

St. Therese - A
I Kings 19:11-13a;
I Corinthians 1:26-31;
Matthew 18:1-4
Little Flower - 10/4/20

My Brothers and Sisters,

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

In today's first reading, God reveals himself to Elisha not in the strong or heavy wind or in the earthquake or in the fire. God reveals himself in the tiny whispering sound. One of the key elements of our Catholic identity at Little Flower School is our focus on St. Therese's Little Way. St. Therese revealed God and God's love not in great deeds but in everyday actions done with great love.

Today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians suggests that God chooses the foolish to shame the wise and the weak of the world to shame the strong. St. Therese was neither wise nor powerful in the eyes of the world. Although in the eyes of the world her life counted for nothing, she subsequently touched the lives of millions of people through her autobiography and through her Little Way.

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. More importantly, she made herself into God's little child by completing entrusting her life and her future to God, by recognizing her complete dependence upon God, and by becoming humble.

This has been a year like no other in our lifetime. Last year when we celebrated the Feast of St. Therese, who would have believed that the entire world would be ravaged by a pandemic? In the midst of all the pain and suffering, there have been some positive signs. Despite all the violence, many people have reached out to help others in little ways. The pandemic has certainly taught us the fragility of life itself and of our way of life. If we open ourselves to God, we realize that to have hope, we have to entrust our lives and our futures to God, we have to recognize our complete dependence upon God, and we have to be humble.

However, I think these readings also have a powerful message for us as a parish. As a parish we are called to imitate St. Therese. When Little Flower was founded in 1925, this area was not well developed. However, by the time I was in later grade school, Little Flower had become the largest parish in the Archdiocese, always having at least three priests and sometimes a fourth. There were many baptisms, First Communions, confirmations, and marriages. Older realtors often said that Little Flower was a destination parish. When looking for a home, people simply told them, "I want to move into Little Flower."

Today Little Flower is a much smaller parish. Like St. Therese we have to be humble. First, we must recognize our complete dependence on God and entrust our parish and its future to God. We are facing some serious challenges, at least partially because of the pandemic. Our Sunday Mass attendance was not all that good before the pandemic. Like other parishes, we will struggle to return to the attendance we had prior to the pandemic. Likewise, prior to the pandemic, as numbers in our parish have declined, we have struggled to maintain our Sunday collection income. The pandemic has only made this struggle harder. Also, because of our smaller census, we often find it difficult to do everything we would like to do in the areas of evangelization and outreach. Therefore, like St. Therese we must find our Little Way and continue to make a real difference in the lives of our community, both parishioners and neighbors.

My brothers and sisters, thank you for all you have done and continue to do to help our parish continue to thrive. During these challenging times, we want to ask St. Therese to intercede with God to protect us from the coronavirus, to help us continue not only to survive but to thrive, and to help us make a real difference in the lives of people within our community, both our parishioners and our neighbors.