



Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois and Canada

www.littleflower.org

Spring 2012

Walking in the
footsteps of

St. Thérèse



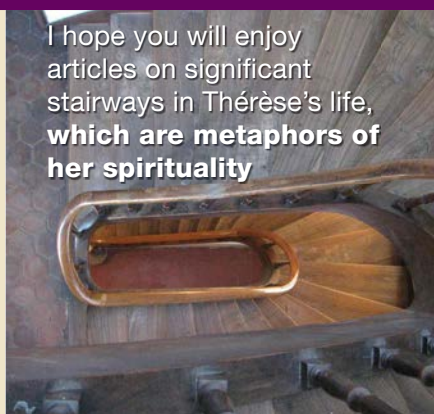
Chosen paths of God

>> Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm., director

Dear Friends of St. Thérèse, It is good to be in your hands again, as we reflect on walking in the footsteps of St. Thérèse. You and I as friends of the Little Flower try to live and follow her “little way” spirituality. We all know it is filled with stairs, steps, ups and downs, and some elevators rides. She is an excellent and stellar model of how to be a faithful follower of Jesus amid the descents and ascents of our lives.

I hope you will enjoy articles on significant stairways in Thérèse’s life which are metaphors of her spirituality, the new treasures at the National Shrine, including her bridal shoes, the National Shrine at Christmas and our new Shrine Director, Father Bernie, as

well as information about the Society and the Carmelites. May this time together Between Friends be a walk of education and inspiration. Thank you for your friendship with Thérèse and the Carmelites. We hold you close in our hearts and know you



I hope you will enjoy articles on significant stairways in Thérèse’s life, which are metaphors of her spirituality

are held tight in Thérèse’s heart – and God’s heart! You and your intentions are being remembered in daily Mass and community prayer. Walk well in her footsteps.



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A simple path



>> Mary Therese Lambert is editor of *Between Friends*

Have you been blessed in your life to know some really holy people? Working for the Carmelites and the Society of the Little Flower, I can honestly say that I have. They don’t glow or have halos or make me feel like a sinner or a slouch, but something about them draws me into something deeper about me. That’s why I view them as holy in my sense of the term.

I have never met an official saint as far as I know. But I did have an experience of almost overwhelming holiness when I visited the Carmel in Lisieux.

The nuns live a cloistered, prayerful life even though tourists and pilgrims surround the Carmel and clamor for tours in order to walk in the footsteps of St. Thérèse. Few are invited inside the cloister and very few have visited the actual cell of Sr. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, our beloved Little Flower.

Traveling with Father Bob does have advantages. We were invited inside the Carmel and given the most amazing, gracious and inspiring tour. Visiting the very room in which St. Thérèse lived, studied, prayed, and died was a blessing I carry with me every day.

In her cell I could feel and sense holiness, a gentle power so brilliant it is as if its glow and luster were in some measure left behind in that space.

I share this because here in Darien, IL, at the National Shrine of the Little Flower, we are trying to give pilgrims and visitors a similar experience. We are in the process of assembling within the Shrine an exact replica of her room that I was blessed to visit in the Carmel in Lisieux.

The Carmelite Nuns are extremely grateful for the generous assistance the Society is providing them to restore the Carmel. In gratitude, they have given some beautiful artifacts to the Society so that we can attempt to give pilgrims here a sense of the holiness of St. Thérèse through these physical items and relics.

We human beings rely upon our senses – touch, sight, smell and hearing – to stimulate our deeper, inner sense of the

divine and sacred. This is what we are trying to accomplish in our National Shrine expansion project currently in progress.

The nuns in Lisieux have sent the Society the original door to Thérèse’s first cell when she entered the Carmel in 1888. They also sent a window from the Carmel chapter room, where Thérèse made her vows, so that we can build a very accurate replica of her cell. This will be a powerful addition to the National Shrine.

We are also recreating the display areas of our museum so that the unique artifacts from the childhood and life of St. Thérèse can best be arranged in order to illustrate and tell the story of her remarkable journey of a soul.

Finally, we are adding a complete audio narration of our entire display so that the story of St. Thérèse, and her little way of holiness, may come more to life for our visitors. We are especially eager for young people who visit to find our Shrine more interactive and the information more accessible via state-of-the-art museum software and computer displays.

This major renovation and expansion of our National Shrine powerfully open up the life and holiness of St. Thérèse to future generations.

The presence of holiness in our lives is the grace of God. This Shrine and our mission of making St. Thérèse known and loved, seek to enable God’s grace, through her shower of roses, to be more visible and tangible in our world. God bless you for the support and prayer you offer her Society of the Little Flower.

You belong to a remarkable family of grace and blessing, witness and commitment – that’s how I view the Society of the Little Flower.

Your goodness and charity are so clear to me through your letters in response to the Society’s newsletters and appeals. Our goal in writing to you every month is two-fold.

First, our goal is to nurture your knowledge and understanding of our beloved, St Thérèse, the Little Flower of the Child Jesus.

You have been drawn by her simple, pure faith and unshakeable, selfless love of Jesus. Your desire to follow in her “little way of spiritual childhood” has brought you to the Society of the Little Flower. Our desire is to strengthen your bond with St. Thérèse and further your spiritual imitation of her little way of making holy the ordinary and the everyday.

Second, our goal is to encourage you to actively participate in the shower of roses she promised in her last days on earth. Her promise to “spend her heaven doing good on earth” is fulfilled in large measure by friends like YOU who generously support and sustain the work of her Carmelite priests, nuns, brothers, sisters and lay ministers.

Our letters and newsletters seek to build upon your knowledge and understanding of the Little Flower and also of the ministries of her Carmelite brothers and sisters.

All of us who work and minister in her name here at the Society of the Little Flower feel greatly blessed and inspired. You inspire us every day with your letters and acts of faith, hope and charity. You motivate Father Bob and all of us to keep our hearts and minds focused on both the holiness of the Little Flower and also upon her missionary zeal.

Thank you for sharing in both of these aspects of her shower of roses. You are a dear friend of the Little Flower.

>> For your comments or questions, please write to Mary T. Lambert:
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Walking in the footsteps of Jesus with Thérèse

As we seek to walk in the footsteps of St. Thérèse, we must begin by asking ourselves, "Where do her footsteps lead?"

Who taught her how to live? How to love? And eventually, how to die?

Any attempt to understand and then follow our beloved St. Thérèse sets us very quickly on the footsteps of Jesus, her Lord, her guide, her role model, and her certain hope.

Jesus, son of Mary, is perhaps a peculiar subject of this "Saint of the Month" article, as Jesus is infinitely more than any prophet before or any saint after His time walking this earth.

But Jesus, Son of Mary, was fully and truly a man. He walked this earth inviting others to follow in His footsteps, literally, as with the apostles, as well as figuratively and spiritually. Thérèse sought all her life to know ever more fully this man Jesus and to be like Him in all things.

Perhaps she pondered the boy Jesus when Thérèse lost her dear mother at the tender age of 4½. She could imagine Jesus alone in the Temple as His parents journeyed home to Nazareth without Him. For the first time, Jesus found Himself beyond the loving gaze and secure embrace of His own mother and foster father. Perhaps the courage of the boy Jesus strengthened the little girl as she grew up without her mother.

Surely the boy Jesus loved His own mother even more intensely than Thérèse could understand. But He did not cling to her in Jerusalem when He stood bravely in his Father's house. Thérèse loved her father's house and yet could look beyond to another reality, following the will of her heavenly Father just as the boy Jesus longed to do.

Jesus returned to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary and lived under their authority, growing in wisdom and stature and love of the Lord. Thérèse too grew in stature and wisdom and

holiness in her father's house.

As far as the Gospels convey, Jesus spent the next 18 years of His life in the family home and the family business. What could these years in Nazareth have meant to Him, these patient, quiet, hidden years?

Thérèse longed for such hidden years, but that meant leaving her father's home for the cloister. She was impatient to move on with her own journey of holiness and self-emptying. So eager was Thérèse to enter the Carmel at Lisieux that she even begged special permission from Pope Leo XIII to join at age 15 rather than wait even one year.

Within those secure walls, young Thérèse could contemplate Jesus ever more deeply, her beloved Lord in whose footsteps she strove daily to walk. Much like Jesus laboring as a carpenter in Joseph's workshop, Thérèse labored under the watchful eye of her superiors. Surely Joseph was more patient and kind to his apprentice than some of the Carmelite nuns were to this youngest sister. And yet, her apprenticeship was in the way of the cross and the way of compassion.

And as disease closed in on Thérèse at age 24, she again could look to Jesus who walked courageously toward His death in Jerusalem. She could take great comfort in knowing her Savior Himself did not want to give up so

soon His human life, but rather begged the Father to allow the cup of pain and sorrow to pass over him. And yet, Thérèse followed in Jesus' footsteps in accepting without complaint or despair the will of the Father. For she knew with all her heart, mind, and soul, she knew far beyond mere faith, belief, or reason, that she would follow in Jesus' footstep, through the gate of death to life eternal. Her beloved Savior and Lord would allow her to spend her heaven doing good on earth – a shower of roses from the precious Little Flower of the Child Jesus.

Thérèse followed in the footsteps of Jesus, walking in confident love, in transformation and surrender – the paschal mystery of suffering death and life. She teaches us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus because this is the journey of illumination, glory, and holiness. 🌹

- John C. Riss



Father Bernhard Bauerle New shrine director

Everyone knows him as "Father Bernie." He portrays a German intensity, which breaks out in a delightful twinkle. He is the new Director of the National Shrine of St. Thérèse in Darien, IL.

Born in Germany, Father Bernhard Hans Bauerle was sent to the USA after the WWII to escape the poverty and desperation of post-war Germany at age 14. He attended Joliet Catholic High School where he met the Carmelites. During his eight years of Carmelite formation and education, he learned about St. Thérèse as one of the new Carmelite stars. Ordained in 1964, he spent 38 years teaching, administrating and serving in Carmelite high schools in Louisville, KY, Mundelein and Joliet, IL. He was elected to, and served in, Carmelite Provincial Administration from 2002 until 2011, and in the fall of 2011 accepted the responsibility of becoming the Shrine Director.

"My mom had devotion to St. Thérèse and knew of the Carmelites," Father Bernie explained, "which I only learned about after



ordination. St. Thérèse was not an important part of my spirituality, but I think this is changing here. I'm learning more about her and how she touches people's lives. I'm humbled by their attraction to her and their trust in her and in the Carmelites. I'm touched by people just coming here to pray in silence and be with her."

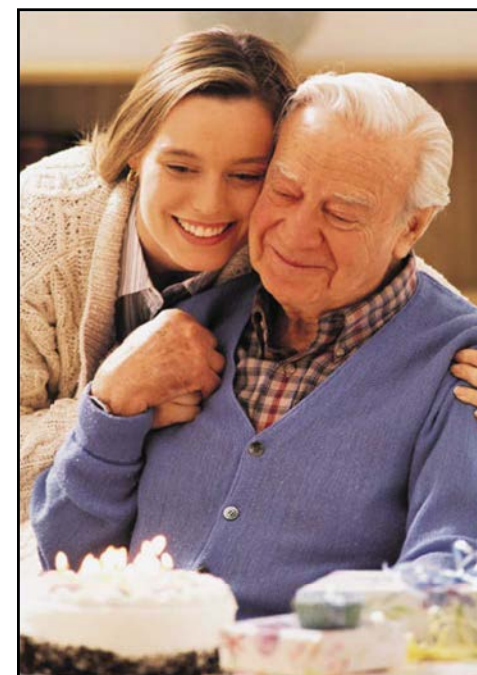
Father Bernhard enjoys the pastoral aspect of this shrine ministry – the daily Mass, the sacraments, listening to people, and hopes to expand his presence and programs there.

"I love his homilies at daily Mass," one shrine pilgrim stated. "Father Bernie is prayerful and precise and gives me something to reflect on every time." 🌹

Pilgrimages of Faith

Father Bob is leading a biblical pilgrimage of faith.
• The Holy Land, October 14-25, 2012

For full brochure and registration, please contact: Darlene, Carmelite Spiritual Center,
8433 Bailey Road, Darien, IL, 60561 (630)-969-4141 CSCRetreat@aol.com



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*"What matters in life,
is not great deeds,
but great love."*

Saint Therese of Lisieux

Carmelite Carefree Village is a Senior Living Community located next to the National Shrine of St. Therese in Darien, IL. In the spirit of St. Therese, we've been advancing quality lifestyles for older adults since 1979.

Our Community offers Independent Living, Assisted Living, & Memory Loss Care in private apartments. Maintenance, housekeeping, 3 daily meals, 24 hour staffing, all utilities including phone, personal care alarm, shopping, planned social programs, activities, banking & Health Care Services are provided for an affordable monthly fee. No Membership Fee required.



The walk of a beloved bride

The National Shrine of St. Thérèse in Darien, IL, sparkles with new treasures. The Carmelite Nuns of Lisieux have graciously loaned us the bridal shoes which young Thérèse wore as she entered the Carmel on April 9, 1888. This sparkling treasure includes some of the liturgical vestments which the Vatican made of the bridal gown she wore as part of the entrance ritual.

We are all aware of the challenging journey Thérèse experienced in pursuing this call. After much discernment and struggle, (going even to the local Bishop and Pope Leo XII in Rome) and her papa's heart-wrenching approval, Thérèse was finally approved to enter the Carmel. Her papa purchased for her a beautiful cream velvet wedding dress, with satin swans and matching wedding shoes for her to meet her Beloved as His bride. Amid sobs from her family, Thérèse's heart was filled with joyful inner peace and throbbing passion.

We can only imagine how young Thérèse's heart was glowing as she walked those steps into the Carmel – the fulfillment of a long-felt call. She was giving herself to her Beloved. As she wrote: "my heart was beating so violently it seemed impossible to walk when they signaled for me to come to the enclosure door. I advanced, however, asking myself whether I was going to die because of the beating of my heart! Ah! What a moment that was! One would have to experience it to know what it is."

The 15½-year-old bride said: "I am here forever and ever," as she knelt before her papa for his tearful blessing at the enclosure door. The Carmelite nuns then escorted this youthful bride inside the cloister to the Blessed Sacrament and gave her a tour of her new home.

Responding to love first given, Thérèse was walking into a new part of her journey, to be filled with awesome and ecstatic love, deep solitude, intense suffering and prayerful self emptying. The Carmel was not all she thought it

would be, but she knew this is where God wanted her. Enclosed in a cloister, she became the saint who took the whole world into her heart and prayer. Love always expands us and never contracts.


After her death, beatification and canonization, her cream velvet bridal entrance dress was made into beautiful vestments by the Vatican seamstresses, at the request of Pope Pius XI, who beatified and canonized St. Thérèse. On display at the shrine, as a gift of the Carmel Lisieux, are the priest vestment, Communion banner, chalice veil and pall, and the burse for the corporal used at Mass. Also on display are the delicate bridal shoes she wore.

Visitors notice the cream velvet in the center piece and in the stars, as well as the precious golden stitching and sparkling jewels, and the lace collars made from her veil.

Priest Mass Chasuble has the cream velvet bridal material is seen in the cross on the back, (which reads: "all you

little ones, come to me"), the center panel in front (which reads "God is love"), the 34 stars and the lilies. The most beautiful part is the back, because in those days the Priest celebrated Eucharist with his back toward the people. The intricate gold thread was donated and sewn by the Vatican. The lace collar is made from her bridal veil. The lilies reflect the picture she drew of her mom and dad and the nine Martin children (lilies) – five in full bloom for the five sisters who lived and four closed buds for those who died in infancy. The 34 stars represent St. Thérèse as the newest star in the Communion of Saints, a bright light calling us to read and live the Gospel with

her childlike simplicity, confidence, trust and unconditional love. Eucharist (Mass) is experienced as the Banquet of the Beloved.

Pilgrims to the Darien Shrine have expressed awe at seeing these beautiful artifacts of St. Thérèse and closeness with her as that special bridal moment of love. One passionate friend pleaded: "Oh, if I could just walk in those wedding shoes for one moment, it would mean everything! It would be like walking in heaven!" These beautiful, sparkling treasures remind and encourage us to continue to walk in Thérèse's footsteps – in the way of confidence and love. 

- Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.





St. Thérèse's stairway spirituality

ascending and descending



As a young girl, when her Dad took her to the big city of Paris, Thérèse was fascinated when her eyes first saw a new invention, an elevator, so easily taking people up and down the floors. She wrote: “We live in an age of inventions. We need no longer climb up a flight of stairs with great effort. I am determined to find an elevator to carry me to Jesus, as I was too small to climb the steep stairs of perfection. In Holy Scriptures, I sought the elevator I wanted, and I read: ‘whoever is a little one, let them come to Me.’”

This innocent search for an easy way to God is Thérèse’s famous metaphor of her “little way” spirituality – her humble attempts to soar into God’s arms and heart. With childlike simplicity, confidence, and hope, she celebrates littleness as the best means of holiness. In some ways it is strange and contradictory, because as a Carmelite, she enters and expands a tradition of Carmelite spirituality, which her namesake Teresa of Avila celebrates as a journey up, down, and through an Interior Castle to the glistening glory within, and her mentor John of Cross celebrates as the Ascent of Mount Carmel through an interior tunnel of darkness seeking light.

Only a child sees through contradictions and integrates them.

We all want easy ways to God – to what our hearts long for. Yet human experience teaches us that elevators are often fantasies – ways of denying the work of transformation that God’s beloved daughters and sons are called to. Didn’t Jesus say: “If anyone wishes to follow me, let them take up their cross” – which means climbing and descending stairways. Yes, it is all the work of God – but God’s grace works best with those who cooperate and help themselves as partners with divine love.

One of the great lessons of the Little Flower’s life is how she integrates the reality of the descents, climbs and struggles of stairways with the faith experience of elevators – human effort, and God’s free unconditional, uplifting love.

As a woman of the God’s word, St. Thérèse knew the experience of Jacob’s dream in Genesis 28 of a stairway or ladder connecting heaven and earth, with movement up and down. This experience happens at Beth-el (the “house of God”) and because he engaged the stairway he was renamed Israel (“one who wrestles with God”). Thérèse’s life teaches us how to ride elevators as we engage stairways as the way we encounter God.

Paula D’Arcy reflects the wisdom that “God comes to us disguised as our life.” Stairways were great teachers of Thérèse – how God was forming her and defining her.



The Alençon stairway of confident love

At Alençon where she was born, there is her childhood stairway, near the living room, and upstairs to their bedrooms. Thérèse, being a high maintenance child who needed attention, went up and down those stairs so often. But her mom, Zélie Guérin, writes that she developed a delightful but frustrating habit of dramatic exits upstairs and entrances downstairs. When told to go to bed, young Thérèse would run to the stairway, step on the first step and cry out “Mama, Mama!” If mama did not respond “Yes, my child” – she would not go any further. She did this on every step. Young Thérèse was not going to climb the stairway alone and unnoticed. That her mom, dad, and even her siblings sisters played along with her little game and catered to her need to be noticed and responded at every step, is such a great testimony of love. This response of her mother and family became the container of love by which young Thérèse would learn in the most human way that she was beloved – by others and ultimately by God. So ascending and descending were human ways of developing a strong self-image – of being grounded in love – of belonging – of not being invisible – of being known and loved, which is critical to human and divine intimacy and love. These stairs experienced so much. They were stairs of transformation and growth – her having to go to bed earlier than she wanted – frequent and prayerful trips upstairs to visit her mom as she was dying – mornings of anticipation and evenings of despair and hurt feelings – yet they were all a stairway cathedral of love where holiness would blossom as she grew up. Somehow the “yes, my child” echoed God’s love on every step – and young Thérèse heard it often enough to believe it, despite the insecurities,

sensitivities and fears that could haunt her. This Alençon stairway of childhood was the cradle of her learning to trust love, which became the elevator of trusting Jesus.

Sometimes I cry when I relive this childhood stairway experience of Thérèse because my mom and dad were loving, but very challenging. As children, they loved us (me) so much they wanted us to succeed and try harder. But instead of listening to the love expressed in their challenge, I walked the way of feeling inadequate and not being good enough. Thérèse listened to and absorbed the love “yes, my child” and developed that inner security and safety of confident love. She knew she was beloved of God. Like many of us, I still yearn and strive to believe this incredible good news and confidence of being loved.



Les Buissonnets stairway of conversion and transformation

After her mom died, her papa, Louis Martin, moved the family to Les Buissonnets in Lisieux. These were challenging times for young Thérèse – the loss of her mother, a deepening and touchy sensitivity and ability to be easily hurt and be disappointed, a scrupulous soul, the loss of Pauline (her security blanket second mother) leaving to become a Carmelite, the constant sickness and longing melancholy, and the cruel betrayal by classmates and friends ravaged her soul. She seemed lost at times amid easy and many tears. The desire to be holy, good and perfect was strong and elusive. At times she became self-centered to protect herself from the disappointments of life. Growing up, in her late childhood and early adolescence was not easy for Thérèse. She was hard on herself and

even deflected the enormous outreach of others, because she got lost, as we all can do, in her own expectations and darkness, exiled from her own goodness and love. The stairway into adulthood was a difficult climb.

Just before her 13th birthday, on Christmas Eve 1886, she prayed at Midnight Mass to the Infant Jesus to be generous in giving herself to Him and be a wholehearted saint. We all need to be careful what we pray for. Returning home to Les Buissonnets, she looked at the fireplace where she would place her shoes to be filled with presents. She overheard her Papa who was frustrated that she should still do childish things say: “I hope this is the last year!” She was crushed and hurt; tears flooded her eyes – but rushing up the stairs to her room, she had a miracle conversion – she basically heard Jesus say (in modern idiom): “Thérèse, get over yourself – it’s not about you!” She experienced an inner strength that echoed the simple physical experience of climbing those familiar steps. A liberating elevator swept through her soul and lifted her from self-centered grief and sensitivity. Instead of sulking in self pity, she wiped away her tears and courageously went down the stairs and excited her Papa with grateful delight for all the goodies he had put in her shoes. Her focus was on him and pleasing him – not herself. Thérèse was free. She explained: “I felt charity enter my soul and the need to forget myself... the work I had been unable to do the last 10 years was done by Jesus in one instant.”

The Buissonnets stairway experience was one of conversion, self-emptying and transformation – an elevator experience to a new level of life – to adulthood and maturity – to love: a burning and thirsty desire to save souls and be for others. It was the stairway into the second half of her life – a stairway she was so familiar with but finally awakened to its invitation to what she always desired.

This early adolescence experience of awakening always touches my life. I can get so caught up in myself, my dreams, hopes, and hurts, that I miss the big picture – thinking life and God’s will are all about me. We can be so self-centered and burdened by the disappointments of life and unmet expectations. As much as I don’t like them, I’ve learned to be

grateful for wake-up calls from my childish selfishness to an adult reverence and focus on others – including the effects of my behavior on other people. It is huge jump and stretch for me to stop playing the victim and walking in self pity even over hurts that only exist in my imagination. Often the confrontations to my ego have been painful but freeing wake-up calls – elevators that freed me from heavy self-created burdens and darkness.



The Lisieux Carmel stairway of surrender

Thérèse felt the call to become a Carmelite Nun. She persisted despite opposition from the prioress, the priest-chaplain and even the local bishop that she was too young and not ready. She even appealed to the Pope, knowing that he was at the top of the church stairway. Finally she was received in, dressed in bridal beauty as she was giving her life to her Beloved. The Carmel was not all she had romantically expected. Some of the other nuns irritated her and even looked down on her as too simple or childlike. Her room was on the second floor. Several times a day she would deliberately, silently, and attentively climb up and down this stairway for community prayer and activities. This winding stairway was an important part of and reflection of her life.

Despite the great dreams that called her to be a missionary, priest, doctor and warrior, she learned to be “love in the heart of the church – my vocation is love” – she learned to integrate all the various pulls of life into being where she was – where God had planted her and with whom God has placed her. She tried not to live from the false self and ego expectations which can try to define us all.

Our Prayer

Gentle Thérèse, teach me to walk in your footsteps – to follow your little way of trust, transformation and surrender. Teach me to be childlike enough to let Jesus be the elevator Who raises me above the stairways of confusion, darkness, need, hurt and fear. Free me with your trusting spirit, so that I might be lifted up above all that weighs me down and makes my heart heavy. When I try to carry everything and climb by myself, life gets heavy and stairways seem impossible. Save me from thinking that I must do all the work of salvation. Give me your innocent trust so that I can throw myself into God’s arms. Lift the scars, burdens and fears of my heart. By His death on the cross, Jesus saved us – His outstretched arms connect us with God. Like you, Little Flower, I want to be God’s child. Instill confidence in me that I will allow God to lift me in His strong arms. Let Jesus be my elevator this day. Make me light again that I can fly to the heights of God’s embrace like you, gentle St. Thérèse, my friend. I want to join you on the uplifting ride! Help me be a dependent and trusting child of God like you on all the stairways of my life!

She prayed: “It is your arms, Jesus, which are the elevator to carry me to heaven. So there is no need for me to grow up. In fact, just the opposite: I must become less and less.” She was living her “little way of spiritual childhood” – the spirituality of trust and confidence.

We can imagine times she ran upstairs or slowly walked down. Her steps were unique, one of the gardeners had mentioned. She had made her oblation to merciful love. She has desert experience of the dark nights of the senses and spirit. As her TB progressed, she looked into emptiness. God was purifying and raising her beyond the self-serving ego needs of earning salvation by work, prayers and suffering to a self-emptying trust and surrender to divine goodness and intimacy.

The sisters noticed her struggle to climb those stairs to her room – one evening it took her almost one half hour to climb those stairs. She never complained, just stopped again on each step to catch her elusive breath before she could make

the next step. She did not cry out, but as in her childhood, she must have heard “yes, my child” which gave her strength in the faith awareness that she was not alone or abandoned. Over nine years she had walked and run up and down these stairs. Now they were the final challenge and metaphor of her life of surrender to divine love, within and beyond her.

Thérèse was moved downstairs to the infirmary, never to climb again. As every last consolation of body and spirit was taken from her, including her ability to receive Holy Communion, she learned that “Everything is grace” even as her body weakened and bled. Amid the darkness, her final words were “My God, how I love You!” She had told the sisters: “It is into God’s arms that I am falling! I’m afraid I have feared death. Now I am not afraid of what happens after death... I am not dying – I am going to Life!”

This stairway of surrender has been a constant challenge in my life. I’m a high-energy guy and my dad taught me to work hard and give my best. Driven by a self-created sense of inadequacy, I work hard. I’m constantly striving and need to do it myself – to take that next step – always proving myself – exhausting myself and others as a driven man. Only later in life did I learn to surrender to the experience of being loved and lifted, out of the inadequacy that was defining and driving me. I finally was so weak and tired that I heard and listened to the “yes, my child” and surrendered to the God who defines me as His beloved son. It was like a powerful elevator transported me to some new heights of freedom and light. Yes, it was a death to long held self-definition and a driving ego. Now it is life, even though it continues to be a struggle. I stand on the steps with Thérèse. Amidst the darkness of my long recovery from spinal surgery, all she ever said was “trust God!” It is all about surrender and getting over ourselves!

I suspect we all have these stairways and elevators in our life experience, as “God comes us to disguised as our life.” Thérèse can teach us how to climb and descend in faith and enjoy the elevator ride – knowing it is all Beth-el, the beloved house of God we are walking, climbing and living in. 🌹

- Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.



Words matter

>> Daniel Pritchard is an Ambassador of the Society of the Little Flower

I never felt like I could walk in those footsteps...

Not because I was pressured, or felt intimidated, or anything like that. I just never thought I could measure up. Those were BIG footsteps. They were my dad's.

He wasn't an overly complicated man. He didn't have a prestigious job, nor was he famous in a celebrity kind of way. But he was my dad. Watching him, through my boyhood eyes, I knew his was a tough act to follow. It still is.

He was part of Tom Brokaw's labeled "Greatest Generation." It's a perfect term. Most of the finest people I've met in my life were part of that generation.



Born in 1916, my dad grew up on a farm. In the ethic of his day, kids did what they were supposed to do. And they kept their mouths shut. That was my dad.

But, for him, words didn't matter as much as actions anyway. Character and integrity mattered. You had to stand for something strong and good and honorable. And you had to be

there when the chips were down. For anyone – and everyone. That was my dad.

As a loving father, he wanted what was best for me. I knew I could always count on him. I think I'll always remember the whisker rubs (along with the hugs and kisses) before I went to bed each night.

But as I grew older, and as the inevitable independence of the teenage years took hold of me, the words "I love you, dad" became less and less frequent.

It got so that saying those words became impossible for me. I wish I knew why. In my dad's later years I began to pray that I would have the courage to say "I love you, dad" just one more time.

On January 14, 1994 my dad was in intensive care, struggling for his life. There was medical equipment everywhere. The family gathered and he was given the last rites. We all left the room praying for just one more day. And in the back of my mind, I was reminded of my prayer: "just one more time."

I walked back into that room, looked him in the eye and said, "I love you, dad." A tear ran down his cheek as he whispered back, his words muffled by the breathing tube, "I love you, too." These were the last words my dad and I said to each other. The next day, he was gone.

As I look back, my dad was wrong about one thing: Words do matter! And final words can matter the most: their sound can echo for years to come.

No one knows what their final words will be. But we do have control over a form of our final words: the final testament of our life – our will or living trust.

Many of us only think of our estate plan in legal terms. But that document, lovingly prepared, can

also proclaim our heart's deepest feelings. Our estate plan not only instructs how our assets should be distributed, it also lets the world know who was important to us in life.

At the Society of the Little Flower, we pray that you will consider including a few words in your estate plan that lets the world know how important St. Thérèse and the Society of the Little Flower have been in your life. By making a bequest for our benefit, so much could be accomplished! And how grateful we would be!

Our plans for the future are big: Carmelite seminarians are counting on us for their education. The poor in missions across the world are depending on us. Those who are lost spiritually are seeking answers, and St. Thérèse can show them the way as no other can.

But our plans, and our ability to share Thérèse's spirituality with those who desperately need it, depend on people like you. We pray – that you will pray – for St. Thérèse to guide you in this decision. And as she has countless times in your life, she will show you the way.

To help you prepare or review your estate plans, we have a free booklet that is yours for the asking: the "Personal Affairs Record Book." This handy guide will help you organize all your assets in one place. Completing it will also be a wonderful gift to your executor: It will make that person's job so much easier. Just call Janice or me in our planned giving office at 1-888-996-1212 and we'll send a copy out right away.

Words can change the course of life. As 2012 begins, now might be the perfect time to consider what your final words will be. 🌹

- Daniel Pritchard

Stair light

I have a circular stairway at home. Initially I loved it for the romance of it all – so evocative, so charming!

As I get older, however, the romance has lessened. I still enjoy the climb because of all the photos that encircle it, and it gives me an excuse to pause and reflect, though my pace now is slower, and my grip on the railing more necessary. Stairways have always been part of our life's journeys. They symbolize our dreams, from inception to realization. Onward and upward – so delightfully American! Even in The Bible, weren't Jacob's angels on a stairway of sorts—a boost to his ultimate destination? Who is to say that all the beloved guests in our home do not still inhabit the energy that surrounds our silent steps.

Thérèse's three earthly homes had staircases that knew the sound of her step: in baby shoes, high-buttoned young lady's fashion, and albergates. One wonders what Thérèse meditated upon as she, quite young, climbed and descended the lovely staircase at Alencon, her first home. Each morning she called out, "Mama!" on the rise of every step. Only when beloved Zélie replied, "Yes, Thérèse!" would the little girl move on to another level. In her nightdress, barefooted, carrying her doll, or carried by her sisters, Thérèse knew the staircase meant growth and change. If it were going up, it could be to her prayer cove behind her bed, or to whispered secrets with her hermit sister Celine. The trip downstairs was noisier – to dinner, play, Father's songs and stories, and the holy commotion with other siblings.

Imagine the handprints of little Thérèse on the papered walls beside the Alencon staircase. My beloved friend Marilyn not only imagines these relics but also the marks made by her own grandchildren up and down her staircase at home. As only a devoted grandmother thinks, they have become holy and treasured imprints, just as Thérèse's were.

After Zélie's death, Louis Martin moved his family to Lisieux's impressive "Bushes," or Les Buissonnets. The stair-

way here is less prominent in view, but nonetheless, busy with five young women, a maid, and Louis himself. After all, this is the stairway that Pauline descended to leave her beloved home for a new one at Carmel. This staircase too heard the panicked running steps of Leonie, Marie, and Celine, as they vigilantly attended the young Thérèse bedridden with a debilitating disease that afflicted her physically and emotionally for several months.

These stairs also provided the backdrop for Thérèse's Second Conversion on Christmas Eve. The teenage Thérèse who so sadly climbed after hearing her tired father's complaint about childish traditions, minutes later, scampered down to open her presents, dry-eyed and committed to a much less self-centered heart. Oh, if those steps could talk! They heard in Thérèse's footsteps the emergence of the young woman soon to enter a new life at Carmel.

And, at Carmel, yet a new staircase for our holy darling to climb: one that led to her cell of spiritual solitude, unimaginable joy, and intense suffering. No bounding up the stairs here, but a measured step for meditation

on each rise. Surely climbing the Carmel staircase became a metaphor for Thérèse's longing to climb the interminable stairs of life to her Jesus. Hearing of the invention of the elevator, Thérèse sees grace as her own "elevator" which will ease her ascent to the arms of her Beloved. In her nine years at Carmel, the stairs heard her step that often hesitated, sometimes stopped completely on its labored way home.

Where is your staircase? What is its destination? Who stands at the top? Who helps you when the steps are too steep? Every human being can write about the stairways in his or her own life. They are personal, intimate, even holy. They know our particular step, and the emotion that guides it, echoing our laughter and absorbing our tears. Often we stand on the bottom step, like poor Sisyphus, dismayed by the length of the voyage and the attendant obstacles. How to continue without losing our courage and our breath? Ah, but we know who stands waiting for us at the pinnacle through every life situation, and who takes our hand to guide us each step of the way. 🌹

- Barbara Santillo





In the footsteps of a loving mother and father

>> **Matthew Brasmer** is an Ambassador of the Society of the Little Flower

Not long ago I was traveling on an airplane, returning home after meeting with several donors who are helping to support the repair and renovation of the Carmel of Lisieux. On the flight I was writing letters when I happened to notice my seat mate reading my words as I typed into my laptop. I looked up at her as she looked away guiltily. I stopped, smiled at her and said, “You know, I too have been caught looking at my neighbor’s book or computer. These seats are so small and it’s kind of hard not to notice what the person is doing next to you, and sometimes flying is boring.”

She blushed, smiled back and said, “I see that you are writing something about St. Thérèse of Lisieux. I have heard of her. Isn’t she the saint that talked about the Little Way?”

“Yes,” I replied, “Thérèse is known as the Little Flower who taught us about the Little Way of trusting God and

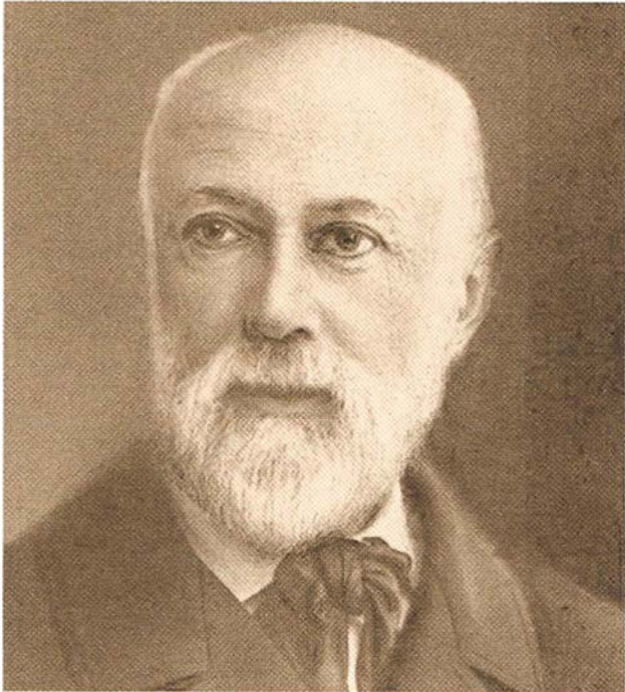
loving others.”

“Well, since I’ve really embarrassed myself today by not minding my own business,” she said, “Do you mind if I asked what this Little Way means?”

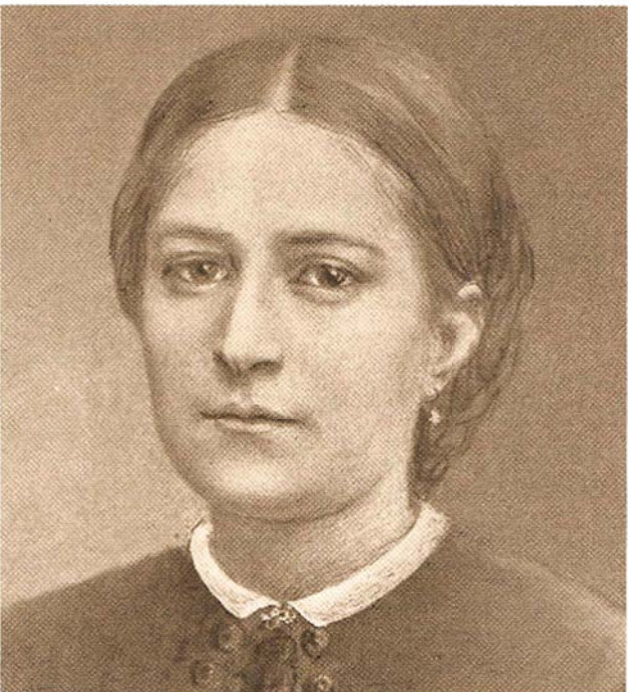
“Not at all,” I said. “Are you Christian, by the way?”

“Well, yes, but maybe not a very good one.” she

Blessed Louis and Zélie Martin Parents of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, The Little Flower



Louis Martin
1823 - 1894



Zélie Martin
1831 - 1877

replied. “I was raised a Catholic and went to Catholic schools, but I only go to church every once in a while.”

“So,” I said, “You are still searching.”

“That’s OK,” I continued. “You do ask good questions, which is the beginning of real faith.”

“Here in its essence is the teaching of St. Thérèse on the Little Way of spiritual childhood: Just as Jesus taught us that God is our Father – like in the Lord’s Prayer – St. Thérèse takes this knowledge of a loving Father who is God to the limit by reminding us ‘we can never have enough confidence in God who is so good, so powerful, and so merciful.’ St. Thérèse then lived this absolute confidence in God through the good days and the bad – and this is very important, she always strived to have an undivided heart and in this she succeeded.”

“Wow,” my seat mate said, “How can anyone really develop so much confidence in God?”

“You need to begin by reading this,” I said as I reached into my briefcase and gave my seat neighbor a copy of *The Story of a Soul*, the autobiography of St. Thérèse. “Send me an email when you finish the book. I’d like to know what you think.”

Since that flight several weeks ago I have not heard back from her, yet I do pray for her search. My airplane seat neighbor did ask an important question about Thérèse Martin which I have been thinking about a lot this year after visiting her childhood homes in Alençon and Lisieux, France.

How did Thérèse Martin develop such a confidence in God?

The quick answer is by the loving and faithful example of her parents (and sisters), through divine grace, and her faithfulness to the Carmelite Tradition. Yet it is the example of her parents, above all, that she herself claims as the largest influence on her spiritual development. Her parents taught her, formed her, disciplined her, and loved her, in a pleasant home where hard work, prayer, and laughter was just a part of everyday life.

Two causes for sainthood for her parents began in 1957 and 1960 and were sent to Rome.

St. Thérèse’s father and mother, Louis and Zélie Martin, were named blessed on October 19, 2008, in large part because of their exemplary Christian example as a husband and wife, father and mother. A further approved miracle will lead to their canonization.

One new book in English gives us a remarkable insight into both the family life of the Martin household and, especially, the interior life of St. Thérèse’s mother, Zélie. Edited by Dr. Francis Renda and translated from

the French by Ann Connors Hess, *A Call to a Deeper Love, The Family Correspondence of the Parents of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, 1863-1885* (Alba House, 2011) contains 218 letters of Zélie and 16 letters of Louis Martin.

In these letters, especially of Zélie’s, we are introduced to the full challenges of a couple’s desire for holiness while losing four of their nine children, running businesses, caring for those in need, seeking grace through the Church’s liturgical year, suffering through cancer, caring for family members, and raising remarkable daughters, both at home and away at boarding school.

Here, too, we are introduced to a mother’s keen analysis of the character of each of her children, especially her little Thérèse. She confides to her sister-

in-law the specialness of young Thérèse, “When I was carrying her, I noticed something which never happened with my other children; when I sang she sang with me.”


In her writing, Zélie reveals herself with honesty, yet also as a woman of high standards, strong self-discipline and will, a loving nature, and deep faith.

At first reading, one is struck by her real concern for the spiritual upbringing of her children while

she is simultaneously running a business and caring deeply for those in her employ and in her community. And then she faces cancer courageously – both in faith and with real suffering.

Twelve days before her death from cancer, in her last letter to her brother she wrote, “If the Blessed Mother doesn’t cure me it is because my time is at an end, and God wants me to rest elsewhere other than on earth.”

Zélie Martin was not a “super woman” in the modern sense, seeking to have it all – successful business woman, mother, wife, community volunteer, yet she was all of these. Rather, as revealed in both her writing and the lives of her children, she was a woman who built her life around an undivided commitment to her faith and family. She wanted to express holiness in all of the things she felt called to do and to become.

So, how did Thérèse Martin develop such a confidence in God? By walking first in the footsteps of her mother and father. It turns out that holiness is really a family affair and is first and last all about love. As St. Thérèse wrote, “Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing.” 

– Matthew Brasmer. Matt can be reached at: matthew.brasmer@littleflower.org, or at (630) 968-9400, X1421.

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