

St. Therese - B  
I Kings 19:11-13;  
I Corinthians 1:26-31;  
Matthew 18:1-4  
Little Flower - 10/7/18

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Feast of St. Therese, our patron saint.

St. Therese was born January 2, 1873. As you probably know, at the age of 15, she entered the Carmelite Monastery in Lisieux. She died from tuberculosis at the age of 24 on September 30, 1897. She was canonized on May 17, 1925. St. Pope John Paul II proclaimed her the third woman doctor of the Church on October 19, 1997. Although St. Therese lived her teenage and adult years in a Carmelite monastery, because of her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, within a few years of her death, she had touched the lives of millions of people. Little Flower Parish was the one of the first parishes in the world named after St. Therese of the Infant Jesus.

Patron saints play 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 as a parish and as individuals. If we look at both the earlier and the more recent history of the parish, God continues to bless us superabundantly through the intercession of St. Therese. Although we continue to thrive as a parish, I believe we need St. Therese's protection and intercession more than ever. We know that the Church is facing many crises right now. One of our biggest challenges as a parish is the decline in Sunday Mass attendance and parish participation.

The second function of a patron saint is as a role model to be imitated. All three readings today exemplify qualities of St. Therese's life. In today's first reading, God is not found in the strong and heavy wind or in the earthquake or in the fire. God is found in the tiny whispering sound. St. Therese did not become a saint because she did great deeds. She became a saint because she lived her Little Way. Today both in society and the Church, everyone is shouting their thoughts, opinions, and feelings. All this shouting is tearing society and the Church apart. We need to speak softly, and we need to live the Little Way in our families, in our parish, and in our community if we are going to tear down walls and divisions and build bridges.

In today's second reading, St. Paul wrote that "*God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong.*" According to the standards of the world, St. Therese was not well educated, and she certainly was not worldly-wise. After all, she entered a Carmelite monastery at the age of 15 and never left. Yet she has touched millions of lives primarily through her short autobiography. She certainly was not among the powerful of the world. When she died, she was probably known by no more than 200 people at most. Yet she has touched the lives of millions of people. As individuals and as a parish, we need to seek and to share the wisdom of God and to make at least a small difference in the lives of the others and in the world.

Finally, in today's Gospel, Jesus calls us to become like little children if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven. St. Therese certainly saw herself as God's little child. Because she entrusted her life and her future to God and recognized her complete dependence upon God, she experienced God's superabundant love for her. If we want to experience God's superabundant love for us, like St. Therese, we need to entrust our lives and futures to God and recognize our complete dependence upon God as individuals and as a Church community.

My brothers and sisters, today with hearts full of gratitude, we celebrate the Feast of St. Therese, our patron saint. May we always ask her to join her prayers to ours and to watch over and protect us as individuals, as families, and as a community. May we imitate her Little Way both in word and deed and strive to entrust our lives and futures to God and recognize our complete dependence upon God so that we may experience God's superabundant love for us as individuals, as families, and as a parish.