

## Chapter Five

### “Acts”

Therese was three and a half years younger than Celine, but she was remarkably intelligent, and in spite of the difference in age, the little sisters soon became close friends. Indeed, as Therese once said, giving Celine a hug: “We are like our little white chicks; we can’t be separated.”

She was thinking of two pet bantams, given them by the nurse, who were never seen apart.

Their mother used to say that she had never known two children so devoted to each other. They often had really spiritual talks together, in which Therese always took the lead. One day Celine, who was then six and a half, put the following question:

“How can God be in such a tiny host?” Therese, a baby of three, answered promptly, “That’s not at all wonderful, because He is Almighty.” “And what does Almighty mean?” continued Celine. “It means,” replied Therese, “that he can do whatever He likes.” Her mother and sisters were astonished at these ready answers, especially as they had no recollection of ever having taught them to her.

Another time the two children were sitting together in the garden having an animated conversation in which the word “acts” constantly recurred. This word puzzled an old lady who lived next door, and who happened to be sitting at her window. “Acts, acts!” she repeated; “what do they mean?” Tired at last of listening, she hurried downstairs to ask Louise, their nurse, what they meant by “acts.”

I do not know what Louise told her, or if she knew any more about it than old Madame Battoir herself. But you, children, shall hear the meaning of this mysterious word.

We must learn to make little sacrifices even in those things which are allowed us. In this way we strengthen our will to refuse ourselves the things that are forbidden. This is called making *acts* of virtue. For example, if a boy does not answer back when he is corrected; if he obeys promptly when he has been told to do something; if he shares with his friends or with the poor, any little presents he had been given; if he speaks kindly to those in trouble; if he tries not to look about in church; if he gives in to brothers, sisters, and playfellows, instead of always wanting to be first, that boy is making “acts” of virtue.

This is what Celine and Therese were discussing so earnestly. They wanted to make many “acts,” and offer them to the Holy Child. To increase the number and to be able to keep count, they had a special rosary with beads which could be moved up and down. Each little sacrifice was marked by pulling a bead along the string. Therese delighted in this, and was continually to be seen putting her hand in her pocket to count a fresh “act.”