

# Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada

# MERCY:

THE *Heartbeat*  
OF GOD!







# Jubilee Year of Mercy

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

## Beloved Family and Friends of St. Thérèse,

It is good to be in your hands again. With you, we know we are *Between Friends*. As we celebrate this Jubilee of Mercy, we know that your faith, friendship, and generosity give full expression to God's good mercy — and fulfill St. Thérèse's mission to "go to the ends of the earth to make God known and loved."

We are people bathed in the mercy of God. Thérèse so beautifully invites us to be open to receive it and be transformed with childlike simplicity.

Enjoy this spring edition of *Between Friends*. We reflect on this Jubilee of Mercy and how it is truly God's heart. There is some other news on Carmelites we want

to share. Mostly let us hope that we all do the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and continue to make a difference in our world.

You are always in our hearts and prayers. You are always present in God's heart — and He is present within you.

Celebrate, enjoy, and share new life. 🌹

**Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.,  
Director**

from the **director**

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**On the cover:** Prodigal Son by Pompeo Batoni





## God's Love and Mercy

>> Mary Therese Lambert, Editor of *Between Friends*

**The mercy of God pours itself out upon every soul –  
with no strings attached.**

And I believe that God's most tender mercy is reserved for those who are searching, fearful, lost, and hopeless. It is in the darkest of moments, and for the most desperate of people, that 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. Love and Mercy are inseparable.

When we believe that God never abandons us, just as St. Thérèse did through many moments of her life, 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 the God of love and mercy.

This issue of *Between Friends* celebrates God's powerful mercy. Within these pages, you will find stories of heartache and disappointment. But you will also find stories 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. 🌹



**Young Carmelites, like St. Thérèse, generously offer their lives to God in love and service as they make their profession of vows, responding to the love and mercy first offered.**



▲ On Friday, January 8, 2016, four men made their simple profession of vows in an overflowing conference center at the Villa Carmelitas in Lurín, Perú. Three of the men – José Benjamín Constante Quezada, Roger Stanley Melara Mondragón, and José Aristides Menjivar Larios – are from El Salvador and completed their pre-novitiate at Centro Xiberta, where Alfredo Guillén is the formation director. The fourth man, Edgar Lucio Lezama Aparicio, is from Mexico and completed his pre-novitiate in Casa del Carmen in Tlalpan, DF.



▲ The Most Pure Heart of Mary Province celebrated the solemn profession of Rolf Nepumuk Willemsen, O. Carm. (above left) and Anthony Armstrong, O. Carm. (above right) on Sunday, January 10, 2016, at a ceremony in the crypt chapel of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

Nepi, a native of Germany, just completed a two-year internship working at Salpointe Catholic High School in Tucson and is currently a second-year student at the Catholic University of America. Anthony, a native of the United Kingdom, is currently doing pastoral work at St. Raphael's Parish in Los Angeles.



ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX'S

# Act of Oblation to Merciful Love

J . M . J . T .

Offering of Myself as a Victim of Holocaust to God's Merciful Love

O my God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to love you and make you loved, to work for the glory of your holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory you have prepared for me in your kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be a saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg you, O my God, to be yourself my sanctity!

Since you loved me so much as to give me your only Son as my Savior and my Spouse, the infinite treasures of His merits are mine. I offer them to you with gladness, begging you to look upon me only in the face of Jesus and in His heart burning with love.

I offer you all the merits of the saints (in heaven and on earth), their acts of love, and those of the holy angels. Finally, I offer you, O Blessed Trinity, the love and merits of the Blessed Virgin, my dear mother. It is to her I abandon my offering, begging her to present it to you. Her Divine Son, my Beloved Spouse, told us in the days of His mortal life: "Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name He will give it to you!" I am certain, then, that You will grant my desires; I know, O my God, that the more you want to give, the more you make us desire. I feel in my heart immense desires and it is with confidence I ask you to come and take possession

of my soul. Ah, I cannot receive Holy Communion as often as I desire, but, Lord, are you not all-powerful? Remain in me as in a tabernacle and never separate yourself from your little victim.

I want to console you for the ingratitude of the wicked, and I beg of you to take away my freedom to displease You. If through weakness I sometimes fall, may your divine glance cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.

I thank you, O my God, for all the graces you have granted me, especially the grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering. It is with joy I shall contemplate you on the Last Day carrying the scepter of your cross. Since you deigned to give me a share in this very precious cross, I hope in heaven to resemble you and to see shining in my glorified body the sacred stigmata of your Passion.

After earth's exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for your love alone with the one purpose of pleasing you, consoling your Sacred Heart, and saving souls who will love you eternally.

In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my


works. All our justice is stained in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your own justice and to receive from your love the eternal possession of yourself. I want no other throne, no other crown but you, my beloved!

Time is nothing in your eyes, and a single day is like a thousand years. You can, then, in one instant prepare me to appear before you.

In order to live in one single act of perfect love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, asking you to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of infinite tenderness shut up within you to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a martyr of your love, O my God!

May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear before you, finally cause me to die and may my soul take its flight without any delay into the eternal embrace of your merciful love.

I want, O my beloved, at each beat of my heart to renew this offering to you an infinite number of times, until the shadows having disappeared I may be able to tell you of my love in an eternal face to face!

Marie, Françoise, Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, unworthy Carmelite religious. This 9th day of June, Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, in the year of grace, 1895. 

(All emphases by St. Thérèse)

Reproduced from *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke, O.C.D.



# 2016 DILGRIMAGES of FAITH *Led by Fr. Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.*

## ITALY: THE JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY

April 18 – 29, 2016

Pope Francis has called the Church to celebrate a Jubilee of Mercy. Fr. Bob Colaresi, O. Carm. will lead a pilgrimage to Rome, the Vatican, Orvieto, Assisi, Florence, Padua and Venice. Come celebrate in the other “holy land” and reflect on the unconditional mercy of God with great Italian food, history, heritage and culture, including the public papal audience. Feel the good energy of Pope Francis.

*\$3,975 per person, double occupancy, includes airfare and all details*



## THE CASTLES AND CATHEDRALS OF ENGLAND & SCOTLAND

September 7 – 18, 2016

Explore the culture that helped form our American experience. We will see Scotland's fierce landscape and Britain's proper society with all their religious history and monuments including: Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews, Loch Lomond, London, Westminster, Stonehenge, Aylesford, Canterbury, and Dover.

*\$5,200 per person, double occupancy, includes airfare and all details.*



## HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

June 20 – July 1, 2016 & November 7 – 18, 2016

A biblical journey – the faith experience of a life-time. We will visit Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, Mount Carmel, Galilee, Nazareth, the River Jordan, and so much more, including boat rides on the Sea of Galilee, Baptismal renewal in the River Jordan, and a biblical Passover meal.

*\$4,355 per person, double occupancy – full airfare and trip; option to get own airfare by using miles.*



For further information, brochure and registration form for each pilgrimage, please contact:  
Darlene Jindra • Carmelite Spiritual Center • 8419 Bailey Road • Darien, IL 60561  
800-431-8720 • [retreats@carmelitespiritualcenter.org](mailto:retreats@carmelitespiritualcenter.org)



## RATE YOUR ESTATE PLAN

**Have you evaluated your estate plan lately? Below is a way to rate the effectiveness of your current estate plan. Rate yourself on the plans you have made for the distribution of your estate and the protection of your beneficiaries' security. After you rate each plan, add up your total score.**

### ■ Will/Living Trust

Score 10 points if you have a will or living trust. People with revocable living trusts still need wills (to distribute assets that are not placed in the trust and to name executors or guardians). Add five points if you have stored your will or trust document in a fire-safe place and notified responsible people of the location. Add five points if you review your will or trust every year to ensure it remains up to date.

Score \_\_\_\_\_

### ■ Life Insurance

Do you have enough protection for your beneficiaries? Does your life insurance still serve its original purpose? Score five points if you have reviewed your life insurance coverage in the last year.

Score \_\_\_\_\_

### ■ Health Care Decisions

Give yourself five points if you have a living will or health care power of attorney (arrangements for making health care decisions if you are incapacitated).

Score \_\_\_\_\_

### ■ Disability

Add five points if you have established a trust or general durable power of attorney that allows others to make financial decisions for you if you become incapacitated.

Score \_\_\_\_\_

### ■ Special Beneficiaries

Subtract five points if you have not established trusts or other arrangements to provide for beneficiaries (if any) who need special care.

Score \_\_\_\_\_

### ■ Business Interests

Subtract five points if you have not arranged for an orderly transfer of business interests (if any) at death, including payment of "death taxes."

Score \_\_\_\_\_

### ■ Net Worth

Add five points if you can estimate, within \$20,000, your current net worth. Subtract five points if you have not determined whether your estate will be affected by state or federal "death taxes."

Score \_\_\_\_\_

### ■ Worthwhile Causes

Give yourself two bonus points if you have arranged through your will, trust, or life insurance to continue your support for worthwhile causes and institutions, such as the Society of the Little Flower, after death.

Score \_\_\_\_\_

### TOTAL SCORE

35-42, excellent

30-34, good

25-29, fair

Fewer than 25 (or if you had to subtract points), see an estate planning attorney at your earliest opportunity!

Score \_\_\_\_\_

**Free Personal Planning Guide** – Please contact our Planned Giving Office to request your free copy of our booklet, "Your 2016 Personal Planning Guide." In it you will find many helpful tips, including a 12 Step Guide to Estate Planning, a worksheet to help you estimate your gross estate, helpful information about taxes, and an article about Social Security benefits. To receive your guide, call Dan or Janice in our planned giving office at 1-888-996-1212.





## The Heartbeat of God!

**W**e are in a Jubilee Year of Mercy. Pope Francis has invited us all to be more aware of and open to the **unconditional** mercy of God. His very recent book is titled *The Name of God is Mercy*. It is a profound invitation we should all read and respond to. It is an examination of conscience for followers of Jesus — and friends of St. Thérèse — and an empowerment to live from God our Source — the God who is Mercy.

Mercy is the heartbeat of God! Mercy is the very essence of God. Despite this truth being revealed throughout the Scriptures and through Jesus, many of us unfortunately still believe more in the God of justice and judgment. Somehow, God being so unconditionally merciful is too big for us to wrap our minds and hearts around. It seems unbelievable, so we let ourselves off the hook and shrink into insecurity, fear, and negative judgment.

Mercy is the heartbeat of God! Like God's breath, spirit, and divine indwelling it pulses through the fiber of our being and life experiences. We cannot exist or be human without our heart beating and permeating our whole body with necessary life-blood. So mercy

is God's heartbeat permeating the Good News of God's love and presence in every breath and experience of our lives.

Despite this divine heartbeat, some aspect of us still remembers the taste of Eden's forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We like to judge — and want a judgmental God, so that we who are created in the image and likeness of God can judge others and ourselves. Did not Jesus again reiterate "Judge not!"? Religion means to "re tie" — reconnect to the truth as revealed. Sometimes we are more addicted to our dark, judgmental side. We allow fear to define us, despite the most frequent biblical revelation being "be not afraid!"

How can a God who revealed He is





intimate with us, lives in us, wants us to rest on His heart, be a God we are afraid of. Fear isolates and hardens us in protective ways. God desires and created us to be vulnerable to His great love and presence. We are made from and for union with God. Did not St. Augustine pray: “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you!”

And yet it is frightening how many people are afraid of God – or at least their toxic, haunting, and false image of who they think God is.

Sin, in our Scriptures, is about separating. Why do we sin by thinking we are separated from a God who chooses to be with us always?

Sometimes the arteries of our soul are so clogged and hardened, we don't hear or

experience the divine heartbeat. A Jubilee of Mercy may involve a heart bypass to get the blood flowing again freely within us – and our world and our Church.

Our world desperately needs mercy. We need to be kinder, gentler, and more forgiving with each other – and with ourselves. The stress, insecurity, violence, and fear we are bombarded with has become a heavy burden. They are shrinking us as a people and as individuals. Our wounds become weapons.

A jubilee is a special year of lifting burdens and freeing people. It is deeply rooted in our Judeo-Christian faith. The Hebrew Scriptures mandate jubilees and sabbaticals to uplift people and burdens – to proclaim, experience and celebrate liberty, the freedom of the beloved daughters and sons of God.

The Book of Leviticus introduces this command of God for a jubilee to occur every 50 years – and in time of stress and crisis to happen more frequently. In a jubilee year, the divine command is prisoners and slaves are freed, debts are forgiven, oppression is lifted, and the mercy of God is powerfully and sacramentally made manifest in very real and practical ways.

God knows we need to release and uplift burdens we carry and lay on others. Yet it is very contrary to the way many of us and societies live, even as Christians and followers of Jesus. We are a burdened people! Our society seems to ridicule mercy as weakness and ineffective. Are we that disconnected from God who creates and lives within and around us? Why cannot we hear the heartbeat of God and divine mercy?

One of the great symbols of a jubilee or Holy Year is opening a door, as Pope Francis did at St. Peter's in Rome. Every diocese throughout the world is invited to have a special jubilee door. Going through a door is a symbol of entering liminal space – going through a threshold and transformation into a new space for soul and body. Often, it is about going into an unknown space to be healed and made whole. It is a call from the comfort and security of the status quo into a newer, unbelievable world that mirrors God's kingdom, not the human power struggles and uptight boundaries

that imprison us and oppress many others. What doors are we being called to walk through in our lives – in our world? What prevents us from even looking? Or walking through? Responding to the call of God's heartbeat?

As Pope Francis said when he opened the jubilee door:

“We grow ever more convinced of God's mercy. How much wrong we do to God and His grace when we speak of sins being punished by His judgment before we speak of their being forgiven by His mercy (St. Augustine). But that is the truth. We have to put mercy before judgment, and in any event God's judgment will always be in the light of His mercy. In passing through the Holy Door, may we feel that we ourselves are part of this mystery of love. Let us set aside all fear and dread, for these do not befit men and women who are loved. Instead, let us experience the joy of encountering that grace which transforms all things.”

A Jubilee Year of Mercy is a call to freedom – God's freedom! We symbolically walk through doors and boundaries to a larger world – a more expansive and inclusive world that is more faithful to the Good News of God's mercy. Freedom is living in the truth as God sees and creates us. It is stepping out in faith and being stretched through whatever is shrinking or burdening us and others.

Our delightful friend, St. Thérèse, was awakened to mercy being the name and nature of God. Because she inherently syncopated with the heartbeat of God, she rejected the harsh Jansenism of her time that imagined a God to be feared, a judgmental, stern, and vengeful God who is hyper-sensitive and unforgiving of any mistake or imperfection. She rejected the concept that God demanded perfection – a God who seemed more concerned about words and concepts we were supposed to believe than in how we lived in relationship with each other. How far we had strayed from the message of Jesus! We so often pray the Our Father: “forgive us as we forgive each other” – but then hold grudges and become vengeful. Some people's concept of mercy seems to have so many conditions, which usually involve control or intervention by others, instead of direct, personal surrender to God. Thérèse knew deep in her listening and





mystical heart that God has no choice but to love us in the way she reflected on Romans 8: 31-39 – nothing can separate us from the love of God!

So deeply did she syncopate with the heartbeat of God's mercy that she alluded several times to the fact that she thought hell was empty – no one was there. Some of her severe Carmelite Nun sisters were scandalized at such a thought, thinking her heretical and naïve. We all think we know people who should be in hell, but is that our pettiness and need for punishment, judgment, and vengeance? I know this challenges the vengeance of my Sicilian blood. We seem to need a hell to scare people – but does God? Thérèse's insight is the pure innocence of God's mercy!

One amazing teaching of Jesus is that whenever the apostles and disciples got all caught up in complex laws and rigid, small-minded understandings, He introduced a child and said: "Unless you become like a little child, you will not enter the kingdom!" Basically, He invites us to re-awaken the wonder and innocence (lack of woundedness) we were created and born with. Have the disappointments, dangers, wounds, fears, threats, and insecurities of life made us so cynical, as individuals and as a people, that we no longer hear the heartbeat of God, which little children still remember. Our beloved St. Thérèse got His message – her "little way of spiritual childhood" is all about simplicity and lack of fear: "go to Him with confidence and trust." Yes, mercy

is the heartbeat of God, but only little children listen that closely and trust it.

On the Feast of the Holy Trinity, June 9, 1895, at age 22, Thérèse wrote and made her *Oblation to Merciful Love*. Its English translation is copied here in this edition of *Between Friends* (page 5). It echoes someone who knew she experienced the heartbeat of God. Highlights include:

- **God and God alone is her sanctity – not her words, prayers, suffering or piety – "with empty hands" – it is all about God's unconditional mercy not earned or deserved by any human being**
- **She is who God actually knows and breathes into being – she is His beloved, not other issues or images that cloud her graced truth;**
- **She is possessed by the God who creates us, breathes life into us each moment, and sustains us;**
- **That God never separates from us – we are tabernacles of the divine presence, which cleanses, purifies, transforms, and defines us;**
- **God is tender, loving, and forgiving – even though God might be disappointed, God never leaves or abandons us – truly Emmanuel!**
- **Suffering does not shrink her, but rather ennoble her to shine in glory; and**
- **She is a heart surrendering herself to the merciful heart of God – with abandon!**

Jesus taught and Thérèse believed that, just like any parents or teacher, our children and students may do stupid and dangerous things, we may be seriously disappointed, but we will still love them and stay with them. We may challenge them, but we don't discard or abandon them. Isn't this love just a soft reflection of the incredible, unconditional, powerful, and merciful love of God! God is always faithful and present, even if we

are distracted and unaware. We are not more powerful than God's presence, even though we try to be!

Pope Francis' jubilee call to mercy is a call to lift burdens and forgive debts. God's mercy is the elevator Thérèse rode to the height of holiness and full union and communion with God. She knew that holiness and perfection are not the same thing. Jesus, even as He was being tortured to death, cried out not vengeance, but "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!" He knew that no one consciously chooses evil – that we are programmed to goodness by the divine presence within us – we simply forget who we are. And God understands and gives us the benefit of the doubt.

So what burdens and debts do we need to release, lift, forgive, and free within ourselves? Our family? Our world? Our relationships? Our responsibility to the rest of the human family of God? To the earth? To our common home?

Thérèse began and ended the writing of her autobiography, the *Story of a Soul*, not to share her story, but "to sing eternally the mercies of the Lord." She knew her life experience was immersed in the heartbeat of God: Mercy!

We, the followers of Jesus and friends of St. Thérèse, need to be re-awakened to the truth. May this Jubilee of Mercy draw us closer to God – through Jesus' heart and Thérèse's inspiration. Once we accept that we are embraced by God's mercy, it will overflow, be shared, and make a tremendous difference in our world. We will be the light and salt Jesus asked us to be. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy will be on our "to do" list.

The heartbeat of God's mercy will transform, gentle, and connect everyone in peace and mutual respect. To hear the heartbeat of God is simply to awaken to the presence and mercy always present and offered. God's mercy is only a heartbeat away. It is the pure, unconditional gift of our generous God whose name and essence is mercy.

Yes, the God who is mercy is the "God in whom we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28) Let us surrender everything else and live from the heartbeat of God. The child in us never really forgot! 🌹

# SPRING CLEANING

## What to Keep, What to Pitch

Spring cleaning shouldn't be confined to your home. Consider clearing out the clutter in your home office and safe deposit box, too. Here are some tips that we hope you will find useful.



### Items to keep indefinitely:

- Birth certificates
- Marriage licenses
- Adoption or death certificates
- Military discharge papers
- Divorce decrees or agreements
- Current insurance policies (health, homeowner, life, automobile, liability)
- Real estate documents (deeds, mortgage documents, and title insurance should be kept as long as needed to figure the basis of the property or replacement property)
- Health records
- Statements from stockbrokers (to determine basis for eventual sale, gift, or bequest)
- Vehicle titles
- CDs
- Trust agreements
- IRA and 401(k) account statements
- Dated sales receipts for investment properties (such as antiques, paintings, or other collectibles so you can document any capital gains when you sell)



### Items to keep four years:

- Employment records of a business.

### Items to keep three years:

- Copies of tax returns (keep your records for three years after the due date of your return, or two years after payment of that tax, whichever is later)
- Supporting records for tax returns, including receipts, W-2s, 1099s, and statements from banks and mortgage lenders
- IRS worksheets to compute passive losses

The items that you should keep indefinitely you may want to store in a safe deposit box. Certain important documents should not be kept in a safe deposit box, though, because they might not be accessible when they are needed most (e.g., funeral instructions or cemetery plot deeds). It may take several days or even weeks before family members can get access to the contents.

Spring is also a great time to review your estate planning documents to make sure your family, friends, and worthwhile organizations, such as the Society of the Little Flower, are provided for in the manner you wish. If it turns out that you need a small amendment or a new will, we hope you'll consider one more satisfying change: a thoughtful bequest to the Society of the Little Flower. Your bequest can be of a stated dollar amount, for a percentage of your estate, or for a portion of what remains after loved ones have been remembered. We would be happy to work with you in planning a gift from your will that will be satisfying, economical, and effective in carrying out the important work of the Society of the Little Flower and the Carmelites. 🌹



# Showered with Roses



*“I love hearing the experiences of people with whom I have shared her novena to get them through tough times — some of whom were doubters. They, too, have been showered with roses!”*

ST. THÉRÈSE once said, “I realize that we aren’t all made alike. For me, God’s infinite mercy is the quality that stands out in my life, and when I contemplate and adore God’s other perfections, it’s against this background of mercy all the time.”


During my travels visiting the many friends of St. Thérèse, I met Gabriela and her beautiful family pictured at left. It didn’t take me long to realize that here was a person who not only loved her husband, Mike, and their four beautiful children, Francesca, 6, Daniela, 5, Charlie, 2, and Nicolas, 6 months, but one who also possessed a deep devotion to St. Thérèse. Gabriela recently shared with me the following testimony regarding her devotion to St. Thérèse:

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*“I was introduced to St. Thérèse and her novena from a friend when I was in college. Ever since then she has changed my life — and everyone else to whom I introduced her. After a very rough patch for me, I decided to pray the novena to find some comfort, and on the last day a friend of mine brought me a single rose for no reason at all (she didn’t know I was praying the novena; in fact, she isn’t even a Christian). She said to me, “I walked by a man selling roses and something told me I had to stop and buy you a rose! That was the first experience of many that I have had of St. Thérèse showering me with roses, and always comforting me and reassuring me that she is listening. And I love hearing the experiences of people with whom I have shared her novena to get them through tough times — some of whom were doubters. They, too, have been showered with roses!”*

*Gabriela also shared with me that even her daughters have started praying to St. Thérèse, and last year both of her daughters received roses! They love St. Thérèse and know how she’s best friends with Jesus.*

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Gabriela and Mike both believe the Society of the Little Flower is a wonderful marriage of St. Thérèse’s message and missionary work, of which Mike thinks to be of utter importance. Gabriela concluded, “We can all be missionaries at home, but what the Carmelites do is beautiful, and it’s work we are happy to support.” 



Before joining the Society of the Little Flower in 2013, Joe Voss spent his life serving the Church in various capacities. In the coming years, he is determined to meet as many friends of St. Thérèse as he can, learning of their spiritual journeys and sharing stories of the impact of their support. Joe can be reached at **888.996.1212**.



## A Rose ... a Fragrance ... a Presence

ON A RECENT VISIT with one of the Society's good friends, Monica was incredibly inspiring as she spoke of her devotion to St. Thérèse. I asked Monica to share some of her thoughts about the merciful love she has experienced throughout her life.

One of the most beautiful definitions of mercy comes from William Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*: "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd. It blesseth him that gives and him that takes." In this Year of Mercy, I can't help thinking of St. Thérèse.

That quote captures her promise, "I will spend my heaven doing good on earth." My definition of mercy is the essence of the Little Flower: "I always see better with my heart." She's only a prayer away at any moment, ready to help.

St. Thérèse's availability has enriched my life and led me ever closer to our precious Lord. To choose


which mercies she has worked in my life is hard because there have been many.

In 1980, my family was in an auto accident. My husband and son were killed, while my daughter and I survived. The next year, I was chosen to be the director of our Christ Renews His Parish retreat. That meant

giving a 45-minute talk on discipleship and how the Lord had worked in my life. Of course a good part of the witness involved the accident and the aftermath, which were still very fresh in my mind and brought tears. The problem was I knew I couldn't speak through tears. The night before, as I tossed and turned, I was saying my St. Thérèse go-to prayer over and over. Suddenly, I was aware of a strong fragrance of roses enveloping me. I knew she was there to help.

Before I got up to speak, I asked St. Thérèse to take my tears and water her roses ... and she did. As I was giving my talk, my prayer partner on the team spent the whole time praying and she told me afterward she couldn't stop crying for the 45 minutes.

As I mentioned, there have been many instances of St. Thérèse's merciful intervention in my life. Ten years after the car accident, she led me with hope through a bout with cancer. Today, she is guiding me as I walk with my present husband as he deals with vascular dementia.

Roses come at unexpected times and in unexpected places. Whether it is finding a rose blooming in the dead of winter or receiving a comforting phone call from the Society of the Little Flower at just the right time, I am confident St. Thérèse is always at my side, spending her heaven doing good on my little portion of the earth. 

**During this Year of Mercy (and always, of course)  
St. Thérèse is the essence of mercy which is born of love. Angelo wrote  
a little poem that captures what St. Thérèse teaches with her life ...**

*"The longest way to God, the indirect, lies through the intellect.  
The shortest way lies through the heart.  
Here is my journey's end and here its start."*



Mary Zacharias is a member of our Gift Planning Office and has been on staff at the Society of the Little Flower for more than 30 years. She would be honored to visit with you and hear the ways St. Thérèse is a part of your life. Call her anytime at **630.719.2230** to talk or arrange a time to get together.







# Mercy Across the Generations

» Daniel Pritchard is the Director of Planned and Major Gifts for the Society of the Little Flower



**THE SEEDS OF KATHLEEN'S DEVOTION TO ST. THÉRÈSE** were sown long before she was born. They were planted in the heart of a high school boy who lived on the south side of Chicago and attended the iconic Carmelite high school Mt. Carmel. That devotion, as well as a love for Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, remained in the center of that young man's heart for the rest of his days.

When one has a treasure so dear, it cannot be contained. It cries out to be shared, and that is what Kathleen's father, Bill, did. Not only did he readily proclaim his love and devotion for the Blessed Mother, she guided many of the most important decisions of his life. It was as natural as taking a breath for Bill to introduce her

to his family so that they, too, could share his love for her.

Throughout her formative years, Kathleen often turned to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel for help and intercession. She, along with her six brothers and sisters, were enrolled in the brown scapular and whenever they traveled, the scapular was an essential part of their travel "kit." They wore it proudly.

With such a strong Catholic Carmelite influence — equally important to Kathleen's mom, Colleen — it was not surprising that Kathleen's faith was her most prized possession. Armed with this spiritual weapon,

one might think that Kathleen would easily navigate the obstacles of life. But no one escapes the cross.

When struggling through a particularly difficult time during college, Kathleen suffered a crisis of faith. These struggles led her to question many aspects of the faith that had been her foundation. Her dad and mom coached her through those rocky times, and, through them, along with the merciful love of Our Lady and the Little Flower, her faith grew even stronger. But her biggest challenge was yet to come.


Immediately after graduation, Kathleen's dad was diagnosed with early Alzheimer's disease. As his memory dimmed and life's everyday tasks became too difficult to navigate at home, the family decided to place him in a care facility. Ever faithful, his wife, Colleen, was his partner though it all, accompanying him on walks and other activities. On one occasion, after sharing these circumstances with a local shopkeeper, she gave Colleen a medal. She said that this medal had brought her to recovery from a heart attack and hoped it would be a source of mercy

and consolation for her as well.

Kathleen, too, participated in her father's final journey. She often prayed the rosary to relieve his suffering. At the end, the family gathered around his bed, with rosaries in hand, scapulars in place, and in the presence of a miraculous medal that had helped to answer a call of mercy. Bill died surrounded by his loved ones as they prayed him to heaven on October 1, the feast of the Little Flower.

The family, ever focused on providing comfort for Bill, never thought to ask who was pictured on the medal that was in her dad's hands. Within minutes of his passing, something urged Kathleen to rush back into his room and find that medal. As you may have guessed, it was a medal of the beloved Carmelite St. Thérèse. Kathleen knew that this saint had answered her family's prayers to bring her dad home.

Mercy shows itself in many ways. Unfortunately, the majority of us experience it most deeply through our encounters with the cross. But Kathleen is quick to point out that even though mercy is often found at the foot of the cross, the cross itself brings us to a new life and a new way of understanding it.

Today, Kathleen is more devoted to St. Thérèse than ever. Thérèse is her constant companion and her picture is prominently displayed in her home and office. In Kathleen's words, "I love her. She's adorable!" 

“  
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understanding it.”



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