

St. Therese - B
Micah 6:6-8
Colossians 3:12-17
Matthew 18:1-4
Little Flower - 9/27/15

My Brothers and Sisters,

Although her feast day is October 1, every year we as a parish also celebrate the Feast of St. Therese on the weekend that falls within the Little Flower Novena. As you know, our parish was one of the first parishes in the world named for her after her canonization in 1925. Today, then, we are also celebrating the 90th anniversary of the foundation of Little Flower Parish.

According to tradition, because local realtors wanted to develop the area, they offered Bishop Chartrand this property for \$1 if the Diocese of Indianapolis would build a parish and school. The 20th Jubilee Brochure stated that in 1925 “the fourteen hundred block on Bosart Avenue, where the site was located was in the midst of a vast expanse of commons, with not a single house anywhere in the unpaved stretch from Tenth to Sixteenth Streets. There were no sewers, no sidewalks, no gas, no electric lights, no telephones and no city mail service.” The original church, now the gym, was dedicated on September 12, 1926, and Little Flower School opened on September 20, 1926 with 85 students. From these humble beginnings, the parish became the largest parish in the Archdiocese in the 1960's with over 5000 parishioners and 967 children in school. Today we have 2078 parishioners and 266 children in school.

We all know that the world, the Church, our neighborhood, and our parish are very different from what they were when the parish was founded, what they were in the 1960's, and even what they were in 2003 when I became pastor. For parishes to thrive in a rapidly changing world, they have to be nimble, i.e., they have to be able and willing to adjust rapidly to all kinds of changes.

If we want to be a thriving parish in 2025, our 100th anniversary, I would suggest that we as individuals and as a parish have to embody the qualities enumerated by the Prophet Micah in today's first reading: *“What is good has been explained to you, only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.”*

We are called to act justly. I would suggest that we need to focus on increasing our community outreach within our parish boundaries and then on evangelizing and re-evangelizing within our community. We need to become missionaries within our community.

We are called to love tenderly. Today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Colossians explains what this means for a community. In a community, loving tenderly implies *“heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.”*

Finally, we are called to walk humbly with God. St. Therese is the pre-eminent example of walking humbly with God. In today's Gospel, in response to the question who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, *“Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.”* Little children are completely dependent on others. Among the primary qualities of little children, then, are their capacity for trust and their capacity for hope. As a community, we have to trust God and hope for the fulfillment of God's promises.

My brothers and sisters, as we celebrate our 90th anniversary, we thank God for all his blessings on our parish through the intercession of St. Therese and ask, through her intercession, his continued blessings upon our parish.