

St. Therese - B  
Song of Songs 8:6-7;  
Galatians 2:19-20;  
Matthew 18:1-4  
Little Flower - 9/30/12

My Brothers and Sisters,

Although her actual feast day is Monday, today we are celebrating the Feast of St. Therese, our patron saint. A patron saint plays two roles in the life of a parish. The first is as a protector and intercessor. In other words, St. Therese watches over us and prays to God for us. Certainly, our parish has been blessed since its beginning through the intercession of St. Therese. The second is that a patron saint is someone whose virtues are to be imitated. Today's readings suggest three virtues of St. Therese for us to imitate.

Today's first reading reminds us that authentic love is strong as death and "*its flames are a blazing fire.*" From her writings and from everything written about her, it is clear that St. Therese had a passionate love for God. However, she also had a passionate love for the souls of all people. In this context, passionate means she loved God and others with her whole being. To imitate St. Therese means, in the words of Jesus, to love God "*with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*" [Mt. 22:37] and your neighbor as yourself.

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls us to become like little children. This is precisely how St. Therese saw herself. In the Gospel, to become like little children is to see God as our loving Father and to acknowledge our dependence upon God. However, because our relationship with God and our relationships with others are inseparable, it is also important that we recognize that we are interdependent with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul wrote to the Galatians, "*I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me...*" Like all great saints, by dying to self, St. Therese was transformed into the likeness of the Risen Christ. One of the great paradoxes of Christianity is that the more we become Christ-like, the more we become ourselves. The best evidence of this is St. Paul himself. He is the one who wrote, "*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me...*," yet next to Jesus himself, he is the strongest personality in the New Testament.

My brothers and sisters, as we ask St. Therese to continue to ask God to bless our parish, let us imitate her virtues by passionately loving God and others, by acknowledging our dependence upon God and our interdependence with others, and by becoming Christ-like, thereby becoming the best, most authentic, version of ourselves.