she had lost when she was four and a half. On this glorious night the third period of my life began. It has been the loveliest of them all and the one richest with heavenly graces. Jesus, satisfied with my goodwill,

accomplished in an instant what I had been unable to do in ten years. Like the apostles, we could say: "Master, I have toiled all the night, and caught nothing." Jesus was more merciful to me than to His disciples. He Himself took the net, cast it, and drew it up full of fishes. He made me a fisher of men. I longed to work for the conversion of sinners with a passion I'd never felt before. Love filled my heart, I forgot myself and henceforth I was happy. (62-62)

- It was at the sight of the Precious Blood flowing from the Wounds of Jesus that my thirst for souls had been born. (64)
- I seemed to hear Jesus say to me what He said to the Samaritan Woman: "Give me to drink." It was a real exchange of love: I gave souls the Blood of Jesus and offered Him these purified souls that His thirst might be quenched. The more I gave Him to drink, the more the thirst of my own poor soul increased, and He gave me this burning thirst to show His love for me. In a short time God had lifted me out of the narrow circle in which I'd been going round and round, quite unable to escape from it. When I see the road He has made me tread, I am profoundly grateful, but it was essential that I should be fit for it, and though I'd made the first and greatest step along it, there still remained much for me to do. Now I was rid of my scruples and my excessive sensitiveness, my mind began to develop. All that was great and lovely had always appealed to me, but now I was gripped by an intense desire for learning. (64)
- When I realized how trifling are the sacrifices of this life compared with the rewards of heaven, I wanted to love Jesus, to love Him passionately, and to give Him a thousand tokens of my love whilst I still could. (65)
- Such tremendous graces had to bear fruit and it was abundant. To be good became natural and pleasant for us. At first my face often betrayed the struggle I was having, but gradually spontaneous self-sacrifice came easily. Jesus said: "If ever a man is rich, gifts will be made to him, and his riches will abound." For every grace I made good use of, He gave me many more. (66)
- Yet the divine call was so urgent that, if necessary, I'd have plunged through flames to follow Jesus. (67)
- One evening, not knowing how to tell Jesus how much I loved Him and how much I longed for Him to be served and honoured everywhere, I thought with sadness that not a single act of love ever ascended from the gulfs of hell. I cried that I would gladly be plunged into that realm of blasphemy and pain so that even there He could be loved for ever. Of course that could not glorify Him, for all He wants is our happiness, yet when one's in love one says a thousand silly things. This didn't mean that I did not want to be in heaven, but for me heaven meant love and, in my ardour, I felt that nothing could separate me from Him who had captivated me. (71)
- So we had to return to Lisieux without a favorable reply. I felt my future was finally ruined. The nearer I got to my goal, the more difficulties there were. Yet I felt at peace, for I sought only to do the will of God. (75)
- I realized very clearly that happiness has nothing to do with the material things which

surround us; it dwells in the very depths of the soul. One can be just as happy in a gloomy prison as in a palace. I am much happier in Carmel, even though I suffer spiritual trials and the ordinary inconveniences of life here, than I ever was outside where I wanted for nothing and enjoyed all the comforts of home. (86)

- I resolved to lead a life of greater devoutness and mortification than ever before. When I speak of mortification, I don't mean the kind of penance practiced by the saints. There are great souls who practice every sort of mortification from childhood, but I am not like them. All I did was to break my self-will, check a hasty reply, and do little kindness' without making a fuss about them---and lots of similar things. (89)
- The day chosen for my entry was Monday, April 9, 1888. (89)
- At the solemn examination before my Profession, I stated what I was going to do in Carmel: "I have come to save souls and, above all, to pray for priests." If one wants to achieve one's object, one has to use the right means, and as Jesus had told me He would give me souls through the Cross, I welcomed the Cross and my love of suffering grew steadily. For five years I trod this path, but no one else knew of it. (91)
- I found it easy to believe I merited nothing, for I knew how weak I was and how far I was from perfection. Nothing but gratitude filled my heart. (92)
- I've said that Jesus was my Director. Father Pichon's superiors sent him to Canada almost as soon as he had begun to guide me. I had only one letter a year from him, so I, the Little Flower on the mountain of Carmel, turned at once to the Director of directors and blossomed in the shadow of the Cross. I was watered by His tears and Precious Blood and His adorable Face was my radiant sun. (93)
- Until then I had known nothing of the richness of the treasures of the Holy Face...and I understood more clearly than ever what true glory is. He whose kingdom is not of this world showed me that the only condition worth coveting is "to want to be ignored and regarded as nothing, to find joy in contempt of self. "I wanted my face, like the Face of Jesus, to be, as it were, hidden and unrecognized. I longed to suffer and be forgotten. (93)
- Later, in heaven, we shall enjoy talking of these gloomy days of our exile. For the three years of Father's martyrdom seem to me to have been the sweetest and most fruitful period of our lives. I would not exchange them for the most wonderful ecstasies. In gratitude for the priceless treasure of this suffering my heart cries out: "We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us: for the years in which we have seen evils." O dearest Mother, how sweet and precious this bitter cross was, since we felt nothing but love and gratitude for it. We no longer walked along the way of perfection--we ran, we flew. (97)
- My longing to suffer was granted to the full, yet its attraction for me never lessened and soon my soul shared the trials of my heart. My spiritual dryness increased and I found no comfort in heaven or earth. And yet, in the midst of this flood of grief I had so eagerly called down on myself, I was as happy as could be. (97)
- One day, as I was praying, I realized that my eager desire to make my vows was mixed with a lot of self-love. As I was the little plaything of Jesus, there to console and amuse

Him, I had no business pressing Him to do my will instead of His. (97)

- At the start of my spiritual life, when I was thirteen or fourteen, I used to wonder what more I could ever learn about spiritual perfection. I thought it impossible to understand better. But I soon came to know that the farther one travels along that road, the farther away the goal seems to get. Nowadays I'm resigned to seeing myself in a permanent state of imperfection and I even delight in it. (98)
- Above all, I tried to do my small good deeds in secret. I loved folding up the mantles forgotten by the sisters and seized every possible opportunity of helping them. I was also attracted towards penance, but I was not allowed to satisfy my longing. The only mortification granted me was to master my self-love, and that did me far more good than any bodily penance. (99)
- Now I'll tell you of the retreat before my Profession. I was far from getting any consolation from it. Instead, I suffered complete spiritual dryness, almost as if I were quite forsaken. As usual, Jesus slept in my little boat. I know that other souls rarely let Him sleep peacefully, and He is so wearied by the advances He is always making that He hastens to take advantage of the rest I offer Him. (99)
- During three long weeks of trial I was able to have the tremendous consolation of daily Holy Communion. How sweet it was! Jesus spoilt me for a long time, much longer than He did His more faithful brides, for, after the influenza had gone, He came to me daily for several more months and the rest of the community didn't share this joy. I had not asked for any special treatment, but I was most happy to be united each day with my Beloved. I was also allowed to handle the sacred vessels and to prepare the altar linen which was to receive Jesus. I felt that I must be very fervent and I often recalled the words addressed to a deacon: "Be holy, you who carry the vessels of the Lord." (106)
- So you see, darling Mother, that the path I tread is far from the way of fear. I always know how to be happy in spite of my failings and to profit from them. Our Lord Himself encourages me along this path. (106)
- I saw that He alone was unchanging and that He alone could satisfy the immensity of my desires. (107)
- Now I wish for only one thing---to love Jesus even unto folly! Love alone attracts me. I no longer wish for either suffering or death and yet both are precious to me. For a long time I've hailed them as messengers of joy. I've already known suffering and I've thought I was approaching the eternal shore. From my earliest days I have believed that the Little Flower would be plucked in the springtime of her life. But today my only guide is self-abandonment. I have no other compass. I no longer know how to ask passionately for anything except that the will of God shall be perfectly accomplished in my soul. I can repeat these words of our Father, St. John of the Cross: "I drank deep within the hidden cellar of my Beloved and, when I came forth again, I remembered nothing of the flock I used to look after. My soul is content to serve Him with all its strength. I've finished all other work except that of love. In that is all my delight." (109)
- I thank you for not having spared me. Jesus knew very well that His little flower needed the

life-giving water of humiliation. She was not strong enough to take root without it, and she owes that priceless favour to you. (112)

- This sun never withers the Little Flower. It makes her grow wonderfully. Deep within her petals she treasures the precious drops of dew she received in days gone by. They always remind her how small and weak she is. Everyone can stoop down over her, admire her, and shower flattery on her, but it won't give her a scrap of that foolish self-satisfaction which would spoil the real happiness she has in knowing that is nothing but a poor little nonentity in God's eyes. When I say that all praise leaves me unmoved, I'm not thinking of the love and confidence you show me. I'm very moved by it, but I feel that I now need have no fear of praise and that I can accept it calmly. For I attribute to God all the goodness with which He has endowed me. It is nothing to do with me if it pleases Him to make me seem better than I am. He is free to do what He wants. (113)
- You know, Mother, that I have always wanted to become a saint. Unfortunately when I have compared myself with the saints, I have always found that there is the same difference between the saints and me as there is between a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds and a humble grain of sand trodden underfoot by passers-by. Instead of being discouraged, I told myself: God would not make me wish for something impossible and so, in spite of my littleness, I can aim at being a saint. It is impossible for me to grow bigger, so I put up with myself as I am, with all my countless faults. But I will look for some means of going to heaven by a little way which is very short and very straight, a little way that is quite new. We live in an age of inventions. We need no longer climb laboriously up flights of stairs; in well-to-do houses there are lifts. And I was determined to find a lift to carry me to Jesus, for I was far too small to climb the steep stairs of perfection. So I sought in Holy Scriptures some idea of what this lift I wanted would be, and I read these words from the very mouth of eternal Wisdom: "Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me." I drew nearer to God, fully realizing that I had found what I was looking for. I also wanted to know how God would deal with a "little one," so I continued my search and found this: "You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees; as one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you." Never before had I been gladdened by such sweet and tender words. It is Your arms, Jesus, which are the lift to carry me to heaven. And so there is no need for me to grow up. In fact, just the opposite: I must stay little and become less and less. O God, You have gone beyond anything I hoped for and I will sing of Your mercies: "Thou hast taught me, O Lord, from my youth, and till now I have declared Thy wonderful works and shall do so unto old age and gray hairs."
- (113-114)
- Most people judge God's power by their own limited understanding. (115)
- I began to consider just how Jesus had loved His disciples. I saw it was not for their natural qualities, for I recognized they were ignorant men and often preoccupied with earthly affairs. Yet He calls them His friends and brethren. He wants to see them near Him in the kingdom of His Father and to open this kingdom to them He wills to die on the Cross, saying: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." As I meditated on these words of Jesus, I saw how imperfect was my love for the other nuns and I knew that I did not love them as Jesus loves them. But now I realize that true charity consists in putting up with all one's neighbor's faults, never being surprised by his weakness, and being inspired by the least of his virtues. Above all, I learnt that charity is not

something that stays shut up in one's heart for "no man lighteth a candle and putteth it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel; but upon a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light." This candle represents that charity which must illumine and cheer not only those dearest to me but "All those who are of the household." (122)

- When I act and think with charity, I feel it is Jesus who works within me. The closer I am united with Him, the more I love all the other dwellers in Carmel. If I want this love to grow deeper and the devil tries to show me the faults of a sister, I hasten to think of all her virtues and of how good her intentions are. I tell myself that though I have seen her commit a sin, she may very well have won many spiritual victories of which I know nothing because of her humility. What seems a fault to me may very well be an act of virtue because of the intention behind it. (123)
- Since any small good deed I do can be mistaken for a fault, the mistake of calling a fault a virtue can be made just as easily. Then I say with St. Paul: "To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day. But neither do I judge myself. He that judgeth me is the Lord." As it is Jesus who judges me, and as He said: "Judge not and you shall not be judged," I want always to have charitable thoughts so that He will judge me favorably---or, rather, not judge me at all...In Carmel, of course, one has no enemies, but one certainly has natural likes and dislikes. One feels attracted to a certain sister and one would go out of one's way to dodge meeting another. Jesus tells me that it is this very sister I must love, and I must pray for her even though her attitude makes me believe she has no love for me. "If you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? For sinners also love those that love them." It is not enough to love. We must prove that we do. We naturally like to please a friend, but that is not charity, for so do sinners. (123-124)
- I am, I confess, far from practicing what I know I should, yet the mere desire I have to do so gives me peace. If it happens that I fall and commit a fault against charity, I rise again at once. For some months I have no longer even had to struggle. I can say with our Father St. John of the Cross: "My house is entirely at peace," and I attribute this deep peace to a certain battle which I won. Ever since this victory the hosts of heaven come to my aid, for they cannot bear to see me wounded after I fought so valiantly...(126) (NB: goes on to describe the experience of the sister who was repugnant to her, whom she won the affection of, through her "real charity")
- Alas! When I remember my days as a novice, I see how imperfect I was. I laugh now at some of the things I did. How good God is to have lifted up my soul and given it wings! All the nets of the hunters cannot frighten me, for "a net is set in vain before the eyes of them that have wings." In the days to come it may be that my present state will seem most imperfect, but I am no longer surprised by anything and I feel no distress at seeing my complete helplessness. On the contrary, I glory in it and every day I expect to discover fresh flaws in myself. In fact, this revelation of my nothingness does me much more good than being enlightened on matters of faith. I remember that "charity covereth a multitude of sins" and I draw from the rich mine opened by the Lord in the Gospels. I ransack the depths of His adorable words and I cry with David: "I have run the way of Thy commandments when Thou didst enlarge my heart." Charity alone can enlarge my heart...O Jesus, ever since its gentle flame has consumed my heart, I have run with delight along the way of Your "new commandment" and I want to continue until that blessed day when, with Your company of virgins, I shall follow You through infinite realms singing your new canticle---the canticle of

LOVE. (128-129)

- Yet our own thoughts, our own ardent ideas and feelings seem like a treasure which really belongs to us and which no one has a right to touch. For instance, if I tell a sister about some enlightenment that came to me in prayer and if she later discloses it as if it were hers, I'm inclined to think she has stolen my property. Or if during recreation one whispers something amusing to her neighbor, and she repeats it aloud without saying where it came from, well, that strikes its author as a theft. She may say nothing of it at the time although she would like to, but at the first opportunity she will delicately let it be known that her ideas have been stolen. I could not explain these pathetic human failings so well, Mother, if I had not suffered from them myself. I should like to have believed that I alone suffered from them, but I learned a great deal by listening to the temptations which beset the novices. In performing this task you gave me, I was forced to practice what I preached. Now I can say that I am no more attached to my own ideas or feelings than I am to material possessions. If I think something and speak about it and the other sisters like the idea, I find it quite natural that they grab it as if it belonged to them, for such a thought is the Holy Ghost's, not mine. St. Paul insists that "without the Spirit of love we cannot call God our Father." So this Spirit is at liberty to make use of me to transmit a worthwhile thought to someone else, and I have no right to consider that such a thought belongs exclusively to me. Besides, although I do not despise those fine thoughts which draw us nearer to God, I have realized for a long time that we must be very careful not to rely too much on them. The noblest inspirations are worthless without good works. It is true that some people can benefit greatly from such inspirations if they are humbly grateful to God for letting them share in the banquet of a privileged soul. But if that privileged soul takes pride in her spiritual wealth and prays like the Pharisee, she is like someone dying with hunger in front of a table heaped with food, whilst her guests tuck in and perhaps glance with envy at the owner of so much. How true it is that God alone knows the secrets of our hearts! We ourselves are so shortsighted. When we meet someone with a deeper spiritual insight, we think God cares more for them than for us. Yet surely God has the right to make use of one of His creatures to give His other children the food they need. He had this right in the days of Pharaoh, for, in Holy Scripture, He told him: "And therefore have I raised thee, that I may show My power in thee, and My name may be spoken of throughout all the earth." Centuries have passed since He uttered these words and His ways have not changed: He has always used human beings to accomplish His work among souls. (129-130)
- I remember that when I was a postulant I sometimes longed to seek my own satisfaction and enjoy a little pleasure. This longing was so strong that I was forced to hurry past your cell and to clutch the balustrade to prevent myself turning back. A thousand excuses for seeing you came into my head so that I could justify my natural impulses---excuses like asking your permission for various things. How glad I am now that I crushed such impulses right from the start of my religious life! I am already enjoying the reward promised to those who fight bravely. No longer do I feel that I must refuse to let my heart have any comfort, for my heart is centered on God....Because it has loved only Him, it has gradually developed until it can manifest to those dear to Him a tenderness incomparably deeper than if it had spent itself in selfish, barren love. (132)
- The moment I began to deal with souls I realized instantly that the task was beyond my strength. I put myself quickly in the arms of God and behaved like babies who when frightened bury their heads on their fathers' shoulders. I said: "Lord, You see that I am too



little to feed Your children. Put food into my hand if it is through me that You want to give each of them what is good for her. Without leaving Your arms and without even turning my head, I will distribute Your treasure to all the souls who come to ask me for food. When they like it, I shall know it is You they must thank, but if they complain that what I give them is bitter, I shall not be disturbed and shall try to persuade them that the food comes from You. And I shall take good care that it is all they get." My task was simplified as soon as I realized I could do nothing by myself. Spiritually I bothered about nothing except uniting myself more and more closely to God. My trust has never been let down. (132-133)

- I was going to say unhappily for me, but that would be cowardly, so I will say, instead, happily for my sisters, ever since I placed myself in the arms of Jesus, I have been like the watchman keeping an eye on the enemy from the highest turret of a strong fort. Nothing escapes my gaze and I am often astonished to be able to see so clearly. (133)
- ...I take good care not to bring her back to what she was saying, for one does no good by self-seeking. (134)
- I have said that I learned a lot by teaching others. I discovered that every soul has almost the same difficulties and that there is yet a vast difference between individual souls---a difference which means that each one must be dealt with differently. There are some with whom I must make myself small and show myself willing to be humiliated by confessing my own struggles and defeats, for then they themselves easily confess their own faults and are pleased that I understand them through my own experience. To be successful with others, firmness is necessary. I must never go back on what I have said, and to humiliate myself would be regarded as weakness. (134-135)
- So then I prayed, invoked the Blessed Virgin, and---as always---Jesus was victorious. All my strength lies in prayer and sacrifice. They are my invincible weapons, and I know, by experience, that they can soften the heart much better than words. (135)
- The power of prayer is really tremendous. It makes one like a queen who can approach the king at any time and get whatever she asks for...I tell God very simply what I want and He always understands. For me, prayer is an upward leap of the heart, an untroubled glance towards heaven, a cry of gratitude and love which I utter from the depths of sorrow as well as from the heights of joy. It has a supernatural grandeur which expands the soul and unites it with God. I say an Our Father or a Hail Mary when I feel so spiritually barren that I cannot summon up a single worthwhile thought. These two prayers fill me with rapture and feed and satisfy my soul. (136)
- I cannot say that Jesus gives me any outward, visible humiliations. He is content to humiliate me in the depths of my soul. I am apparently a complete success. I walk along the dangerous road of honours---if I can use such a phrase about convent life. And I understand why God and my superiors allow it. If the community thought I was an incompetent nun, with no brains or judgment, it would be impossible for you, Mother, to let me help you. That is why the divine Master has flung a veil over all my faults. Because of this veil, the novices praise me. It is not flattery, for I know they really believe what they say. But their praise does not make me vain, for the knowledge of my wretchedness never leaves me for a moment. But sometimes, I have a great longing to hear something different

from praise, for my soul sickens of too sweet a diet...God raises the veil which hides my imperfections from them, and my dear little sisters then see the reality and no longer find me quite to their liking. With a simplicity I find charming, they tell me what a trial I am to them and what they find unpleasant about me. They stand on no more ceremony than if they were discussing someone else, for they know that their freedom of speech delights me. It is actually more than delight. It is like a wonderful festival which overwhelms me with joy. If I had not experienced it, I could not believe that something so against one's natural feelings could afford such happiness. (138)

- I have noticed that the holiest nuns are the most loved. Other people want to talk to them and perform unasked services for them. So these nuns find themselves loved by all, although they would not mind being neglected and treated without consideration. The words of our Father, St. John of the Cross, can be applied to them: "All good things have come to me since I no longer seek them for myself." (139)
- Then I looked at the poor invalid I was guiding along. Instead of music, I heard her pitiful complaints instead of elegant decoration, I saw the bare bricks of our cloister in a faint glimmer of light. This contrast moved me. Our Lord poured on it that light of truth which so outshines the false glitter of earthly pleasures that I would not have given up the ten minutes it took for me to perform my act of charity in exchange for a thousand years of such worldly parties. (141)
- You see, Mother, that I am a very little soul who can only offer very little things to God; it often happens that I let slip the chance of making these little sacrifices which give such peace, but I'm not discouraged. I put up with having a bit less peace and try to be more careful next time. Ah! How happy God makes me! It is so pleasant and easy to serve Him during this life. (143)
- You know, God, that I have never wanted anything but to love You alone. I long for no other glory. Your love has gone before me from my childhood, it has grown with me, and now it is an abyss whose depths I cannot plumb. Love attracts love and mine soars up to You, eager to fill the abyss of Your love, but it is not even a drop of dew lost in the ocean. To love You as You love me, I must borrow Your love---only then can I have peace. O Jesus, it seems to me that You cannot give a soul more love than You have bestowed on me, and that is why I dare ask You to love those You have given me "even as You have loved me." If, one day in heaven, I find out that You love them more than me, I shall rejoice, recognizing that even on earth they must have deserved it more, but meanwhile I cannot imagine any greater love than that You have given me without any merit of my own. (147)
- Well, that is just what my prayer is. I ask Jesus to draw me into the flames of His love and to unite me so closely to Him that He lives and acts in me. I feel that the more the fire of love encompasses my heart, the more I shall say: "Draw me," and the more will those souls who are near to mine "run swiftly in the sweet odour of the Beloved." Yes, they will run and we shall run together, for souls on fire cannot stay still. Like St. Magdalene, they may sit at the feet of Jesus, listening to His gentle yet exciting words. They seem to give Him nothing, yet they give much more than Martha who is anxious "about many things." Jesus does not, of course, blame Martha's work, but only her worrying about it. For His Mother humbly did the same jobs when she got the meals ready for the Holy Family. (148)

- Archimedes said: "Give me a fulcrum and with a lever I will move the world." What he could not get, the saints have been given. The Almighty has given them a fulcrum: Himself, Himself alone. For a lever they have that prayer which burns with the fire of love. Thus they have moved the world, and it is with this lever that those still battling in the world move it and will go on moving it till the end of time. (148)
- But how radiant and how fragrant these traces are! I have only to glance at the Holy Gospels and at once I breathe the fragrance of His life and know which way to run. I rush to the lowest place, not the highest. I leave the Pharisee to go ahead, and repeat, with the greatest confidence, the humble prayer of the publican. Above all I imitate Mary Magdalene, for her amazing---or rather her loving---audacity which won the Heart of Jesus, and captivates mine. (148-149)
- Oh, dearest, dearest sister, what is there to do after such words but stay still and weep with gratitude and love? If people who are as weak and imperfect as I am felt what I feel, not one of them would despair of scaling the summit of the mountain of love. Jesus does not demand great deeds. All He wants is self-surrender and gratitude. (150)
- I want to be a warrior, a priest, and apostle, a doctor of the church, a martyr....I would like to perform the most heroic deeds. I feel I have the courage of a Crusader. I should like to die on the battlefield in defense of the Church. If only I were a priest! How lovingly, Jesus, would I hold You in my hands when my words had brought You down from heaven and how lovingly would I give You to the faithful...Like the prophets and the doctors of the Church, I should like to enlighten souls. I should like to wander through the world, preaching Your Name and raising Your glorious Cross in pagan lands. But it would not be enough to have only one field of mission work. I should not be satisfied unless I preached the Gospel in every quarter of the globe and even in the most remote islands. Nor should I be content to be a missionary for only a few years. I should like to have been one from the creation of the world and continue as one till the end of time. But, above all, I long to be martyr. From my childhood I have dreamt of martyrdom, and it is a dream which has grown more and more real in my little cell in Carmel. But I don't want to suffer just one torment. I should have to suffer them all to be satisfied. Like you, my adorable Jesus, I want to be scourged and crucified. I want to be flayed like St. Bartholomew. Like St. John, I want to be flung into boiling oil. Like St. Ignatius of Antioch, I long to be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, ground into a bread worthy of God. With St. Agnes and St. Cecilia, I want to offer my neck to the sword of the executioner and, like Joan of Arc, murmur the name of Jesus at the stake. My heart leaps when I think of the unheard tortures Christians will suffer in the reign of anti-Christ. I want to endure them all. My Jesus, fling open that book of life in which are set down the deeds of every saint. I want to perform them all for You! (153-154)
- I realized that love includes all vocations, that love is all things, and that, because it is eternal, it embraces every time and place. Swept by an ecstatic joy, I cried: "Jesus, my love! At last I have found my vocation. My vocation is love! I have found my place in the bosom of the Church and it is You, Lord, who has given it me. In the heart of the Church, who is my Mother, I will be love. So I shall be everything and so my dreams will be fulfilled!"...I am only a weak and helpless child, yet it is my very weakness which has made me daring enough to offer myself to You, Jesus, as the victim of Your love. Long ago only pure and

spotless victims were accepted by Almighty God. The divine justice could be satisfied only by immaculate victims, but the law of love has replaced that of fear, and love has chosen me as victim--feeble and imperfect creature that I am. Is the choice of me worthy of love? Yes, it is, because in order for love to be fully satisfied it must descend into nothingness and transform that nothingness to living fire. I know, Lord, that "love is repaid by love alone." And so I have sought and I have found the way to ease my heart--by giving You love for love. (155)

- Well, I will scatter flowers, perfuming the divine Throne with their fragrance, and I'll sweetly sing my hymn of love. Yes, my Beloved, that is how I'll spend my short life. The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers and these flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doings of the least of actions for love. Thus will I scatter my flowers. I will never find one without plucking its petals for You and I shall sing, sing without ceasing even if I have to gather my roses from the midst of thorns. And the longer and sharper the thorns, the sweeter my song will be...Jesus, I love You, and I love the Church my Mother. I remember that "the smallest act of love is more to her than every other work put together." (156-157)
- Jesus, my Jesus, if this longing for love is so wonderful, what will it be like actually to possess and enjoy it forever? How can a soul as imperfect as mine hope for love in all its fullness? Why do You keep these boundless longings for great souls, those eagles which soar to the heights? I, alas, am only a poor little unfledged bird. I am not an eagle. All I have are the eyes and heart of one, for in spite of my littleness I dare gaze at the Sun of love and long to fly towards it. I want to fly and imitate the eagles, but all I can do is flap my tiny wings. They are too weak to lift me. What shall I do? Die of grief at being so helpless. Oh no! I shan't even let it trouble me. With cheerful confidence I shall stay gazing at the Sun until I die. Nothing will frighten me, neither wind nor rain. If thick clouds hide the Sun and if it seems that nothing exists beyond the night of this life---well, then, that will be a moment of perfect joy, a moment to feel complete trust and stay very still, secure in the knowledge that my adorable Sun still shines behind the clouds. (157-158)
- O eternal Word, my Saviour, You are the Eagle I love and the One who fascinates me. You swept down to this land of exile and suffered and died so that You could bear away every soul and plunge them into the heart of the Blessed Trinity, that inextinguishable furnace of love. You re-entered the splendours of heaven, yet stayed in our vale of tears hidden under the appearance of a white Host so that You can feed me with Your own substance. O Jesus, do not be angry if I tell You that Your love is a mad love...and how can You expect my heart, when confronted with this folly, not to soar up to You? How can there be any limit to my trust? (158)
- O Jesus, if only I could tell all little souls of Your immeasurable condescension. I feel that if You found a soul feebler than mine---though that's impossible---You would delight in heaping even greater favours on it if it abandoned itself with supreme confidence to Your infinite mercy. But why do I want to tell the secrets of Your love, my Beloved? You alone have taught me them and surely You can reveal them to others. I know You can and I implore You to: I beseech You to cast Your divine glance upon a vast number of little souls. I beg You to choose in this world a multitude of little victims worthy of Your LOVE!!! (159)

