

St. Therese - B
Micah 6:6-8;
Colossians 3:12-17;
Matthew 18:1-4
Little Flower - 9/26/21

My Brothers and Sisters,

Although her actual feast day is October 1, today we celebrate the Feast of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus, our patron saint.

The final verse of today's reading from Micah summarizes the meaning of holiness or goodness: "*What is good has been explained to you, ..., only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.*" This reading captures the values St. Therese lived in her life and which we are called to live in our lives.

As we know, St. Therese entered the cloistered Carmelite convent in Lisieux, France, at the age 15. She died from tuberculosis in that same convent nine years later at the age of 24. To understand how St. Therese lived these three values we have to understand how she lived them in that convent.

St. Therese acted justly. She acted justly because she had a profound respect for others, for the human dignity of others, even the sisters who were not kind to her or who even treated her very poorly. To act justly is to always do the right thing even in the face of wrong. However, although she lived in a cloistered convent, she was very concerned with the lives of all of God's children throughout the world. As Fr. Ron Rolheiser wrote, "her 'little way' is not about privatized piety, but about noticing and responding to the pain and tears of our world...in the faces of the poor, the faces of those who are bleeding and shedding tears because of heartbreak, injustice, poverty, lack of love, and lack of being deemed precious."

As the patron saint of our parish, St. Therese is a role model for each of us. Although we may not be able to make a big difference in the larger world, we can make a real difference in the world. Changing the world begins with changing our hearts. Like Therese, we are called to have a profound respect for all people and, therefore, to be concerned for the well being of all. We need to ask ourselves what we can do to help all those people here at home and throughout the world whose basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, education, and health care are not being met.

St. Therese loved tenderly. As a little girl in her family, St. Therese was loved superabundantly by her parents and her sisters, and she, in turned, loved them tenderly and passionately. Even as a cloistered nun she continued to love her family tenderly. Likewise, she showed tenderness even to the sisters who did not treat her well.

Today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Colossians explains the meaning of tender love: "*heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another...*" If we are going to imitate St. Therese as individuals and as a community, these are qualities we must make our own and live as individuals and as a community.

St. Therese walked humbly with her God. More than anything else, she lived today's Gospel. She humbled herself and became like a little child. What characterizes a little child? A little child is dependent on others. St. Therese understood that like a child she was completely dependent on God for all that she was and had. Humility, however, is not only recognizing our dependence upon God. It is also a recognition of our interdependence. St. Therese recognized the deep connections among us in the Body of Christ. Finally, humility is seeing ourselves as God sees us. Therese had a profound understanding of her role in God's plan of salvation. Like Therese, we are called to recognize both our dependence upon God and our interdependence and to strive to discern our unique role in God's plan.

My brothers and sisters, as we celebrate the feast of St. Therese, let us strive to model our individual lives and our community on her and ask her continued blessings upon us, our families and friends, and our parish.