

VOTIVE MASS OF SAINT THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX
BASILICA OF SAINT THÉRÈSE
LISIEUX, FRANCE
OCTOBER 20, 2006

Is 66: 10 -14 c

Ps 131: 1 bcda, 2, 3

Mt 18: 1-4

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen.

1. Our pilgrimage has brought us to the holy places of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, most of all, the Carmel in which she achieved heroic sanctity of life. Saint Thérèse died at just 24 years of age, having spent her whole adult life within the enclosure of Carmel, which she entered at 15 years of age. Although her brief adult life was spent in the hiddenness of the cloister, she became the doctor of the Science of Love for all the world. Her autobiography has been printed in practically every language known to man and is perhaps the most read spiritual book after the divinely-inspired Holy Scriptures. Saint Thérèse was declared a Doctor of the Church by our late and most beloved Pope John Paul II. She is the Doctor of the Science of Love. Saint Thérèse discovered her vocation to be love in the heart of the Church. She wrote: “Yes, I have found my place in the Church and it is You, O my God, Who have given me this place; in the heart of the Church, my Mother. I shall be Love.” (*Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, Father John Clarke, O.C.D. Third Ed. Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996, p. 194).

2. From the time of her death, her brothers and sisters in the Church have come to know the heroic love which she had for them and continues to have for them. God had taught her the Little Way of Divine Love, and her only desire was to love her brothers and sisters in the Church, without boundary. On July 17, 1897, before her death on September 30, she expressed the eternal quality of Divine Love in her life. She declared:

I feel that my mission is about to begin, my mission of making
others love God as I love Him, my mission of teaching my little

way to souls. If God answers my requests, my heaven will be spent on earth up until the end of the world. Yes, I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth” (*Story of a Soul*, p. 263).

How many of us have experienced the boundless love of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux in our lives, whenever we have invoked her intercession. Our name of affection for her, the Little Flower, refers to the shower of the roses of love upon us in the Church. So often, in times of great need or doubt, she sends us a rose to assure us of her intercession.

3. Most of all, Saint Thérèse expresses her love for us by teaching us her Little Way, the way of spiritual childhood. Throughout her life, Saint Thérèse intensely desired to live a holy life, a life in communion of love with God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit. She was profoundly conscious of her own littleness, her insignificance, and wondered how she could ever attain to the love of God, which she so fervently desired. In a letter to her Mother Superior in June of 1897, just months before her death on September 30 of that year, she used the image of an elevator to speak of her own inability to climb the difficult stairs of holiness of life. She found in the passage from the Prophet Isaiah the answer to her desire to love as God loves (Reading I). She wrote:

But wanting to know, O my God, what you would do to *the very little one* who answered Your call, continued my search and this is what I discovered: “*As one whom a mother caresses, so will I comfort you; you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you.*” Ah! never did words more tender and more melodious come to give joy to my soul. The elevator which must raise me to heaven in Your arms, O Jesus! And for this I had no need to grow up, but rather I had to remain *little* and become this more and more” (*Story of a Soul*, p. 208).

In the divinely-inspired words of the Prophet Isaiah, to which we have just listened, she found the inspiration and strength to become a spiritual child, in accord with our Lord's instruction to us in the Gospel (Gospel).

4. What is the Little Way? It is a life founded upon and directed by our Lord and His Gospel. The first step is humility, the recognition that all we are and have comes from God and that it is He Who, with the all-loving arms of Jesus, raises us up to Himself, helps us to lift up our hearts to Him. The Little Way requires a simplicity of life, in which we put aside all of our pretenses to be someone important, to be in charge of our lives, and let Christ be the important one, the one who takes charge of my life.
5. The second step of the Little Way is confidence in God's never failing love. It is childlike trust that God will accomplish in us what we surely cannot do on our own, because He is our all-loving Father. Confidence means freedom from all the useless worry and the paralyzing self-pity which keeps us from letting God carry out His works of divine love through us. When we are confident, we recognize our littleness, but we do not worry about it. We do our best with whatever God gives us, and know that His love and mercy will supply for what is lacking in us.
6. Finally, the Little Way is abandonment to Divine Providence, that is, throwing ourselves like a small child into the arms of a parent, knowing that all is in the hands of God, Who loves us more than we will ever comprehend. When we abandon ourselves to Divine Providence, we no longer worry about what others think of us, we no longer dwell upon the misunderstanding and rejection of our witness of love. We are able to accept disappointments, trusting that the all-merciful Lord is ever at work in our lives, if only we give ourselves completely to doing His will.
7. Humility, confidence and abandonment to Divine Providence is the Little Way of Saint Thérèse, the Way of Jesus, the Way of the Cross. As we are blessed to spend a few hours in the places which our Lord made holy through the life of Saint Thérèse, let us ask for the grace to imitate her following of Jesus. On June 9, 1895, Saint Thérèse, who had a

strong devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, made her “Act of Oblation to Merciful Love,” her consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At the beginning of her consecration, she declared:

“O my God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to *Love* You and make You *Loved*, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish Your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory You have prepared for me in Your Kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be a saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg you, O my God! to be Yourself my *Sanctity*” (*Story of a Soul*, 1996, p. 276).

On pilgrimage to Lisieux, let us be renewed in our desire to be saints and give ourselves anew to Christ Who alone is our holiness, Who alone makes us saints.

8. With humility, we now give ourselves into the all-merciful and all-loving arms of Jesus Who, through His Eucharistic Sacrifice, lifts our hearts up to His own glorious pierced heart. He lifts us up to Himself to make us holy with Divine Love, to heal our wounds and to strengthen us to go forth with confidence to do whatever God is asking of us. Let us now, with Saint Thérèse, abandon ourselves to Christ, so that the immeasurable outpouring of His love in the Holy Eucharist may reach all our brothers and sisters, especially those who are suffering in any way.

Heart of Jesus, King and Center of all hearts, have mercy on us.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, pray for us.