

St. Therese - C
I Kings 19:11-13a;
I Corinthians 1:26-31;
Luke 16:19-31
Little Flower - 9/29/13

My Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend we celebrate the Feast of St. Therese, our patron saint. Her actual feast day is October 1. Originally, it was September 30th, then October 3rd, now October 1st. Today's readings suggest three qualities of St. Therese for us to imitate.

In today's first reading, God told the Prophet Elijah to go to the entrance of the cave because he would be passing by. A strong and heavy wind came first, followed by an earthquake followed by fire. In none of these was God found. Rather, God was found in the tiny whispering sound.

Today some people say that they would become believers if God would dramatically reveal His presence, power, and activity in their lives or in our world. However, for the most part, God speaks to us in whispers. In other words, we experience God in others, in relationships, in the beauty of nature, in the depths of our hearts, and in God's word, the sacraments, and prayer. If we are looking for a dramatic sign, we almost certainly will be disappointed.

St. Therese lived the simplest of lives as a cloistered Carmelite nun, yet she had a profound experience of God's presence, power, and activity. The more complicated our lives, the less we are able to hear the tiny whispers of God.

In the Litany of St. Therese, we pray, "St. Therese, benefactress of the needy." During her short life on earth, Therese developed the virtue of compassion. In today's Gospel, we hear the story of the rich man and Lazarus, a poor man, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps from the rich man's table. When he died, he went to heaven; when the rich man died, he went to hell. I am going to suggest that the reason the rich man failed to give Lazarus any food was that he did not even see him. In other words, he may have seen him physically but looked right through him. Lazarus did not exist in the rich man's world.

To be compassionate is, first, to be sensitive to the real needs of others and, second, to respond to those needs in the best way we can. The Gospel reminds us that it is not enough to be compassionate to those who are part of our world. We have to be compassionate toward those, to use the words of Pope Francis, who live at the margins or peripheries.

My brothers and sisters, the life of St. Therese exemplifies today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. God chooses the foolish to shame the wise. St. Therese had little formal learning, yet today she is one of only 34 doctors of the Church. God chooses the weak to shame the strong. St. Therese became a cloistered Carmelite nun at the age of 15; by the age of 24 she was dead from tuberculosis. However, after her death and after the publication of her autobiography, she had a tremendous impact on the Church and the world. For example, our parish's first public novena in honor of St. Therese came to a close on her feast, September 30, 1927. The average nightly attendance was 700. Closing night approximately 1500 people were present. God does indeed choose the weak and make them strong in bearing witness to Him. Today God is choosing us to make a difference. Foolish and weak though we may be, we are all called to evangelize by word and example; foolish and weak though we may be, we are all called to reach out to those in need and make a difference in their lives.