

A Reflection October 1, 2020

Feast Day of St. Therese of Lisieux (The Little Flower)

- Today our Church celebrates the Feast Day of Saint Therese of Lisieux. Her religious name was actually Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.
- She is much more commonly known as “The Little Flower” due to the appearance (or sometimes just the fragrance) of roses that usually accompany the miracles attributed to her intercession. I received one of those miracles so I know this is true.
- And I am really blessed today because I have the opportunity to tell you about her.
- Therese was born in France, one of seven children. She entered a cloistered convent (little contact with the outside world) at the age of eleven and remained there until her death at the age of twenty-four.
- Therese’s life had its share of pain. Her mother died when Therese was four years old. She saw her father suffer from a disease similar to Alzheimer’s disease. She herself experienced severe anxiety and depression early in her life and she died of tuberculosis at age 24.
- So what is so important about this young nun who spent her life tucked away in a cloistered convent? Why was she declared a saint and only 1 of 4 woman Doctors of the Church (a title given to certain saints indicating their teaching is useful in any age or time)?
- This is why.
- Therese was given a special grace from God. The ability to understand what it means to have real faith in God; the ability to live out (in action and attitude) that faith each day; and the ability to teach this understanding – to share it with the world through her writings.
- Since our scripture readings today are all about faith, I’m going to let Therese’s teachings help deepen our understanding.

- Therese gave a name to her understanding of Faith and how to live out that faith. She called it “The Little Way”. And her “little way” has two parts to it.
- The first part has to do with the type of *attitude* real faith requires us to have. It describes how we should *think* and *feel* about our relationship with God.
- Therese calls this attitude “child-like innocence”. She tells us to learn a lesson from young children.
- Children place all of their trust in their parents don’t they? They eat the food given to them trusting it is ok. When they hear their parent’s voice, they turn and listen. They reach out and want to be held close. When they are hurt, they run to mom or dad for comfort. When they are afraid, they hold on tight for safety.
- Children trust their parents instinctively. They know their parents love them; watch over and care for them; protect them and can be relied on for all they need.
- Therese said *this is exactly* how we should *think* and *feel* about God. We need to love and trust and rely on God in the very same way a small child loves and trusts and relies on its parents!! We need to remember we are God’s children – He made us - and He loves us dearly. This is the attitude real faith requires.
- The second part of Therese’s “Little Way” deals with how we are to *take* this attitude of faith and *live it out* each day of our life.
- Therese summed this up in one sentence: “Grow where you are planted”.
- This sentence meant several things to Therese. She saw faith as something to be used, put to work because it has tremendous power.
- Therese tells us: Grow where we are planted – Grow where God has placed you.
- We don’t need to look far or to do big heroic acts. There are plenty of opportunities to love, to be God’s love – right in front of us everyday.

- Therese said don't miss them. Seek holiness in the ordinary things of everyday life.
- One of Therese's favorite sayings was "Do small things with great love" – like a smile or a note or word of encouragement to someone who needs it.
- Therese's "Little Way" calls us to water the seed of faith planted in us by praying everyday. She tells us to talk to God in a direct and personal way, from the heart, as a child speaks openly and honestly to the parents they love.
- Therese saw prayer as putting her faith to work. Part of her mission was to pray for others especially priests and missionaries. She also prayed fervently for the conversion of hardened criminals. Therese urges us to put our faith to work by praying for others.
- St. Therese calls us to trust that where you are planted, is exactly where God wants you to be at this very moment. Find a way to see God there, find a way to be His love there. If you are enjoying "good times" – share them and give thanks. If your planted in a difficult situation requiring you to reach out and help someone – Be God's love there – no matter how difficult.
- And if you are planted in the middle of change and confusion in your life (tough choices, career changes, what school, what treatment?), trust in God's plan for you! Pray, listen and be patient. Trust in God's time and His ways: God is never late and *His* ways are always best.
- Finally, Therese taught that receiving Jesus in the Holy Eucharist was essential to grow in faith, essential to the "Little Way". In the Eucharist Jesus strengthens our attitude and drives our actions. In her autobiography titled "Story of a Soul", Therese wrote this about faith and the Eucharist: " I don't really see what more I shall have in heaven, I shall see the good God it is true, but as to being with Him – I am wholly with Him already upon earth". Something to think about each time *we* receive Holy Communion.
- The Little Way: see the opportunities in front of you; do little things with great love; pray for others; never give up hope.

What a very simple and powerful teaching our Lord has given us through this wonderful saint!