Thursday of 2nd Week of Lent

SELF

"It is a remarkable thing: God so loves humility that He sometimes tests us, not to make us do evil, but to teach us by our own experience what we really are, permitting us to say or do some foolish thing, giving us reason to humble ourselves." -St. Francis de Sales

ST THERESE OF LISEUX

St. Therese of Lisieux is famous for her "Little Way": the recognition that holiness can be achieved by doing simple, everyday things with as much love as possible. However, many are unaware of the struggle she had with pride as a child. Tragedy and loss came quickly to Therese when her mother died of breast cancer when she was four and a half years old. Her sixteen year old sister Pauline became her second mother -- which made the second loss even worse when Pauline entered the Carmelite convent five years later. A few months later, Therese became so ill with a fever that people thought she was dying. Having been 'rejected' by or separated from Pauline, who 'takes the veil,' Therese cannot help wanting to disappear, to die, to refuse to be a self or to mother herself. She withdraws from the family, from extreme fear and pain, into illness and depression. She almost dies from accumulated mother-losses while all the time crying out for "Mamma" in her delirium.

Therese wanted the focus on herself as a girl because she only felt loved when people focused on her. She would often cry and was very sensitive when she was not doted on. She sought to medicate the pain of her mother's loss and feeling abandoned by having people focus on her. She was healed of this pride when the Blessed Virgin Mary smiled at her at age 10. No longer did she need people to focus on her in order to feel loved. She knew she was a Beloved daughter of God and that God always doted and loved her. Often overlooked in this simple spirituality is the important role that humility plays. Those who are proud seek to do great and important things (usually for their own glory first, then God's); those who are humble gladly accept whatever role is assigned to them, and even come to rejoice in being given the least important and appealing tasks, so as to follow more closely in the footsteps of Christ. We also can start to think everything is about us and focus on self. This sometimes comes in wanting others to notice our accomplishments and only feeling happy when we are the center of attention. Another form of pride of self is always feeling like people are talking about us or we have failed others. Either way the focus is on us rather than on God. How have you focused on self by wanting others to always notice you or feeling you have failed others?

For your prayer

St. Therese would have prayed with Jeremiah 17:5-10. Use your imagination as you slowly read Jeremiah 17:5-10. Please reflect on how when we rely on ourselves that we are barren but when we rely on God we are blessed. Reflect on how God is inviting you to reflect on God more than making everything about yourself.