

September 29, 2019

THE LITTLE WAY TO HEAVEN!

THE LITTLE WAY TO HEAVEN. This Tuesday, October 1st, we celebrate the Feast of St Therese of Lisieux (January 2, 1873- September 30, 1897), also known as "St Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face" or simply as "LITTLE FLOWER". St Therese was born in Northwest France. She entered the Carmelite monastery of Lisieux at a very young age: she was just 15 year old. She lived there a life of humility, simplicity and trust in God, often referred to as THE LITTLE WAY. Suffering from tuberculosis, she was only 24 when she died. While she never left her convent, we know much about her spiritual life because at the request of her Mother Superior she wrote an autobiography: "STORY OF A SOUL" which I recommend you to read. It is one of the most influential spiritual writings because of Little Flower's simple and child-like approach.

Over the last four years, our parish has been blessed with the presence of three nuns "Missionary Catechists of St Therese " (MCST) : Sister Leilani, Sister Maria Paz and currently Sister Rosario .Sister Rosario is now in charge of preparing our children to their First Reconciliation and First Communion . She is also providing much assistance to the Overall Religious Education Program, and to the Homebound Ministry. Sister Rosario, Sister Leilani and five other MCST Sisters will RENEW THEIR RELIGIOUS VOWS at OLHOC, 7 PM MASS TUESDAY OCTOBER 1st (Feast Day of St Therese): you are all invited to attend both the Mass and the Reception in the Father Martin Hall right after Mass (light refreshments).

The renewal of the religious vows of the MCST Sisters is an opportunity for all of us to deepen our understanding of the LITTLE WAY and to put it into practice in our daily lives with the HOPE that this Little Way will help guide our desires and decisions on our JOURNEY TO HEAVEN . Don't you want to enter Heaven and stay there with God forever and ever? Though Little Flower has now been recognized as a Doctor of the Church, her writings are simple and inspirational. We can all benefit from living a similar " Little Way": recognizing our own brokenness , accepting humiliation with merciful love , trusting in God as an infant totally trusts in his mother , doing everything with love and only for the Glory of God (and not for our own worldly benefit: power, status, pleasure , money)...It is recognizing that we are totally in the hands of God and that EVERYTHING IS GRACE...It is to be open to that

GRACE brought to us by the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments.

Fr. Michael Gaitley in his book "33 Days to Merciful Love" writes that Therese saw herself as a weak little bird without strength and unable to fly. She admitted: "I am not an eagle, but I have an eagle's EYES AND HEART". She also said "Because I was little and weak the Lord lowered Himself to me...I have always wanted to be a saint...In spite of my littleness, I aspire to Holiness. It is impossible for me to grow up, and so I must bear with all my imperfections. I want to seek out a means of going to heaven as a little way...There must be a Path for little souls.. I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus for I am too small to climb the rough stairway of perfection...I must search this elevator in the Scriptures and I found it : "Whoever is a LITTLE ONE ,let him come to me" (Proverbs 9:4). The ELEVATOR which must raise me to heaven is YOUR ARMS, O JESUS! And for this I had no need to grow up, but rather to remain LITTLE.

In his homily of May 17, 1925 (Canonization of St Therese of the Child Jesus) , Pope Pius XI said : " Saint Therese learned thoroughly the teaching of the Gospel that unless we convert and become like children we will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:2) and she translated it into her daily life. Moreover she taught THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD by word and example to the novices of her monastery...God enriched her with a superabundant share of divine light and GRACE , which enkindled in her so ardent a flame of love...so much so that shortly before her death she could say that SHE HAD NEVER GIVEN GOD ANYTHING BUT LOVE."

Let us pray together with LITTLE FLOWER in the words chosen by Fr. Gaitley:

"Come Holy Spirit, fire of mercy. Give me the heart of an eagle, a burning longing to choose all that you will for me. Unveil for me the mystery of the HEART OF CHRIST: his tender mercy for sinners. Help me to recognize the darkness of my littleness, to keep trying to grow in holiness and to keep trusting in your merciful Love. Though weak, broken and sinful, help me to trust that I can become a great Saint through the amazing power of Divine Mercy. Come Holy Spirit; teach me to pray with my whole heart JESUS I TRUST IN YOU. Help me to embrace the Little Way with all my heart."

One in Christ,
Father Alain