



NOVENA

*To Request Graces
Through the Intercession
of Venerable Sr. Thecla Merlo*



*The Lord
does not give you
what you ask for
but what you believe
you will receive.*

Ven. Sr. Thecla Merlo

Sr. Thecla Merlo

Co-Foundress and First Superior General of the Daughters of St. Paul

Teresa Merlo was born in Castagnito d'Alba (Cuneo), Italy on 20 February 1894. She spent the first twenty years of her life in the midst of her family, attending school and participating in the life of the parish, where she worked as a catechist and helped to form young women to the Christian life.

In June 1915, when she was twenty-one, she met Fr. James Alberione, the Founder of the Pauline Family, who invited her to become a part of the first group of future Daughters of St. Paul.

Teresa accepted his invitation with simplicity, faith and the docility of heart that made her always prompt to do the will of God.

In 1922, she and several other young women made their first profession of the religious vows. On that occasion, Teresa was given the name "Thecla" in honor of a disciple of the Apostle Paul.

She was appointed Superior General of the new Institute and from that time on she was always called "Prima Maestra."

A forthright, practical, humble, strong, wise and creative woman, she collaborated with Fr. Alberione not only in the foundation of the Congregation of the Daughters of St. Paul, but also in the initiation of the Pauline Family.¹

Through her example, words and prayers, Sr. Thecla guided and supported the Daughters of St. Paul for more than forty years in the new vocation that Jesus Master had entrusted to them in the Church.

A religious who was “traditional” and yet at the same time decidedly modern and sensitive to the changes taking place in society, she encouraged her Daughters, by this time present on all the world’s continents, to pursue a single goal, namely: to strive for *the glory of God and the good of souls*,² giving rise to always new apostolic initiatives and opening new centers to dissem-

¹ Moved by the action of the Spirit, from 1914-1959 Fr. Alberione founded different Institutes interconnected by a single spirituality and by a bond of profound communion. The Pauline Family consists of five religious Congregations (the Society of St. Paul, Daughters of St. Paul, Pious Disciples of the Divine Master, Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd and Institute of Mary, Queen of Apostles), four Secular Institutes (Jesus the Priest, St. Gabriel the Archangel, Mary Most Holy of the Annunciation, and the Holy Family), and one lay Association (the Pauline Cooperators).

² In keeping with the language of the times, Sr. Thecla used the term *souls* to mean the whole person: body and spirit.

inate the truth through the modern instruments of communication, which she considered to be *instruments of evangelization*.

With profound joy, she welcomed the promulgation of *Inter Mirifica: Decree on the Media of Social Communication* (December 1963), a Vatican II document that Fr. Alberione in a certain sense presaged and that she saw as yet another sign of approval of the Institute of the Daughters of St. Paul.

Sr. Thecla always declared that she was very happy with her vocation, to the point that she once exclaimed: "I wish I had a thousand lives to dedicate to the Gospel!"—a Gospel that she not only announced but first of all lived. In fact, *she always kept the Word of God in the center of her heart* and allowed herself to be evangelized by it.

After having offered her life to the Holy Trinity for the sanctification of every Daughter of St. Paul, Sr. Thecla died on 5 February 1964 in Queen of Apostles Hospital, Albano Laziale (Rome), Italy, leaving her Daughters the rich legacy of her teachings and directives, which help them carry out their mission with dedication and conviction in the Church.

Thecla Merlo:

A Woman of God

A woman of faith and hope,
she believed in the Lord,
who chose her for
a remarkable adventure.
Trusting in his fidelity,
she responded to his call to the point
of heroic self-offering.

Firmly anchored in Jesus Master,
Way, Truth and Life,
her life was a dynamic synthesis
of contemplation and action,
open to the new times,
in harmony with the paths the Spirit
was revealing to the Word.

Aware of the good present
in the heart of every person,
she believed in the importance
of every human relationship
and the sacred aspect
of every communications instrument
when used to promote human beings

and help them understand
the true meaning of life.

A courageous apostle,
she announced Jesus Master
through the witness
of a simple and joyous life,
facing the challenges
of the modern world
with trusting resourcefulness,
continually seeking new forms,
new instruments and new ways
to “proclaim from the housetops”
the good news of the Gospel.

First Day

Trust God

Jesus Christ says:

“Do not worry about your life.... Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides” (Mt. 6:25, 33).

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo

Believe that everything is disposed by our good heavenly Father—both the things we like and the things we don’t like—because many times he permits the bad and draws good from it.

Let me check to see whether or not my heart rests tranquilly on the heart of God, who is continually thinking about me.

The greater our need, the more our faith grows. And the divine providence of God—who nourishes the souls and bodies of his children, who is never in crisis, who never gives up, who

does not relinquish his powers, who does not know failure—will continue in this way.

Let us rely only on God. Let us surrender ourselves to him. He is good, infinitely good!

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*My God,
you are always thinking about me,
you are within me and around me.*

*I am carved
on the palm of your hand.*

*I trust you
and entrust myself to you.*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Second Day

Pray with Trust

Jesus Christ invites us:

“Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Lk. 11:9).

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo

It is necessary to pray with perseverance, without hesitation in our heart, with the certitude that what we ask for will be given to us. This is faith! We must believe and remain serene. The Lord always answers us: he will either give us what we ask for, or he will give us other graces that are more beneficial to us.

Prayer is very powerful. God can't resist our prayers. It is a mistake to think that the Lord does not listen to us because of our faults or sins. We must trust in the immense goodness of God, who doesn't look at our human condition, but who always answers us when

we pray: "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you" (Jn. 16:23). We need everything and the Lord gives us everything.

Prayer is the strength of human beings and the weakness of God. If we are souls of prayer, we can overcome every problem.

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*God grants graces
to those who ask with faith.
Prayer can move God
to change his plans
because he is good.*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Third Day

Live in Humility

Jesus Christ says:

“I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children” (Mt. 11:25).

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo

God is great, immense, eternal. He created everything. He is everything! I am like dust on the road...nothing. And I dare to believe that I am something?

We need to become small, very small. Let us bow our heads before [the Child in] the manger.... He, who was in the condition of God, was willing to take the form of a slave. He, who was rich, became poor. He, who didn't need to depend on anyone, never did his own will. He, who never sinned, was willing to be condemned as a sinner. He, who nev-

er threatened anyone, permitted himself to be sentenced to the most extreme punishment.

Do we want to be his disciples? Then let us imitate him! Let us learn from Jesus how to be small. Let us be firmly convinced that this is truly our condition, and consequently let us distrust ourselves and have great trust in the goodness of God.

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*To abase myself so much
that God is drawn to me.
To raise myself so high by trust
that I reach God.*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Fourth Day

Remain in God

Jesus Christ says:

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo:

Am I trying to leave my heart open to the work of grace by removing my ego, which is the main obstacle that prevents me from attaining what is good for myself and for others?

Let us strive to have a heart filled with God so as to take him to souls by every means. How beautiful and holy it is to communicate to others Jesus, whom we want to always carry in the center of our heart.

Let us live in intimacy with the Divine Master: mind, will, heart and activities; our senses, hands, feet, eyes, ears—everything for him and

with him. Let us strive for always greater union with him, until our soul no longer desires or rests in anything but God because without the help of his grace we can't do anything: "By myself I can do nothing, but with God I can do all things."

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*My God,
I want to hide myself in you
like a drop of water in the ocean.
I surrender myself to you
completely, always
and in all things.*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Fifth Day

Seek the Glory of God

Jesus Christ says:

“The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him” (Jn. 8:29).

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo:

Everything only and always for the glory of God and the good of souls! I renounce my own will so as to cling to the will of God alone. I renounce my preferences and my way of seeing things, so as to have only the preferences of God.

My God, may my every breath, every affection, every heartbeat, every internal and external, physical and spiritual movement, be for you. By means of them all, I want to say at every moment: I love you, my God! May I always do what is pleasing to you!

If it is your will that I be healthy, then I am ready! If it is your will that I be sick, then I am ready! I want only what pleases you. Everything for the glory and praise of the Holy Trinity!

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*Glory to God
and peace to all people:
may this always be our yearning,
our greatest desire.*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Sixth Day

Proclaim the Gospel

Paul says:

“If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!” (1 Co. 9:16)

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo:

The apostolate that the Lord has entrusted to our small Congregation is so beautiful and vast—it is a sacred duty!

The power idea that should motivate us is *souls*. The thought of them should torment us. We should be concerned about how to reach them, how to bring them the Word of truth and salvation. So many souls never hear anyone speak about God. Who can help them? We must have a heart and mind as immense as the heart and mind of Jesus and St. Paul, who made himself all things to all people so as to lead them all to Christ (cf. 1 Co. 9:19).

Our apostolate is participation in the mission of Jesus. Let us strive to irradiate always more and always better the light and grace of the Divine Master. Let us give Jesus to souls, like Mary and with Mary. We can only give what wells up from our heart. If our heart is filled with God, we will give him to others.

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*I am extremely happy
in my vocation.
I wish I had a thousand lives
to dedicate to the Gospel.
May it race ahead and expand!*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Seventh Day

Follow the Best Way

Paul says:

“I put before you the best way of all....”
(1 Co. 12:31; 13:1-13)

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo:

We often read the characteristics of love listed by St. Paul. Everything can be reduced to love, which has two flames: the first is directed to God and the second to others. It is useless to tell the Lord we love him if we don't love others. We are all children of God and brothers and sisters among ourselves. We must love God and love one another with a love that knows how to understand, to sympathize, to help. Each of us must strive to think well of others, speak well about them, desire their good and act mercifully toward them. We must not be envious, jealous or spiteful. Instead we must offer others compassion and mutual assistance.

Let us reinforce our unity with the cement of love. Let us strive to belong to God by removing all the “rust” in our heart. If we realize that something is not right, let us pluck it out immediately, otherwise it will take root. Let’s be smart! In this way, we will be happy here [on earth] and then...a beautiful heaven awaits us!

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*Living together,
we put in common
our good qualities but also our faults.
We will never go wrong
if we speak well about others.*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Eighth Day

Confide in Mary

On the cross, Jesus put us in the hands of Mary:

“‘Woman, behold your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (Jn. 19:26-27).

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo:

I am yours, Mother. I no longer belong to myself and never want to do so again. I am nothing.

In your hands, Mary, lie my salvation, progress and merits. I place everything there. Carry me in your arms because I am poor and wretched. But I have complete trust in you, Mary, my hope, my help, my good Mother. You are kindness, piety, mercy, a powerful intercessor. Detach me from myself.

Everything we have is yours. The Congregation is also yours. You are our Prima Maestra,

our great *Maestra*. Teach us, support us, defend us from every danger, as you have done up to now.

And after this exile, show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb.

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*The Blessed Mother
makes hard things easy.*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Ninth Day

Race Toward the Goal

Jesus reassures us:

“I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be” (Jn. 14:2-3).

From the words and writings of Sr. Thecla Merlo:

Life is a preparation for heaven. God is everything; I am nothing. All things end; only God remains with me.

We are on our way to eternity. We are on a trip to heaven. On this trip, we run into many problems, many hardships, but everything can help us reach our goal. Let us always head toward heaven. May our every thought, affection and action be for heaven. May everything be aimed at doing the will of God and remaining united to him so as to one day see him.

Let us think about what lies ahead of us. Let us think of the beautiful heaven that awaits

us after our labors here below. Let us become saints by correcting our faults. Let us strive and work for a beautiful heaven. Let us yearn for this heaven, which is ours. We have a place there unless we give it up.

Prayer To Request Graces (p. 27)

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory to the Father



*The thought of heaven
comforts and consoles us.
Life is a journey
toward our eternal homeland.*

Sr. Thecla Merlo



Prayer To Request Graces

Most Holy Trinity, thank you for the gifts of light, grace and virtue granted to Venerable Sr. Thecla Merlo, and for having chosen and made her the wise mother and reliable guide of the Daughters of St. Paul.

Through her intercession, grant that I may live of her great loves: Jesus Master, the Eucharist, the Church, and the Gospel proclaimed to all people with the instruments of social communication, to the point of complete sacrifice.

Lord, if it is your divine will, exalt this faithful Servant to the joy of the Church and the good of humanity, and grant me, through her intercession, the favor I ask of you. Amen.

With ecclesiastical approval

Anyone who receives graces and favors through the intercession of Venerable Sr. Thecla Merlo is asked to send this information to the Superior General of the Daughters of St. Paul, Via San Giovanni Eudes, 25 – 00163 Rome, Italy

Generalate of the Daughters of St. Paul
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