

Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada

Continuing
the Mission in

***UNPRECEDENTED
TIMES***



You Are Deeply Appreciated



Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.
Director

Dear Friend of St. Thérèse,

Our beloved heavenly friend, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, lived through epidemics and diseases in her society and her personal life. She lived through times of darkness, fear, disconnection, and panic. Through them, she learned to trust God in the darkness and silence. She will teach us to trust God amid the confusing world we are living in – not to feel abandoned but to experience the hidden allurements of our loving God whispering, “Trust me.”

The Little Flower has much to teach us about continuing the mission of our lives in unprecedented times – how to bend but not break! She had to learn to rely on resources deep within her to

overcome her weakness, fragility, and smallness. She learned to rely on and trust God more, even when what was happening did not make sense. Like Jesus: “Your will, not mine, be done!”

I thank you for your continued friendship and generosity of spirit with the Society of the Little Flower and the Carmelites. You are deeply appreciated.

Please know that the Carmelites here and throughout the world are praying for you and your special intentions each day at Mass and community prayer.

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

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2** From the director
You Are Deeply Appreciated
- 3** From the editor
‘The Journey of Our Mission Continues
- 4** Seasons of Life
Tulips and Daffodils
- 5** Feature story
‘I Will Always Be With You’
- 7** Someone You Should Meet
Paula Tomsy – Special Gifts Administrative Assistant
- 8** Cover Story
Continuing the Mission in Unprecedented Times



12 The Canadian Corner

- 14** From the Director of Special Gifts
All Part of a Special, Prayerful Community

- 15** From the Special Gifts Office
A Child’s Leap of Faith



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The Journey of Our Mission **CONTINUES**

THIS ISSUE OF *BETWEEN FRIENDS* invites you to explore the journey we continue to share with St. Thérèse. Truly, in spite of the circumstances that have recently gripped our world, our mission does continue. But in a dramatically different way than we would have anticipated six months ago.

So much has happened in our world since then. Change has been forced upon us, and, for many, change can be difficult.

As you cope with the changes in your own life, we at the Society of the Little Flower have also grappled with changes. Our Shrine, Meditation Garden and Spiritual Center have



Mary Thérèse Lambert
Editor of *Between Friends*

been closed for months. Our regular weekday Masses have stopped, as have our retreats.

Hundreds visited us every day. Suddenly, our world was eerily quiet.

Yet our mission has endured, as important as ever. The core of St. Thérèse's "Little Way" was that of trust in God's goodness. No matter life's circumstances, and, indeed, sometimes in spite of life's circumstances, we are called to trust in the Lord.

Thérèse was quite clear: reach out to Him, let Him hold your hand in moments of fear, He will hold tight.

We have been touched by the calls we have received from our friends. Perhaps you were one of those who picked up the phone just to ask for a prayer and a word of reassurance.

Daily, we have been reminded of how important St. Thérèse is to those who love her. Be assured that the Carmelites hold your intentions close to their hearts, remembering them at community prayer and Mass each day.

The road we have walked since March has been bumpy, with twists and turns seemingly every step of the way. But nonetheless, we have walked, perhaps with a glance back from time to time,

but always holding on to our faith.

We have been touched by your friendship. You have been faithful, in spite of it all.

In closing, I humbly invite you to continue your support as your means allow. We rely on the sacrifices you make, and we will be forever grateful for those sacrifices. However you can help would make a world of difference for us. May God bless you always! 🌹

► **I love to hear from you!** Please send any suggestions or comments to: Mary T. Lambert, Society of the Little Flower, 1313 N. Frontage Ro., Darien, Illinois 60561-5340



Tulips and Daffodils

OUR LITTLE FLOWER was fascinated by how the seasons of nature reflect the seasons of God's love affair with us. In the second half of my life, I've come to appreciate this. Nature is God's first self-revelation. But this past spring, which is usually a time of renewed life and hope, blossoming flowers and possibilities, and the wonder of being embraced by the sun, especially here in the Upper Midwest, was confusing.

We had a mild but long winter. In March, some warm days arrived: bulbs started to peak out of the ground, flowering trees started to bud, and the grass actually turned green. Such hopeful signs!

But suddenly thunderstorms and gusting winds blew in, causing damage and returning cold. Tulips and daffodils were shivering in disbelief. Our magnolia trees had started to blossom (always a beautiful sight) – and suddenly their petals were blown away, barren before full blossom. Doesn't God surprise us at comfortable times in our lives? Mother Nature does the same. We were living in hope.

Then there was a calm, as if we were returning to normal. The tulips and daffodils recouped. More growth was slowly happening.

Then, out of nowhere, this surprising and mysterious spring tornado of the COVID-19 pandemic blew in. Everything stopped and changed within a few days. We were isolated and social distancing was the norm. Our economy collapsed and we were cloistered. In disbelief, we had to restructure our lives. So many unemployed. Nowhere to go! Many deaths were happening, including people we knew. Everyone seemed contagious – and we were afraid. The cold winter of discontent and isolation had returned to

reclaim the day. Most of us, like me, don't deal well with setbacks that postpone or destroy our hopes or plans!

OK God, we know you are unpredictable, but this is ridiculous! Everything on the Darien campus was closed. What am I going to do every day? This was a strange new season. OK, Jesus was in the tomb a few days, but this new season of isolation turned into weeks and months. Jesus did not seem to appear breathing "Shalom" through the locked doors of our fear! The stall in the blooming process was frightening.

The stall forced me to slow down. Even as back spasms returned and forced me to cancel two pilgrimages I was to lead later in the year, it provided time to rest and recuperate. I had been hoping that the painful experiences of the last few years would disappear and heal. The reflective stall awakened me that they should be revisited, so I learn to forgive more. Then it felt like late fall, when the leaves were dying and falling, because I lost my creativity and passion to get things done. It felt like dying! It is interesting what nature reveals.

Gratefully, our small Carmelite community was able to go to the National Shrine of St. Thérèse to

celebrate Eucharist each day. But it felt so different: the nine of us spread out in the large chapel. We more intensely prayed for our friends and benefactors – their absence made them more present in our prayer. They helped us from collapsing in self-pity amid our isolation. We knew we belonged to something bigger: the Church, the Society of the Little Flower, the Carmelites – to God. We experienced the constancy of God's love and presence, and that "it isn't about me." Jesus is about us connecting with everyone and the whole creation. Eucharist celebrates this inclusive, expansive reality. Jesus' mandate of "love one another" is expressed in our social distancing for the common good. It was appalling when some people were demanding to have everything opened up, without necessary precautions, because they felt inconvenienced or their personal freedom limited. Sometimes, people think religion is about Jesus and me – so individually focused. This stalls the full blooming process.

As you read this, spring has continued and hopefully our hearts are opening with renewed hope and maybe a transformed way of life. The warmth and beauty of summer are returning. Hopefully, we don't return to normal – we are awakened to the mysterious ways God's love affair with us is reflected in nature. Please know that your love, presence, and generosity continue to be a source of spring hope to all the people the Carmelites serve. In this season of "everything is grace," like St. Thérèse, your name is written in heaven – you are deep in God's heart! 🌹



Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.



▶ Father Bernie Bauerle, O. Carm., Director

'I Will Always Be With You'

I N ALL HIS ACTIVITIES, Jesus reveals to us the Love of God. The greatest example of this love comes to us in the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. Here we are reminded of the Lord's promise: "I will always be with you."

As we have been facing the coronavirus pandemic, we have a powerful example in St. Thérèse who herself struggled with tuberculosis and eventually died because of it. In the National Shrine Museum of St. Thérèse there is a wood carving that presents us with a special moment in St. Thérèse's life.

Three months before her death, the chaplain and the religious superior of the Carmelite community had to tell St. Thérèse that she could no longer receive the Body of Christ. St. Thérèse had developed consumption (the frequent spilling of blood). For St. Thérèse this decision was the last straw. Receiving the Body of Christ was the last hope of the Lord's presence. But was it? St. Thérèse never forgot Jesus' promise. What was still available to her was "Spiritual Communion."

Who would have thought that in our lifetime you and I would have to face a similar situation? Because of the coronavirus pandemic, we have been restricted to our home and cannot participate in the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. And yet, we, too, can follow the example of St. Thérèse by uniting ourselves with the Lord like she did. She never gave up her trust and confidence in the Lord.

In a practical way, when the priest lifts the Host and Chalice during consecration, we, too, can pray, "My Lord and my God" or the final prayer of St. Thérèse before she closed her eyes: "Oh, my God, how I love You."

May St. Thérèse intercede for us and bring us closer to the Lord. 🌹

■ We invite you to unite with us in a Spiritual Communion each day as we celebrate Mass at the National Shrine of St. Thérèse. Recordings of the Mass at the Shrine are posted Monday through Friday after 1 p.m. (central time) on the National Shrine website at saint-therese.org. I hope this time of spiritual communion will be both a solace and an anchor for your faith.

In July, we plan to celebrate a virtual Feast Day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. If you would like to receive updates about this and other special events here, please sign up to receive our Campus Updates at <https://saint-therese.org/campusupdates/>.

2020 PILGRIMAGES

of FAITH Led by Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.

Holy Land

November 1-12, 2020

We 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**. Then, on to the **Galilee**, visiting **Mount Carmel, Jaffa, Nazareth, Cana, Caesaria, Sea of Galilee, Capharnaum, Mount of Beatitudes, Caesaria Philippi, and Mount Tabor**. A powerful experience into the heart of Christianity, the life of Jesus and our Jewish heritage. Cost: \$4,500 (double occupancy).



GETTY IMAGES/KIRILLAMULA

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

FROM SOMEONE YOU SHOULD MEET

PAULA TOMSKY**Special Gifts Administrative Assistant**

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I saw the Society of the Little Flower. I was finding my way to a local junior high school that is directly across the street from the National Shrine and Museum of St. Thérèse. This school was assigned to me during a previous job and would remain in my portfolio for the five years I was with the company. I would see the Society of the Little Flower and think, "I wonder how you get to work there?"

Some years later, I reported to work here for the first time on December 1, 2014. I was happy to be here and hoped my agricultural economics degree, account management, and customer service background would carry over into a donor services environment. Somehow it did. After a time, I served as the Monthly Giving Coordinator for our "Circle of Roses"



program. Then last November, I became the newest member of our Special Gifts Department.

Our Special Gifts donors are a very welcoming group! I don't believe I've ever felt more warmly accepted in a new position! I primarily speak with our annuitants. Very early on, I got the sense this group had some sort of wonderful, shared secret. There is this feeling of being part of an extraordinary group. This has nothing to do with the size of the gifts, but with the trust that may be required to make such gifts, the "leap of faith." There is a peace and happiness that comes over us when we trust God. You have it. That's what I believe I have found with this special group of donors.

With regard to our current situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most donors are taking it all in stride and coping well with the isolation. Due to age or other circumstances, some are already homebound. If you are over a certain age, you've seen a thing or two. This isn't the first crisis we've faced. As a Nation, we've experienced wars, sickness, food and fuel shortages, and financial setbacks. We lived through them. We'll get through this.

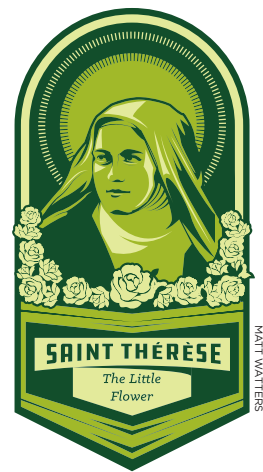
We agree that one of the hardest things is not seeing our families, the ones we are close to but who don't live with us. We stay in touch by talking on the phone and texting, or even writing letters. But we miss being able to hug each other, or seeing the faces of those we love when we share something amusing. I miss seeing my mom's face when I tell her a joke.

We also miss going to Mass. Lots of you are watching Mass on television. At our home, we've tried various things, including livestreaming Mass and playing homilies we downloaded. These are fantastic ways to enrich our Spiritual Communion.

But now we miss the Eucharist, which is so important to us Catholics. I admit that I did not feel this strongly at first. Maybe because our isolation began during Lent, we embraced the sacrificial part of it. Now that it is Easter, we are yearning for the precious gift of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Thanks for sharing these thoughts with me. It is a big part of why I enjoy coming to work each day. There is more to learn here at the Society of the Little Flower and from you. What will a donor tell me today about St. Thérèse that I didn't know? What new thing will I learn about Carmelite Spirituality? What small detail will I see out walking on our beautiful campus at lunchtime that I never noticed before? What new insights on the Gospel will I gain today through the words of St. Thérèse?

Thank you for your patience and wisdom. It is my privilege to serve you. 🌹



“There is a peace and happiness that comes over us when we trust God. You have it. That's what I believe I have found with this special group of donors.”

from someone **you should meet**

Continuing the Mission in **UNPRECEDENTED TIMES**

▶ **IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES**, each person often has a symbol to mark things they use. In the Carmelite Convent, Thérèse chose a reed to mark her belongings. It came from Isaiah, “The reed shall bend but not break.” (Is 42:3) It was the story of her challenging life.



■ St. Therese's clog with the reed symbol from Isaiah.

Our patron and heavenly friend, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, suffered a lot of darkness, disease, and disappointments in her life. Being hyper-sensitive, a perfectionist, and spoiled, she was easily wounded. She had to learn to accept each moment as a gift from God and to grow from the disappointments.

The strength of her spirituality and surrender to Jesus were most apparent about two months before she died. She had been going through about 16 months of a “dark night of her soul” – feeling or experiencing no real connection or consolation of presence

from God. She had been taken to the infirmary, isolated from the community because of her tuberculosis. Holy Communion was denied her because she couldn't keep it down. This was the last tangible sign that God was reaching out to her. It was her deepest darkness! In the absolute emptiness, she shared her deepest teaching: “*Everything is grace!*” She came to understand the revelation that God is present within every breath, experience, joy, sorrow, pain, fulfillment, and disappointment.

There are a lot of parallels to our experience the last few months with the COVID-19 pandemic and social

distancing and shutdowns. We long for resurrection and new life. It is always interesting to remember that the first appearance of the Risen Lord Jesus came when the disciples were locked up because of fear. This unprecedented time of isolation may be a time of renewed life and expanding growth in our faith. Possibly it is an awakening to our true mission – of continuing to be a light of God's presence and justice in our world.

At the beginning of the biblical covenant, did not God tell Abraham to form a people who would be “a light to the nations”? Jesus reiterated that same mission which is the heart of our faith – the reason we are here!

The cloistered isolation, as I call it, shook up and transformed so much of our lives. Is this God waking us up?

So many of us think that we can only find God in Church buildings or the Blessed Sacrament or the Sacraments, instead of within the holy land of our life experience. The God Who spoke His name as “I am” is always at the heart of our being and existence – the source of our life. God is truly and really present – Jesus is truly and really Emmanuel.

Yes, we lost the ability to gather as a Church, and that is significant. But we have not lost access to the Divine Who is always present and inviting us to deeper intimacy. Jesus' teaching on prayer, recorded in the Matthew Gospel, says clearly: “When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in private ... do not rattle on like the pagans who think they will be heard by the sheer multiplication of words.” (Mt. 6:6-7). If Jesus were teaching today, He'd probably use the term “Divine DNA.” And say, “Go to the core of who you are in God!”

It is simply a matter of centering and being quiet, communing with and listening to God already dwelling deep within us. It opens the eyes of the “inner recesses of our soul,” as the Little Flower described it. We should say fewer word prayers and listen more to God revealing, alluring, and loving us.

This time during the pandemic was not to shrink, squeeze, or break us, but rather to expand us to be like God in Whose image we are created, and like



Jesus, whose living Body we are. It is a time of conversion – a time to make choices and heart-felt decisions to truly understand and accept who we are as God's beloved and blessed daughters and sons.



The God Who spoke His name as “I am” is always at the heart of our being and existence – the source of our life. God is truly and really present – Jesus is truly and really Emmanuel.”

We have to continue our faith, even though our lives, world, and society have been radically changed. In no way do we believe that God caused this pandemic as a punishment. God is not cruel! But God, Who is vulnerable to human choices, decisions, detours, and mistakes, journeys with us through everything, sustaining us.

Who would have ever thought we would ever live through and experience the social distancing, cloistered isolation and shutdowns of our lives! This mysterious virus came upon us like a surprising spring tornado. This has been an unprecedented “dark night” – and we've been helpless and powerless, except to live in the present moment each day.

In this time of crisis, we must commit ourselves to contemplative prayer and a more sensitive heart that opens us to deep trust and connection with God. Only then can we hold the reality of what is happening – both the tragic and the transformative. We can get angry at what is deprived us or we can listen more closely to the whisper of God calling us closer, to deeper trust, intimacy, and surrender.

This experience has been a real challenge for an extrovert like me. I need people. I'm energized by their presence. Just as this isolation and quarantine started to happen in mid-March, the challenges started.

For many years, we have gathered as followers of Jesus and friends of St. Thérèse to pray the Stations of the Cross at the Meditation Garden on the Carmelite campus here in Darien, Illinois – near the new National Shrine of St. Thérèse. It is always the last Friday before Holy Week. We have been inspired and energized by the 350 to 500 people who have come regardless of the weather.

Because of COVID-19, we had to cancel this prayerful gathering in Lent of 2020. Like many of you, I felt so sad that we were not able as a faith community to celebrate the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. It all felt empty because of missing the powerful and symbolic Roman Catholic services of Holy Week with



the fuller Body of Christ gathering. The physicality of our Sacraments and community gathering were missing.

While we all certainly developed personal ways to commune with Jesus and thank God for our salvation in Christ, the fullness of the universality of God's love was not properly manifested. I remember other years standing on Easter Sunday as the choir sang Handel's *Alleluia* Chorus – it always stirred my heart and soul, bringing tears of joy to my eyes. Christ is Risen! He is Truly Risen!

Our faith in the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ proclaims that all creation is permeated in a mysterious, intangible, yet real way! God's presence is always clouded, as on Mount Sinai and the Transfiguration! Entering into this relationship with God is at times like wrestling with fog.

So our decision to do the Stations of the Cross virtually so that many of our friends could participate at home turned out to be a strange experience for me. I was honored to be asked. The

morning it was recorded in the National Shrine of St Thérèse, I knew St. Thérèse would be watching over me from the powerful, beautiful window.

Why did I not I think of asking a few people to sit there and listen? Talking to an empty Shrine felt weird. I had to draw from a resource of faith and a presence deep within, and more powerful than my need for people. That presence connected me with the many people who were watching and listening, even if I could not see them. That took a real act of faith in the indwelling Divine Presence, the Communion of Saints, and the larger Church community. This was not about me and my style of speaking. It was about us all walking with Jesus in His significant, salvific walk through His Passion, Death and Resurrection together. But it was a struggle. I coughed a few times, even stopped to drink some water and complained to whoever was videoing that this was really challenging.

Thankfully, they edited it and erased all that my ego was trying to control



and not seeing the bigger picture of God working in, through and for us all! Jesus was giving His life and I was trying to squeeze it into my style. About 1,200 people watched and participated on the internet, a much greater number than had ever attended.

Just walking with Jesus reminds us of what He was going through – stretching and deepening His trust in God as His life was falling apart. Our Scriptures report Him saying; “Why this Father? Take this cup from Me!” One thing that always grabs my soul is the loneliness of Jesus from Gethsemane to death. It reminds us that Jesus came to save everyone, by becoming human and experiencing all we experience, including the pain, struggles, disappointments, betrayals, and deaths of life. Yet He was so alone! “My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?” He screamed from the depth of His soul! Dying is something we do alone! As He surrendered to unimaginable pain, and the darkening experience of His life ebbing away, He prayed: “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit!” Haven't we sometimes uttered those same prayers or sentiments in our own words?

It all connects in the real world of this paralyzing pandemic. For many of us, as days became weeks and then months, the isolation and discipline of that were like “the descent into hell.” Our creedal formula makes such an issue of Jesus going to the depths to reclaim everyone from Adam and Eve – a real descent through human history! The extrovert

in me felt imprisoned, as I'm sure many of you did.

This has been a time of quarantine – an isolation. It is interesting that the word seems to have come from the Latin or Italian word regarding the 40 days of exodus in the desert and Jesus' 40 days alone discerning His messianic identity. Both were times of isolation, reflection, revelation, and thoughtfulness. Israel being courted, refined, and engaged by God in a covenant of life and love, and Jesus wrestling with the different messianic identities others tried to impose on Him. Both were being awakened to their true selves and identity as God's beloved.

This cloistered isolation became reflective for me. I remembered Thérèse's mantra and symbol: "Bend but don't break!" The frustration was breaking my spirit. I had to let go of my frustration; channel this energy into lots of listening to the indwelling Spirit: What was happening to me? What am I afraid of? How much do I really trust God? What am I supposed to learn from this?

Carmelite St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thérèse's namesake, teaches us that if we are going to seriously explore the Interior Castle of our soul, where God dwells, we have to first "know ourselves." While God certainly did not cause this coronavirus pandemic, He certainly has been inviting us inward to trust Him

more – and to become more creative and mindful of the ways we reach out to others. The more we experience this awakening to the graced Presence within us, the more we know and connect with everyone else in significant ways. The God within me sees and connects with the God within everyone else. Carmelite St. John of the Cross teaches us how to maneuver through and learn from the "dark nights" – so that they become clarifying light.

“

While God certainly did not cause this coronavirus pandemic, He certainly has been inviting us inward to trust Him more – and to become more creative and mindful of the ways we reach out to others.”

The reality that most of us could not gather and celebrate the Eucharist or the Sacraments as ways in which God's Presence is revealed and shared with us reminds us of St. Thérèse and her isolation. Those last 18 months she experienced terrifying darkness and emptiness.

She experienced the "absence of God" with no consolation. Rather than rebel,

she went inward to "the inner recesses of the soul," the crevices of our hearts where our deepest longings reside. When they surface, we might consider them conscious prayer. But prayer is always a part of us, and it is manifested by the spiritual fruits of our lives – joy, peace, forgiveness, generosity, faithfulness. Lifting our hearts and souls – including the cracks and crevices themselves, which reveal our brokenness – is what the Lord asks of us."

St. Thérèse admitted that she had no words to pray. When asked what she said to Jesus amid this paralyzing darkness, she simply sighed: "I say nothing to Jesus; I suffer and I simply love Him." It became a wordless, contemplative communion in God.

All humanity and all creation were returned to and reclaimed by God in Jesus' surrender and death. The universality of what He did speaks to the universality of the community He revealed. In His aloneness was the Universal Christ as God reclaiming us all. As the prophet Isaiah proclaims: *He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.* (53:5.)

Alone yet one with everyone and everything! Certainly, we become more aware of and more deeply believe that God dwells individually and unconditionally in each of us and all of us. God is truly "Emmanuel" (God with us) and Jesus has mirrored, awakened, and reclaimed us in the reality of our graced world.

Therefore, we are connected as the Universal Christ Who has saved the world. Our aches, pains, loneliness, fear, and isolation will not diminish the reality of His Resurrection that we all share. We go within to be more alive, holy, and whole. Even extroverts like me who dislike the invisible and need the tangible, sensual, and physical are challenged and empowered to believe. We may feel alone, but we are immersed in and permeated by the Universal Christ, the indwelling Presence of God, and the Communion of Saints, of which our beloved St. Thérèse shines brightly! This is how our mission continues in this unprecedented time. 🌹





BY THE TIME this reaches your hands, it will be months since we have been self-isolating and keeping a physical distance from others. This virus has taken a toll on everyone. The Society of the Little Flower office in Niagara Falls remains physically closed to the public, but that hasn't stopped our ministry. Our staff is keeping quite busy on the Little Flower website, and the telephone calls for intentions keep coming in. Some are requesting special Masses and prayers for an end to COVID-19; for a vaccine to be developed; for persons who are ill with the virus; for those who have succumbed to the virus; healing and comfort for families; for those in the medical field; and for front-line workers. Our donors and benefactors have great faith and trust in the intercession of St. Thérèse. Thérèse herself lost her battle with tuberculosis (consumption) in 1897. This was an epidemic throughout Europe in the mid-19th century, and at the time of Thérèse's death, this was the peak of the outbreak in France. May she "Shower Roses" of healing across our world!

Parish Life During a Pandemic

■ In early March, life began to change in our parishes. First, we had to end any physical touch during the "Sign of Peace" at Mass. Then Holy Water had to be removed from our churches. It wasn't long before everything had to be sanitized after Mass. Then daily Mass had to have people sit at least six feet apart. And the saddest part in the evolution of ecclesial pandemic change was when all churches had to be closed, and all Holy Week and Easter liturgies cancelled for the public.

I remember my heart dropping. It hit me like a ton of bricks. I thought of the crowds that would come out for Palm Sunday, the gateway into Holy Week. I thought of the powerful symbols and the Procession and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday, the crowds listening with sacred devotion to the Passion on Good Friday, and the Veneration of the Wood of the Cross. And then the Mother of all Liturgies, the Easter Vigil, and the joys of Easter Sunday.

So what does a Carmelite do? Move up to the challenge. Due to the echoed sound in an empty church, and access to wifi, I set up an altar in the rectory dining room. I took, from our safe, the original altar stone from 1895 and placed it with great reverence and dignity on the table. And it started from there. Father Marc Bell, O.Carm. our associate, and I wanted to fulfill all the Mass intentions that were requested. Father Marc has been celebrating Mass in his family home in Sarnia.

Word went out, and Mass and services went live every day on Facebook. And the faithful participated at home. Carmelites know, where there's a will, there's a way. It's been a true joy to be able to continue celebrating Mass, united with the parishioners in their homes. After all, the Church is the People of God. It's been a challenge and also a joy, setting up the liturgical environment with different colours in the dining room every day.



■ **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.



Father Gerard Power, O.Carm.

Carmelite Ministry during a Pandemic

■ St. Thérèse wrote, "My whole strength lies in prayer and sacrifice, these are my invincible arms; they can move hearts far better than words, I know it by experience." How true is that, especially during this pandemic experience. Visiting the sick became very difficult. So two of us had to do a crash course with the Region's Infection Control, in order to respond to emergency hospital calls. And then the funerals. Perhaps the saddest part of this whole experience. To have a crisis is one thing, but to lose a loved one and not be able to be at their bedside, or have all the normal services and rituals, was very painful. May God be with all those who are grieving. Just as Thérèse longed for the beatific vision, and to be eternally present with Him, we make the same prayer for all who have died during this pandemic.

After the closure of our schools and most businesses, it soon became evident that many families in our downtown neighborhood would be in dire need. Our Carmelite parish put out a call to the people to assist with food and household items. In less than 30 minutes after posting a request, cars started lining up in our parish driveway, dropping off food items and gift cards. So much food and supplies were coming in that we had to set up four large tables in the garage. It was a sight to behold. We were able to feed so many families in time for Easter, and all throughout the Easter season. It was one thing to pray unceasingly during this pandemic, for the intercession of all the saints to end this storm, but that prayer must get translated into action. Our parishioners provided the answer to so many prayers of single moms and hungry families. Thérèse said, **"Souls thus on fire cannot rest inactive."** And the fire didn't stop there.

Help for the Homeless

■ Before long, we received word that some "tent cities" were being set up throughout town by the homeless. One was right in our neighborhood. Shelters were full. Some refused to go into shelters out of fear. This was heartbreaking to learn. I drove by the nearest tent city, to take a look. My heart dropped. Action was needed immediately. Let the people of God know! And that we did. Thérèse wrote to her cousin Maria, **"LOVE. Let us love, since our heart is made for nothing else."**

Well, that love ignited, and before long, word got out ... and we had food, clothing, tents, blankets, sleeping bags, pillows, and personal hygiene products coming in. The Gospel was put into action. Prayers were answered. Nothing less should be expected from Carmelites and those with whom we minister. The coordinators of the homeless project were able to share the supplies throughout other areas of the city. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow! And may St. Thérèse continue to shower us with Roses of Gospel Action.



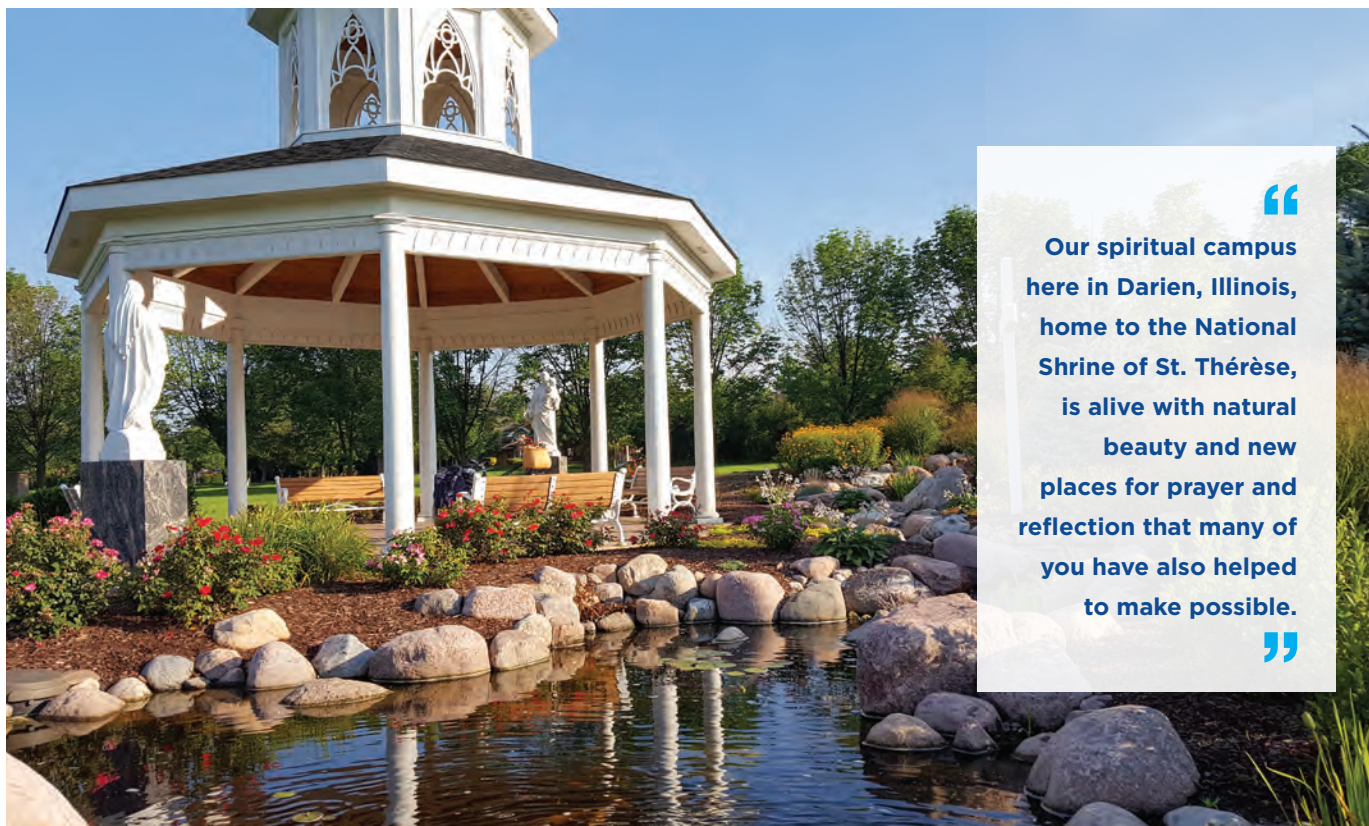
Prayer to St. Thérèse

*Dearest St. Thérèse,
Our sister in Carmel,
You promised to send from heaven
a shower of roses.
You told us with great joy, "My vocation is love!"
If there was ever a critical time in history,
as we know there has been many...
we need your Love and Roses now.*

*Intercede to our God of Love for us.
We are in the midst of a brutal storm,
This Covid-19 Pandemic.
And now a wave of tragedy
has washed over the Shores of Nova Scotia,
And pierced Canada's heart.
Evil reared its ugly head
as people were isolating,
taking 22 innocent lives.
There is so much grief, suffering, pain and fear.*

*For those who are ill,
shower down Roses of healing;
For those who are dying,
shower down Roses of God's mercy;
For those who are grieving,
shower down Roses of comfort;
For those struggling to make ends meet,
shower down Roses of Hope;
For the poor and homeless,
shower down help and mercy;
For children who can't grasp what's happening,
shower down love and understanding;
For persons with mental illnesses,
shower down calm and peace;
For those worried about their employment,
shower down Roses of strength;
For those putting their lives at risk,
so that we may be safe,
shower down Roses of Protection;
For those on edge and getting on
each other's nerves,
shower down Roses of Patience
and Understanding;
For our government leaders,
shower down Roses of Wisdom.
As you spend your heaven doing good on earth,
shower all of us with your roses...
scented with the beauty of God and Mary.
Amen.*

Father Gerard J. Power, O.Carm.



“
Our spiritual campus
here in Darien, Illinois,
home to the National
Shrine of St. Thérèse,
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”

All Part of a Special, Prayerful Community

IT HAS BEEN A PRIVILEGE to talk with many of you over the past weeks.

Thank you for sharing your prayers of well-being for the Society of the Little Flower and the people we serve, your prayer requests, and your donations for Carmelite ministries and the education of seminarians.



Elizabeth Wesel
Director of
Special Gifts

At uncertain times such as this, it is especially important to know that we are all a part of the special, prayerful community centered around St. Thérèse. Many of you have shared that prayer is sustaining you while we are physically separated from loved ones and our Church communities. Please know that today, and every day, the Carmelites are remembering you and your special intentions in their community prayers and Masses.

You have the Carmelites' deep gratitude for your continued support of their worldwide ministries to nourish the spiritual and physical lives of those most in need, and for the education of seminarians who will continue St. Thérèse's mission into the future. Our spiritual campus here in Darien, Illinois, home to the National Shrine of St. Thérèse, is alive with natural beauty and new places for prayer and reflection that many of you have also helped to make possible. Thank you for all you do!

Please know that the Office of Special Gifts is a resource for you to explore how you can continue St. Thérèse's mission through your giving now and in the future. Below are some opportunities that may interest you:

- Creating a charitable gift annuity, which provides fixed payments for life to one or two individuals, with the remainder supporting the St. Thérèse Endowment Fund.
- Making a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA or other retirement plan. This direct distribution to charity is excluded from a donor's taxable income.
- Providing for the Society of the Little Flower through a gift in your Will or Living Trust.
- Naming the Society of the Little Flower as a beneficiary of a retirement account, commercial annuity, life insurance policy, or other financial account.
- Providing a naming gift of \$1,000 or more to help complete the funding of the enhancements to our spiritual campus, home of the National Shrine of St. Thérèse.

Please call us at 1.888.996.1212 if you would like to learn more about these or other special gifts opportunities. If you live in the Chicago area or plan to visit, we would love to meet you in person and give you a tour of campus. May God bless you and your loved ones! 🌹



A CHILD'S LEAP OF FAITH

ALTHOUGH IT HAPPENED EIGHT YEARS AGO, I doubt I'll ever forget the day.

The National Shrine was overflowing with St. Thérèse's friends. We were dedicating the re-creation of her cell (room) on our campus.

The cell is something to behold. Among many other features, we were blessed to receive from the Carmelite Sisters in Lisieux the original floor tiles that Thérèse walked on and the door that she opened each day. At the dedication, our saint's presence was unmistakable.

But the most touching moment of that day happened late in the afternoon.

There was a peaceful presence in the Shrine. A few visitors lingered. In the quiet, I treasured being alone with St. Thérèse. But that quiet was soon to be

interrupted in a way that will stay with me for a lifetime.

Near the entrance of the Shrine there is a beautiful statue of St. Thérèse, and it holds a first-class relic of hers. An elderly woman knelt in prayer

before the statue. Her head was deeply bowed – you could feel the pleading of her heart. At the woman's side, her daughter, mid-40s in age, moved anxiously.

It was clear that her daughter had a mental impairment. Unable to speak, the daughter began to groan and cry out. Her mother tried to quiet her, but she would have none of it, crying out even louder. Touched by the moment, I walked over to the two of them, inviting them to enter Thérèse's cell. I thought the mother might find some solace in that holy space.

The elderly woman, deeply grateful for the invitation, knelt on the floor of Thérèse's cell, with one hand touching Thérèse's door. Her eyes moved quickly across the room, seemingly in an attempt to capture the experience in her mind so that she might return to the memory often.

Her daughter was offering a different type of prayer. Once again, I heard her groans and cries, coming from deep within. In a flash, like a little child, she leapt onto St. Thérèse's bed and grasped the pillow close to her chest. She had found her peace.

Prayer comes in many forms. But one of the keys to prayer, as Thérèse pointed out, is to come to that prayer with the innocence of a child. Children express themselves in many ways: often they chatter on, other times they cry out, and sometimes they simply lift their eyes in wonder.

On that day of dedication, so many years ago, the daughter of that distraught woman taught me a lesson about prayer that I will never forget: words are often unnecessary. What is important is a child's courageous leap of faith, a leap that will always land us in the arms of our loving God. 🌹



Daniel Pritchard

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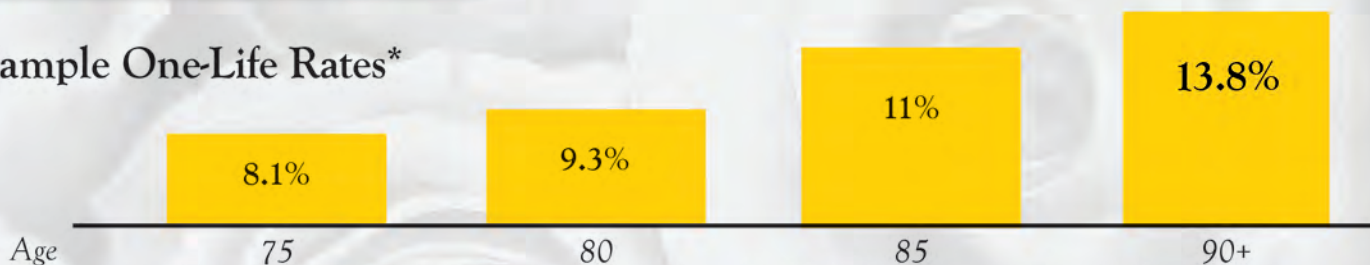


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