

CHAPTER ELEVEN  
THE LOVE OF THERESE FOR THE POOR

It's Monday today! How many rings at the bell there will be! I should love to be Victoire and answer the door!" exclaimed Therese on awaking one morning.

Pauline overheard her, and after consulting with Marie, she told Therese that as a great treat she would let her give away the food which was always distributed to the poor on Monday mornings. Therese clapped her hands with delight, and put on a solemn expression in keeping with this responsible duty.

At the first sound of the bell, she jumped up, ran to the door, and, opening it gently, handed the bread to the expectant beggar with a smile. The whole morning a long procession of poor people came to the door. Therese had not a moment's rest; she was quite out of breath and flushed with excitement and pleasure. Once, however, she came back in great distress.

"Oh, Pauline!" she said, "there's a poor woman, he is so pale, and has a sick baby in her arms!"

The imploring eyes of the child seemed to beg for something more to give. Her unspoken request was at once granted. She ran off, but was soon back again.

"Pauline," she said with a quiver in her voice, "the beggar woman said to me, 'God bless you, little lady!' "

And overcome by such thanks, she could not keep back her tears.

Therese gave alms, not only on Monday, but often besides, for every afternoon, during the walk, other opportunities of charity occurred, and she would give her penny with a heart full of pity for those in need.

One day, seeing a poor old man dragging himself along on crutches, she ran to meet him. But he looked at her sadly and refused her offering. Therese came back to her father almost crying. She had wanted to help the poor man, and she was afraid she had hurt him. Her kind little heart could not bear the thought. What was to be done? Her father had just bought her a bun.

"Shall I take it to the poor man?" she said. "He won't have money, but perhaps he will take my bun!"

She wanted to run and give to him, but he had gone too far. She began to cry, but suddenly this idea occurred to her:

"If I have not been able to help this poor man, God can. Pauline says that our Lord grants everything we ask Him on our First Communion day, so I will pray for my poor old man then." This thought consoled her, and four years later she kept her promise.

Who that old man was no one knows, but it would seem as though Our Lord was so touched by the kind thought of little Therese that after she had become a Carmelite and had gone to Heaven, He granted through her intercession a wonderful favor to another poor old man who was dying of cancer. He was in the Hospital of the Little Sisters of the Poor at Lisieux, and someone read to him this incident from the life of Therese. It struck him that a child who had been so kind to the suffering poor would surely have pity on him, and so he prayed to her to be cured. His simple faith was rewarded, for his tongue, already half consumed by the cancer, was not only suddenly healed without any human remedy, but grew again fresh and entire.

Thus does God show us the beauty of charity, by the power He has given little Therese in Heaven, as a reward for having practiced it so well on earth. It should never end were I to tell you all she did, or wanted to do, for the poor. Her sisters had to restrain her eagerness, and later on she said:

"I could never keep anything and had I been rich, and free to dispose of my wealth, I should have ruined myself, for I could not have seen anyone in poverty without giving him all he needed."

It was this tender compassion for all sufferers which made her ask Our Lord that she might "spend her Heaven in doing good on earth." This He has generously granted, as we may see every day by the wonderful favors she obtains for those who put their trust in her.