

Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada



*Gardens
Blossoming*

What seeds will YOU plant?

One day when a crowd gathered around Jesus, the storyteller in Him became encouraged. Although He was a carpenter's son, he also knew a thing or two about farming.

"A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path ... some fell on rocky ground ... some seed fell among thorns ... but some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred- or sixty-, thirtyfold."

The sower in Jesus' parable most likely had good intentions; no one plants seeds without the hope that they will flourish. But on this planting day, the sower may have been distracted or perhaps didn't sleep well the night before. Whatever the reason, much of his work came to nothing.

On occasion, perhaps you feel the same way. We can plant seeds of various kinds, and not only of the garden variety. We can plant the seeds of good will, encouragement, hope, and promise. But sometimes our good intentions come to nothing.

The receptiveness of others can seem like rocky ground. But that shouldn't stop us from trying.

The seeds you plant through your generosity to the Society of the Little Flower have allowed us to reap a plentiful harvest. Because of you, we are able to educate and train an increasing number of Carmelite seminarians. Because of you, we can feed the hungry in many corners of the world. Because of you, we can inspire generations to grow in faith through the spirituality of St. Thérèse and her "Little Way." All because of you!

The articles within this issue of *Between Friends* are sure to inspire you - and perhaps call you to don your green jeans and go out to do a bit of planting, of whatever kind. You are God's hands and heart to those in our care. Your friendship is a precious gift to us. Thank you for the enormous difference you are making in so many lives. You are our hope! 🌹

**Gratefully in her love,
Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.
Director**



Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.
Director



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COVER IMAGE:
Getty Images/Romania



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Father Thomas
Schrader, O. Carm.
DIRECTOR/PUBLISHER

Mary Lambert
**EDITOR/DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR**

Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.
Mary Lambert
Father Gerard Power,
O. Carm.
Daniel Pritchard
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Society of the Little Flower
1313 N. Frontage Rd.
Darien, Illinois 60561-5340
800.621.2806
www.littleflower.org

**The Monastery of Mt. Carmel
Society of the Little Flower**
7020 Stanley Ave.
Niagara Falls, Ontario
L2G 7B7
800.922.7622
ca.littleflower.org

FAITH CATHOLIC
Patrick Dally
GRAPHIC DESIGNER



Finding grace in everything

SOME YEARS AGO, I wrote about the profound teachings of our beloved St. Thérèse and one of her famous quotes, “Everything is grace.” It can be easy to see grace when our life’s road is straight and level, but much more difficult when facing the pain of life’s inevitable crosses, such as enduring the death of a loved one, carrying on in the face of an unexpected disappointment, or trying to muster up forgiveness in dealing with the betrayal of a friend. In those moments, very little appears to be grace.

Yet Thérèse inspires us to be courageous. She suffered much during her short life, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Her sensitive nature only intensified the pain and, as a result, had to grapple many dark nights of the soul. But she had a brave soul, and that can serve to inspire all of us through moments of turmoil – even those that are now characterized as our “new normal.”

We know, as Thérèse did, the mercy of God pours itself out upon every soul – with no strings attached. God’s most tender mercy is particularly abundant for those who are searching, fearful, lost, and hopeless. It is in the darkest of moments and for the most desperate of people that God’s mercy cannot be contained. It breaks through pain and emptiness just as true love breaks through to the heart – unconditionally.

The God of mercy is the One who also defines Himself as love. Mercy and love are inseparable.

When we believe that God never abandons us, just as St. Thérèse did, we walk a path of childlike trust. Childlike trust was the Little Flower’s instruction manual for life.

We should not be misled, however; the path is not without peril – no one’s journey ever is. Life has its share of bumps and bruises, but we can overcome any obstacle when we trust in the God of mercy and love.

This issue of *Between Friends* celebrates God’s powerful mercy and the many blossoming gardens of hope. Within these pages, I hope you will discover the promise of new life and resurrection – made possible only through God’s mercy.

May St. Thérèse, the one who promised to pour a “Shower of Roses” upon anyone who turned to her, be with you in all of life’s moments. And when the going gets tough, set about searching for God’s grace; it’s most likely just around the corner. 🌹

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Mary Thérèse Lambert
Editor of *Between Friends*

from the editor

GOD LED THEM INTO THE GARDEN LAND OF CARMEL WHERE THEIR GIFTS BLOSSOMED AND BRIGHTEN THE CHURCH

Father John Welch, O. Carm.

EVERYONE CALLS HIM “JACK” because his informal and causal style speaks of his authenticity and easy presence. He met the Carmelites at Joliet Catholic High School and was attracted to the fact they were “a happy group.” The way he experienced his teachers and administrators serving students struck a chord in him. This idea of service has directed his whole life. “In the Carmelite community, there are so many ways to serve – to assist people in their human and spiritual lives,” he explains. “And doing so with a community of like-minded men makes the difference.”

He joined the Carmelite formation program for college, novitiate and theology, making his first profession of religious vows on August 15, 1959. “One of the first books I read in the novitiate was St. Thérèse’s *Story of a Soul*,” he explains. “In a time of Jansenism which stressed human sinfulness and God’s justice, St. Thérèse spoke of God’s mercy. Also, my parents attended the devotions to St. Thérèse at St. Clara’s Parish in Chicago.”

He was in theology during the exciting years of Vatican II and great social movements in society. Highlights for him were the civil rights movement, being part of the March on Washington in 1963, and being on the Mall for Dr. King’s “I have a Dream” speech. “We participated in 24-hour vigils with seminarians of all faiths while Congress debated the Civil Rights Act (1964). These activities were an important part of my Carmelite formation, as I made my solemn vows on February 7, 1963, and was ordained a priest on March 6, 1965.”

Father Jack is also remembered as one of the musicians and singers in a Hootenanny group, “The More or Less Five,” that energized civil rights groups and peace gatherings with songs of hope, joy, and justice. They captured exciting renewal going on in the Church and society. Jack and the more or less five other Carmelites were a strong presence in the songs of freedom justice and promise. “We shall overcome” was the theme song of the movement and the theme of Jack’s life – always hope, promise, and possibility.

Being a natural teacher, Father Jack taught in Louisville, Kentucky, and Chicago. He was then invited to be part of the Carmelite formation team in Milwaukee and then Whitefriars Hall in Washington, D.C., where he taught at the Washington Theological Union for more than 27 years. “The study and reflection



and then communication of spiritual values and the Carmelite tradition, inviting students to explore their faith, is energizing for me,” he shares.

He continued studying, receiving a master’s degree in theology and religious education, and then a doctorate in religious education, focusing on human development. With his ability to explain profound truths in understandable ways, without compromising the depth of their challenge, Father Jack has been a popular speaker in North America and internationally. He inspires people. He also authored many books, including *The Carmelite Way*, *When Gods Die*, *Spiritual Pilgrims* and *Seasons of the Heart*, which were and are very popular and have won awards from the Catholic press. He powerfully explains the teachings of Sts. Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross in modern terms, using Jungian psychology.

“As Carmelites, we are about experiencing God in our lives and allowing it to change and transform us,” he says. His ability to put a positive spin on St. John of the Cross’ dark nights’ concept is impressive. “God’s love is healing us past where we might have gotten stuck,” Father Jack explains.

Father Jack brought many gifts to the Church and the Carmelite experience. He was elected to the Carmelite Provincial Leadership Team and eventually was elected to two terms as the Carmelite Prior Provincial. His kind, positive, respectful, and affirming style spoke volumes about God’s presence within and among us.

Father Jack comments about the Carmelite Province he served: “The men of the province are impressive. They were sincere and dedicated, cooperative and wanted the best for the province and the Order. The Carmelites have a wonderful spiritual tradition to convey, a talented group of men in the various provinces around the world and a truly fraternal sense of family.”

Father Jack Welch’s life gives testimony to the Blossoming Garden of Carmel! He is like the sunshine that makes plants, bushes, flowers, and trees blossom in goodness, beauty, and soulful glory!

Padre Luis Jesús Paz Acosta, O. Carm.

WE CALL HIM “CHUY,” which is a nickname for people named “Jesus.” Father Luis Jesús Paz Acosta has a winning smile, and curiosity about life, and courageous heart that follows where led. When asked about why he became a Carmelite, he replied: “If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans,” reflecting on the strange and wonderful way he was planted in the Garden of God.

The Carmelites of the Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary decided to open a new mission in 1995 in Torreón, Mexico. That decision was controversial and was approved by just a single vote at our provincial chapter. Four “young” Carmelite missionaries, the youngest being 58, established a community in Torreón, where young Luis lived. He explains: “I am surprised that the Carmelites did not choose one of the three most important cities – Mexico City, Guadalajara, or Monterrey – but a peripheral city in a peripheral state (Torreón, Coahuila), and within that city, a peripheral parish, which was located in the east of the city. Carmelites did in 1995 what Pope Francis is saying these days: ‘Go to the peripheries, as Jesus did.’”

“My family moved to that parish four years before the Carmelites. That’s why I say that I didn’t look for the Carmelites, the Carmelites looked for me.”

The Carmelites opened the mission in Mexico like a window. Now that window has become a bridge within the province, since there are currently 15 Mexican Carmelites in different parts of the province, many of them in the United States.

“When I was a child, I was very curious. I was precocious, but also very shy. I always aspired to something more. Torreón, my hometown, was too small for me. I never liked the biological idea of being born, growing, reproducing, and dying. But neither did the cultural idea of getting married and having a family. There was a desire of something more. From a very young age, there was a great emptiness that I wanted to fill with things,



people, emotions, or events. But it could never be filled.”

Chuy is the youngest of four brothers, and his family was not very religious. They were believers, but they didn’t go to church, so he did not grow up in a Catholic culture. As a teenager, Luis Jesús met the “young” Carmelites – Fathers John Hertel, Thomas Jordan, Joel Moelter, and Bill Smith – and also met friar Paul Henson who went there for his internship. At age 13, he went to a retreat organized by the youth group. After a talk, they were divided into groups and were asked to answer some questions, and to choose one of the group to say a reflection. Chuy was the one chosen to share some words in front of the whole group. “And after I did that, Father Paul approached me and told me: ‘You have a Carmelite heart.’ I did not know what was the meaning of that.” When the Carmelites opened a formation house in Mexico City, Chuy was invited there for a vocation retreat. “I went there with high expectations, but I met older people and I was very young. I decided to work and study and forget about that idea.”

He studied human relations (human resources) and dedicated himself to do different things. He stayed in touch with Father Tom Jordan, with no thought about becoming a Carmelite or priest.

“One day, Father Tom asked me to be in Jose Luis Torres’ ordination, the first Mexican Carmelite priest. I was amazed by that. Something inside me changed, I wanted to change and I decided to join the Carmelites.”

Chuy explains: “I entered the Carmelites not because of helping the poor, or even the Church, or, I have to say it, even for God in first place, but to understand myself better and be a different human being. I wanted to fulfill that desire. It was not the best motivation but it was the real one.

“In all the years, my motivation has changed and now I can say that I am here for all the first things. I was ordained almost three years ago and I am living in El Salvador. My



current ministries are Director of Vocations, Director of Pre-Novices in El Salvador, Professor of Ethics at Central America University, and, now, Third Councilor on the Provincial Governance Council."

Chuy's experience with St. Thérèse is unique. Her traveling relics came to the city when he was a teenager. Father Tom Jordan invited him to participate in the Mass with the local bishop at the parish. Father Tom wanted a "rain of roses" to fall from heaven, just as St. Thérèse said. So Tom and Chuy plucked roses and went to the local airport to get on a small plane to drop roses as soon as the Eucharist was over. It was his first time flying and it was very traumatic: "I was very nervous and dizzy, but I enjoyed it. Then I discovered Teresita's great courage and tenderness, which continues to inspire many people."

He has a practical approach to Carmelite life. "From my experience of having lived in four of the five countries of the province, I tell everyone who enters with us that community life is a gift from God, but we have to learn to live in community. The community is not a bunch of bachelors living together, but a bunch of brothers who learn to love each other. The community is also like a Greek statue. From a distance it looks beautiful, majestic, but when you approach, it has cracks. The point is to learn to love the statue, even with the cracks, because each of us is carrying our own cracks. God takes care of our own cracks, or wounds, and still loves us."

Chuy understands the tensions of life: "I believe that Carmelite life must be lived in a tension between individuality and community. Resolving this tension takes us to extremes and at the extremes is the devil, as the medieval monks used to say. To live the tension is to live the Carmel spirituality. It is like a good garden that still has weeds."

His experience in the Garden of God is: "People taught me to pay attention of what is important. As an academic with my academic partners, sometimes we answer questions that nobody is asking. We share our responses with the people. People have to be heard and raise their own questions, struggles, happiness. The gift that I share with them is to listen better and help them to discover the love of God, which is an experience in life, and not just an intellectual idea. I want to serve them more with a humble spirit and with all my experience and courage."

Chuy blossoms in a challenging garden of El Salvador. The Carmelites believe and are grateful that God smiles as He opened surprising doors and opportunities and how Chuy responded with curiosity, generosity, and courage. Luis Jesús Paz Acosta was planted in the Garden of God and blossoms in ways he never imagined and today generously pours his life and energy into the blossoming of God's presence. 🌹



Father Bob Colaresi,
O. Carm.

2021 PILGRIMAGES of FAITH

Led by Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm

Father Bob Returns to the Holy Land

Holy Land Pilgrimage:

Nov. 7-18, 2021



After a year when the pandemic canceled all pilgrimages, we will return to our spiritual home and reflect on the Scriptures. Starting in **Jerusalem**, we visit the **Mount of Olives, Bethlehem, Ein Karem, Way of the Cross, Western Wall, Masada, Judean Wilderness, Ein Gedi, and Emmaus**, and then to the **Galilee**, visiting **Mount Carmel, Jaffa, Nazareth, Cana, Caesaria, Sea of Galilee, Capharnaum, Mount of Beatitudes, and Mount Tabor**. Mass and Scripture prayer services daily at holy sites. Israel has been very aggressive with the COVID vaccination program and is very safe. Mandated protocols will be followed and vaccination is required for the sake of others.

Cost: \$4.300 (double occp) covers air transportation from Chicago/Tel Aviv, and all hotels, dinners and breakfasts, guides, private bus and drivers, and other benefits listed in the brochure.

For further information, full brochure, and registration form, please contact: Carmelite Spiritual Center, 8419 Bailey Rd., Darien, Illinois 60561 - 630.969.4141 - retreats@CarmeliteSpiritualCenter.org

TO SERVE YOU EVEN BETTER



SOME OF US CRINGE at the sound of the word “change,” but there is no need to cringe as you read on about a small change that is coming our way at the Society of the Little Flower United States office. This change is actually terrific news, and we are confident that it will enhance your relationship with us.

We are happy to announce that we are forming a partnership with the Spiritual Gift Processing Center in Milford, New Hampshire; this partnership will help us to serve the mission of St. Thérèse more effectively. The Spiritual Gift Processing Center will be an extension of our organization, ensuring that your prayer intentions and other requests continue to be handled in a timely way.

One of the staff members at the processing center is a woman named Liz.

She asked if she could share a bit about herself with you:

“I find myself truly blessed to work in partnership with the Society of Little Flower. I was raised in a devout Catholic family, taught to help those less fortunate; serve the poor, the sick, and the disabled; and strive to make the lives of those around us better. Little did I know that I would one day be empowered to work in partnership



“

Miss no single opportunity to make some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word, always doing the smallest thing right and doing it all for love.

”

with the Society of the Little Flower, an organization that does just that!

“One of my favorite St. Thérèse quotes is, ‘Miss no single opportunity to make some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word, always doing the smallest thing right and doing it all for love.’

“My greatest personal achievement is giving back and paying it forward. I believe in instilling compassion in our children and my four grandchildren, teaching them that generosity doesn’t have to be a material gift. Sometimes, generosity is as simple as offering a smile, a touch, a hug, or taking a few minutes out of each day to support someone who could use help and encouragement.

“As being a part of the Society of the Little Flower team, we are excited to welcome the opportunity to serve your needs and further support the wonderful work of the Carmelite missionaries.”

We want to assure our dear friends that every request is still being seen and addressed at the Society of the Little Flower, and that your prayer intentions will continue to be placed at the National Shrine of St. Thérèse in Darien, Illinois. 🌹

someone you should know

BY MARY T. LAMBERT, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

BACKGROUND: GETTY IMAGES



Gardens Blossoming

"Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (Jn 4: 14)

THE LAST 12 TO 18 MONTHS have been a drought in many ways. It wasn't the "living water" that Jesus spoke of to the Samaritan woman, but frozen icicles, freezing weather, and a cold winter, at least here in the upper Midwest. COVID stopped so much of life; masks, social distancing, no hugging of loved ones, businesses, stores, schools closed, and even our church attendance limited. For many, it was a cold and lonely time – the icicles said it all!

But eventually the sun returned and the melt started. Slowly, the icicles dripped water to the ground. That water helped melt the frozen ground – and soon the starkness of frozen nature began to peek out. What a sign of hope! At times, it seemed like everything was so frozen and stark that they would never blossom again.

The cycle of nature was working as God intended. St. Thérèse kept reminding us that the seasons of nature reflected the seasons of God's love for us. Jesus promised that the "living water" of God's freely given love and presence would well up from deep within – and we would be joyfully alive.

After Lent, then suffering the death of and rejoicing in the resurrection of Jesus, we recently celebrated

Pentecost, the confirming Spirit of Jesus. Mary and the apostles were overwhelmed by the fiery Spirit – the Divine Spark – and regained courage, hope, and an aliveness that felt like a blossoming flower! It was and is a beautiful energy. "Paraclete" Who is our advocate or defense attorney to protect and energize our truth that we are each and all the beloved daughters and sons of God. The breathing of Holy Spirit changed the arc of history and creation.

Our beloved St. Thérèse is a Carmelite. Carmel

means the "garden or vineyard of God." Carmelites were founded in the late 12th century, during the Third Crusade. Disillusioned by the violence, injustice, betrayal by civil and religious leaders, and their romantic ideals, they were driven to abandon a return to Europe and go to Mt. Carmel in northern Israel. They went to the Spring of Elijah, hoping that his experience of reigniting the divine spark would rekindle their faith.

They gathered in a dry river bed, (*wadi ein Siah*) that symbolized their thirsty longing for divine energy and presence that had empowered them. Mary, our sister in faith, helped them to listen to the silent emptiness, not fight, flee, or freeze.

The silent listening with a community of brothers

helped melt the hard hearts and faith began to blossom – a new springtime in the Holy Land – into an intimacy that springs from deep within, the Divine Indwelling. Carmel and Carmelites are always about darkness seeking light and tapping into that deep thirsty drought we all have for union and communion with God and all creation. This Carmelite mystical journey is about the Divine Spark exploding and possessing us – the blossoming of heaven here on earth. Gardens blossoming are sacraments of God's

“

Remember St. Thérèse's greatest teaching, at the darkest time in her life:

'EVERYTHING IS GRACE!'

The Spirit is breathing within and around and through everything, if we watch carefully and listen!

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► Carmelites were founded in the late 12th century, during the Third Crusade. Disillusioned by the violence, injustice, betrayal by civil and religious leaders, and their romantic ideals, they were driven to abandon a return to Europe and go to Mt. Carmel in northern Israel. (pictured).



"MOUNT CARMEL" BY CHADNER IS LICENSED UNDER CC 0



► Prayer of listening and contemplation alone reveals the reality that God creates in the gardens of our lives.

fulfilling presence, beauty, and goodness!

Remember St. Thérèse's greatest teaching, at the darkest time in her life: "Everything is grace!" The Spirit is breathing within and around and through everything, if we watch carefully and listen!

After the dark and isolating ordeal, it is time to wake up: to new realities about our world and our interconnectedness; to our vulnerability and connection with each other; to our responsibility to each other as sisters and brothers in God's family, sharing a common home, earth. COVID taught us how vulnerable and connected we are. And now we continue to share our solidarity and community by being vaccinated so that we are safe in each other's presence. "Love another as I have loved you" is the fertilizer of God's garden.

There is a French proverb that says: "Roses bloom because we believe in them." Like the early Carmelites and disillusioned crusaders, have we lost faith? Are we living in dark frozen soil of cynicism, hardened hearts, self-interest, and doubt? Each of us, our families and society, has suffered so much personal and societal loss. This can shrink our spirit. We feel hopeless. We think we are the frozen soil or hardened, barren plants and branches that will never allow life to happen.

But our faith tells us otherwise: We are actually drenched in living water – the divine presence – in every flower, leaf, blade of grass, weed, bush, or tree; every bird, butterfly, squirrel, and chipmunk;

every raindrop, ray of sunshine, and snowflake; in the stars twinkling in the night sky, the moon, the sun, and the wind. The enchanted universe of grace! How good is our God and how close is the intimacy of the Divine presence!

This spring of new life which Easter and Pentecost proclaim and celebrate energizes us to blossom to our full potential as His beloved daughters and sons, creating the beloved inclusive community of justice and mutual responsibility the Spirit is creating. When God raised Jesus from the earth and tomb, He raised us all to our full glory. The Risen Lord's first word was "Shalom"; be whole and connected; blossom in the garden I planted you in and make everyone and everything blossom.

Life is not about weeds, just precious images of God! Weeds of selfishness, greed, lust, racism, creating and projecting false truths of our own insecurities, being too superficial or not reflective enough to see the naked deformity of evil and error and conspiracy theories craftily decked out as an attractive plant, even as they overwhelm, destroy, demean, and divide the beauty of God's Garden. Haven't we all seen aggressive and vibrant plants filling in our gardens and only later realizing that they are overwhelming and destroying the other plants and vegetables. Weeds love the best gardens because of the fertilizer and great care they receive. In our biblical tradition, Lucifer is the angel of light, because he is darkness pretending to be

light in elusive and attractive ways. Listening, contemplative prayer alone reveals the reality that God creates in the gardens of our lives.

"The glory of God is a person fully alive!" proclaimed St. Irenaeus in the second century – he knew that Jesus came so that we might achieve the fullness God invites everyone to. It is a wholeness or fullness that is mental, emotional, physical, social, relational and spiritual. We are graced with the "irresistible" energy of life, of God, of life blossoming to its fullness and diversity of beauty.

The Carmelites have experienced this blossoming in the gardens of our lives in many ways – the friends of St. Thérèse and the Carmelites have watered the *wadi-ein-siah*, the dry riverbed of so many people's lives by:

- The abundant painful petitions our friends share with us regarding the struggles and health of family members and friends; the trust in the power of prayer;
- The constant increase of donations to help the Carmelites help people in much more stressful and serious conditions;
- The enormous outreach to food pantries, medical centers, etc.;
- The creativity of religious people developing ways to pray together when churches were limited or closed;
- People awakening to their responsibility to be a Church not so dependent on clergy and to work for the justice of God's kingdom;
- People awakened to the need to create a more just society so that everyone in the garden gets necessary water, opportunity, and justice;
- People making the choice not to use violence even when they feel wronged, but rather to work for truth and peace;
- People using the extra time the isolation provided us to be more reflective and doing centering, meditative, contemplative prayer, which freed them to listen to God more carefully; and
- People who took time to stop and smell the roses, even amid the winter of our discontent.

We see the Carmelite Garden of God growing with the increasing number of men responding to God's call to live religious life and serve God's people as Carmelites and priests. Our growth in El Salvador, Mexico, and Peru has been amazing – people in challenging situations who want to make a difference, share God's love, and work for the dignity of every human person. In tough soil, these young men face the challenges to work for justice when the weeds and forces of violence are overwhelming.

Here on the Carmelite campus in Darien, which was necessarily shut down, the National Shrine

is opening to welcome pilgrims and daily Mass attendees; the Carmelite Spiritual Center is now hosting programs of spirituality; the Gift Shop is helping people with religious goods; and the Meditation Garden is blossoming. People are walking the Stations, visiting the prayer paths and Carmelite saints that dot our campus. It is a place of pilgrimage and prayer again, after being a dry riverbed. There is life happening again after a long year of isolation and the terrible winter that froze everything. The darkness and depression are lifted – flowers and human beings are proclaiming God's glory and beauty.

The Pentecost life of spring speaks to God's Spirit having the final word! Among my favorite plants are the "Burning Bushes" that transform into brilliant red, proclaiming the Divine Spark of God's presence deep within and around us.

The fertilizing gift of Divine mutuality is the living water, dropped from melted icicles, creating the life of true friendship – the relationship between a human being and the divine being who is God – that communion of life that blossoms with compassion, forgiveness, justice, and empowering, respectful love.

Yes, the Garden Land of Carmel is awakening and blossoming with renewed energy, hope, beauty, and promise. The Carmelites here at the Society of the Little Flower hope you get the opportunity to join us here at the Blossoming Garden in Darien at St. Thérèse's National Shrine. It's a touch of heaven! 🌹





Continuing to make a difference

YOU ARE CONTINUING to make a difference. And for that, we are grateful. Your prayers and support are carrying us through this storm. There's new life and hope everywhere. Things have been going very well with the Society of the Little Flower here in Canada. This past year has been very difficult on everybody. One of the things that has been a bone of contention throughout this COVID-19 pandemic is: "What is deemed essential?" What should be an essential service? It became very clear that the Society of the Little Flower and the intercession of St. Thérèse have certainly been an essential service for our donors and devotees.

During the past year, the Society of the Little Flower here in Canada has experienced such an increase in volumes of calls for help, for needs, for prayers. There has been so many extra requests for prayer cards, rosaries, Mass enrollments, and images of St. Thérèse. The need for her intercession has been great. While our office has remained closed to the public, we have done everything possible to keep up with those volumes of calls and to get items out to the faithful. You have kept prayers alive, and we have continued to hold you deeply in our Masses and prayers and liturgies.

As we got deeper into the end of winter and the birth of spring, the request for Easter cards increased dramatically. People were beginning to feel a sense of joy. Why? Because there were so many signs of hope that this pandemic would be coming to an end. With the increase of people being vaccinated, this gave us a sense of new life, resurrection! Good news! The past year has been like a long Lenten season. It has certainly been a storm.

Our faith tells us that we can never lose hope. St. Thérèse has been a source of hope for us during this past year, undoubtedly because we Christians believe that God is in the business of answering prayers. As St. Thérèse herself knew, we can give God our disappointments, hurts, failures, and problems, and He will turn into miracles, into Easter, into joy. May God continue to bless you, our generous donors and benefactors, who are continuing to support our Carmelite formation programs. You continue to help spread the good news and spreading devotion to one of the greatest saints of modern times.

Life is slowly returning to normal, full of nature blossoming, full of hope. We will come out of this as a stronger people with a deeper faith. In gratitude for your support, may you and your families be showered with many "roses" from our beloved St. Thérèse. 🌹

The awakening to St. Thérèse

T HIS PAST WINTER, I spent two months in my little hometown of Admiral's Beach in southeastern Newfoundland. It was time for a break, and a much-needed opportunity to visit my ailing mother. After 14 days of quarantine, I was free to visit four generations of my family. We had an entire weekend together with our mother at the old homestead. Right after the weekend, my sister was diagnosed with the new COVID-19 variant. In just two days, the entire Island was placed into lockdown with the rapid spread of this new variant. Crisis time! Was mom going to get the virus?

The first thing I did was ask St. Thérèse to intercede for us. She always does. "Little Flower, in this hour, show your power!" I glanced up in prayer at St. Thérèse's statue on the living room shelf in our family home. Our entire family had to be tested. With St. Thérèse's intercession and God's help, though, all came out well. It was another month before I could see anyone. I stayed in my family home, and I was literally "Home Alone." I spent a lot of time reading, painting, and reflecting. And one of the reflections was how I came to know St. Thérèse, the Little Flower. There's a story long before I became a Carmelite.

When I was a little boy, I spent much time in my grandparents' kitchen. They were pious and holy souls, a very prayerful couple. I will always remember the large image of St. Thérèse in their kitchen. It was from the 1940s and was framed by my grandfather, Gerard Power. It had many coats of oil paint over the wooden frame. It always had a shine to it. I didn't know much



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St. Thérèse lived knowing there was more than this earthly life. She always had her heart set on heaven as her goal.
 ”

about St. Thérèse's story, only that she was a Carmelite nun and had died young with tuberculosis.

As a young boy, I sold the newspaper

in our town (pop. 400) of 65 houses. So many kitchens in our town had a picture of St. Thérèse! I always wondered about this saint. My childhood pastor, Father Dan Murphy, had a great devotion to St. Thérèse. He would often tell me little stories about her and about her finding God in the ordinary, everyday life. When I joined the Carmelites, I took a great interest in learning more about her life.

One day in Washington, I stumbled upon a book that contained a map that St. Thérèse had drawn of North America. And that was exciting enough, but right in the top right corner of the map was a little triangle drawing of Newfoundland. And of course it was in French, Terre Neuve! I was so excited. She knew about our island. I was amazed.

During my formation program, I had the wonderful opportunity to spend a week in Lisieux, France. I was able to delve deeply into the life of St. Thérèse. We visited her family home, her family church, the cloister where she served as a sister. We students were even permitted into the bedroom where St. Thérèse died at the age of 24. It was such a moving experience and certainly drew me closer to this great saint. Throughout my formation program, I was able to attend many talks given by some great Carmelite priests on St. Thérèse. One of the greatest was Father John Russell, O. Carm. He brought her and her "Little Way" alive for us.

St. Thérèse lived knowing there was more than this earthly life. She always had her heart set on heaven as her goal. And from there, we reap the fruits and strength of her vocation. May St. Thérèse shower all of us with "roses" as we continue to live out our vocation of love. 🌹



Father Gerard Power, O.Carm.

■ **Father Gerard Power, O.Carm.** is the new Director in Canada of the Society of the Little Flower. Father Gerard was born in St. John's, Newfoundland, and raised in St. Mary's Bay. He joined the Carmelites in Washington, D.C., in 1993, professing his simple vows in Middletown, New York, in June 1995. He professed his solemn vows at Mount Carmel Monastery Chapel in Niagara Falls in 1998, and was also ordained to the priesthood at the Monastery Chapel in 1999. He was the last Carmelite ordained in the last millennium. Father Gerard currently serves as Pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Niagara Falls. He also serves on several boards and commissions within the Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. He has been a Civilian Inspector and Auxiliary Chaplain with the Niagara Regional Police Services since 2009.



The Carmelite National Shrine of St. Thérèse Campus

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, St. Thérèse's Shrine in Darien, Illinois, has been transformed into one of the most visited Shrines of the Little Flower in the world! Thanks to the generosity of many of Thérèse's friends, the Darien campus received a significant renovation and expansion. That effort included a stunning new Shrine chapel with expanded seating that features a magnificent, 35-foot, etched-glass window of St. Thérèse; it is breathtaking to behold! The renovated National Shrine Museum holds more sacred artifacts of St. Thérèse than anywhere outside of Lisieux, France, the home of Thérèse's Carmel. Our Carmelite Spiritual Center was also expanded, and can serve more than 120 retreatants, while also offering opportunities for spiritual direction and individual days of reflection.

The Carmelite National Shrine of St. Thérèse is full of beautiful grounds that include a walking path of the Stations of the Cross, a reflection pond, meditation paths with Carmelite statues throughout, and benches for private reflection. A highlight is a unique and inspiring St. Thérèse prayer space on our lake. In addition to all of that, we also have a gorgeous Infant of Prague Grotto prayer area, water fountain features, and a very special Walk of Illumination.

Many of St. Thérèse's friends have become a part of her eternal legacy here by helping us financially with the expansion and renovation. They have made significant donations, which, in turn, allow for personal recognition opportunities. The Walk of Illumination at the clock tower will soon honor loved ones both living and those gone before us. In addition, benches, trees, statues, water features, and other holy areas are still in need of financial help; we would

be pleased to honor you or your loved ones in gratitude for your support. If you are interested in being part of this extraordinary testament to St. Thérèse and Carmelite spirituality, please contact our Special Gifts office at 888.996.1212.

Our campus is a welcoming oasis to our beloved St. Thérèse's friends from around the world who come to learn more about her, while praying, reflecting, and gaining a sense of deeper faith and connection to "the greatest Saint of modern times."

Please call ahead of time to plan your visit; we would be happy to welcome you with open arms as you immerse yourself in this truly holy experience. 🌹

For information on how to be a part of the legacy of St. Thérèse's National Shrine call 888.996.1212

SEND INQUIRIES TO:
Society of the Little Flower
Special Gifts Department
1313 N. Frontage Rd.
Darien, Illinois 60561

GETTY IMAGES/NAOYA SO

THE ROSE GARDEN OF ST. THÉRÈSE

You don't have to go very far to find one. And the good news is, they are there for the asking, popping up in unexpected places - an answer to prayer. When you see one, your eyes are sure to open wide: You have been heard!

Stories abound about how St. Thérèse honors her promise of showering roses upon those who turn to her, even in the most difficult of circumstances. No one could accuse her of being stingy. She longs to be generous – abundantly so – as she fulfills her heavenly job description, showering roses on those who seek her in times of need. Her roses truly are there for the asking.

Hardly a day goes by without someone writing to the Society to let us know that their prayers were answered through the intercession of our beloved saint, often signaled by an accompanying rose. Skeptical? Cast your doubts aside; the stories are real.

Here are just a few:

- ▶ A woman paced about her house, waiting for her doctor to call about some test results; the outlook was portrayed as grim. But peace soon came, delivered by a glance out the kitchen window: roses found blooming in the middle of winter, surrounded by snow. (The doctor's "good news" call soon followed.)
- ▶ A grief-filled father frantically rushed from his home at 1 a.m. to see his dying son in the hospital, only to find a rose resting on the hood of his car.
- ▶ And then there is the scent of roses, that beautiful fragrant smell whose source can't be identified, but lingers in the air to offer consolation when it is most needed. This author can personally attest to two such experiences.

There are far too many stories to recount here; volumes could be filled with them.

St. Thérèse is a faithful friend, with the heart of a mother. When called upon, she doesn't turn her back. And she takes delight when people return to her embrace to offer a simple, heartfelt thank you.

Those thank you messages can take many forms. Here at the Society of the Little Flower we have chosen to honor those who have expressed their gratitude to St. Thérèse in a particular way: by including the Society and the Carmelites in their estate plans. It is called "the Rose Garden of St. Thérèse."

Such remembrances are easy to accomplish, and there is no minimum amount required to become a member of this special group of friends. Gifts of this nature can be created through one's will or trust, or by establishing a charitable gift annuity, or by making the Society of the Little Flower a beneficiary of a life insurance policy, IRA or bank account, or Donor Advised Fund. There are other possibilities as well, and we would be pleased to discuss all the options with you.

To assist you in the estate planning process, we have two practical planning guides that are available to friends of the Little Flower. One guide is called the *Personal Affairs Record Book*, which is a handy asset organizer that will be of great help in settling your affairs when the time comes. The other is titled *Effective Estate Planning: What You Need to Know*, a guide written in easy-to-understand language to help you confidently navigate the estate planning process. To request your free copies, call our Special Gifts Office at 888.996.1212.

If you have already included the Society in your estate plans (or plan to do so), please let us know. It would be our honor to enroll you in the Rose Garden of St. Thérèse, with its many spiritual benefits. 🌹



Daniel Pritchard

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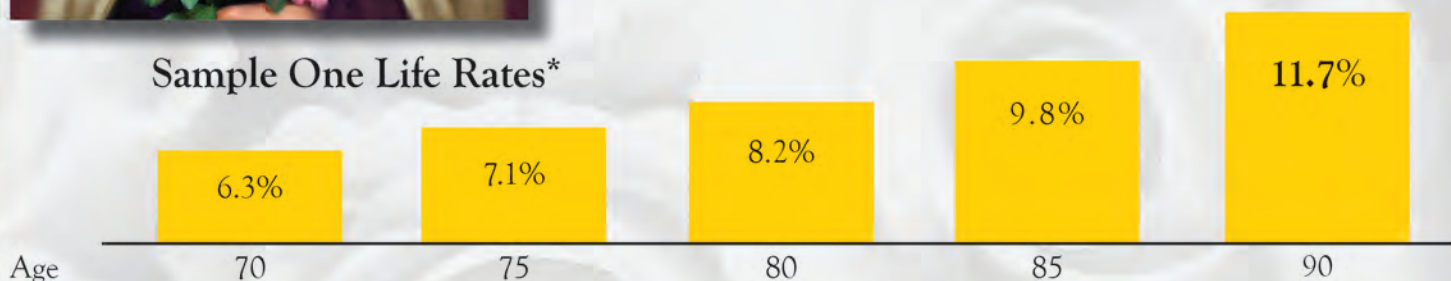
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