

St. Therese - A
Micah 6:6-8;
Colossians 3:12-17;
Matthew 18:1-4
Little Flower - 10/1/23

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Feast of St. Therese, the patron saint of our parish. As you may know, we were one of the first parishes in the world dedicated to St. Therese after her canonization in 1925. When I was in school, we were told that we were the first.

Patron saints play two important roles in the life of a parish and its parishioners. The first is as a protector and intercessor. In other words, we believe St. Therese watches over us and prays to God for us both 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. The best evidence of this is that even with all the changes COVID brought we continue to thrive as a parish.

The second is that a patron saint is someone to be imitated. Many or most of you may be aware of the emphasis Little Flower School places on St. Therese's Little Way. All three of today's readings list qualities that St. Therese lived or tried to live during her life, qualities of her life that we should try to imitate in our lives.

If you have been reading *The Criterion* or other Catholic news sources, you know that this Wednesday, October 4, Pope Francis will open the first session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. It is titled "For a Synodal Church. Communion, Participation, and Mission." It has often been referred to as the Synod on Synodality. The first session will be October 4 to October 29. The second session will be during October of next year.

This Synod will be very different from all the preceding Synods. Beginning in 2021, the Church consulted and listened to Catholics throughout the world. You may remember being invited to provide input either here on the parish level or to the Archdiocese. Second, this will be the first Synod in which non-bishops will have a full voice and vote. In other words, there will be lay men and women, male and female religious, and priests who will have a full voice and vote during the assembly, which is remarkable in itself.

Although there are some critics who believe that the Synod will have an agenda, Pope Francis sees it as much more spiritual. Although there will be listening and discussion among the participants, he believes that more importantly this will be a time for listening to the Holy Spirit guiding the Church today. Therefore, before the Synod begins, there will be retreat for all the participants. During the Synod, the different daily sessions will begin with a presentation by a theologian, followed by a spiritual reflection, and then there will be what has been called "conversation in the Spirit" first in small groups and then in the whole assembly. One priest has suggested that it has been designed "to identify what the Holy Spirit wishes to say to the assembly and through it, eventually, to the Church, through mutual listening and discernment of what has been heard."

As a Carmelite sister, St. Therese's primary ministry was prayer. The reason I have spent so much time talking about the Synod is that Pope Francis is asking the entire Church "to unite in communion of prayer and insistent invocation of the Holy Spirit to guide us in discerning what the Lord is asking of his Church today." Because this Synod is so important, I am asking you to pray every day this month, through the intercession of St. Therese, for the Holy Spirit to enlighten the minds and hearts of all the Synod participants. I am also asking you to keep informed about the Synod through *The Criterion* and other Catholic news sources.

Finally, my brothers and sisters, on this Respect Life Sunday, let us also pray, through the intercession of St. Therese, that the Holy Spirit will open the minds and hearts of all so that all will develop a profound respect for all life from the moment of conception to natural death.