

Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada

—EVERYTHING IS—
GRACE

Everything is grace

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

Beloved Friends of our beloved St. Thérèse,

It is good to be with you again. As you hold this edition of *Between Friends* in your hands, please know the Carmelites and I hold you in our hearts and prayers.

Continuing our celebration of this Jubilee Holy Year of Mercy, we focus here on how it led St. Thérèse to her greatest experience and teaching that “everything is grace!” What a powerful insight into the Gospel – into the unconditional presence and power of God’s love!

Mercy really is the heart of God!

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the patron of St. Thérèse and the Carmelites, is also featured. We understand her to be “Our Sister in Faith” – and our official title is the “Brothers and Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.” Please enjoy some

interesting articles for reflection.

We are so grateful for your prayerful and generous support, which enables the Carmelites to be missionaries of God’s mercy and presence.

Because of you, we are among and *Between Friends*. You are living grace for so many people. You show us the generous mercy of God! 🌹

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

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Namesake, mentor and challenge

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

I was named after her. Thérèse was always a part of my life. She led me to this wonderful and vital job as International Development Director of her Society of the Little Flower. She has carried me through tough times and inspired me to live in profound service to her mission: “to make God known and loved to the ends of the earth.”

And yet, to be honest with you, her profound teaching that “everything is grace” remains a real challenge for me, and I suspect for many others. Like many of you, my life has suffered deaths, betrayals, disappointments, abandonments and pains that I never imagined. Thérèse always gave me courage. She suffered so much in her life, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Her hyper-sensitivity only heightened the pain. She suffered many long dark nights of refinement. She had a brave soul and has inspired that in me – and probably in many of us.

I sincerely doubt how many of the painful events of my life can be seen as “grace.” They seem like heavy, painful and empty experiences which shrink my spirit, and not expand it. I suspect some dark, destructive force is at work. At times I’ve felt abandoned by God and even by her, our beloved friend. I say “why me?” – “I’m doing your work!”

I often reflect on that teaching “everything is grace” in the darkest and emptiest moment of her life and stand in disbelief. I desperately want to believe that – but it is so hard and a stretch of faith and trust. I ask: “What am I to learn from this disappointment and darkness?” The emptiness within shouts so loud. I try to be strong and courageous and put my best face on and keep things going. In my heart of hearts I want Thérèse to lift the burden of life’s pains so that Mary Therese Lambert can experience joy and love and trust again – make it feel like true grace!

There are moments when, like a rose from heaven, I see and experience light and hope – an inner freedom and joy – a lifting of the heaviness. This is the way



Thérèse showers me with roses – and keeps me going. I still try, in her “little way” to listen to what is happening – what God wants me to do – to create joy and goodness for others, even from a source I don’t experience within myself. In all humility I know it is God carrying me – working and breathing through me – using me as an instrument of divine love and grace.

“Everything is grace” for me means keeping faithful – doing good for others – fulfilling responsibilities to family, work and friends. It means trusting that God is working through me and empowering me even when I cannot find the energy within myself. I’ve had wonderful moments of joy, peace and wonder which fire possibilities for me. They give me hope that the dark nights of my life will not have the final say on my self-identity or my life. Thérèse is a missionary of hope amid hard and dark times. Her teaching “everything is grace” lights a way for us. Grace is in the struggle with the darkness we experience. We just have to remain faithful. God does not give us more than we can bear – and often entrusts heavier burdens on those He knows will grow from them and grace others. I hope this edition of *Between Friends*, with our focus on “Everything is grace” is inspiring to you. 🌹



OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

FEAST DAY:
JULY 16

For Carmelites, she is “Our Sister in Faith.” We were founded on Mount Carmel, the “garden of God,” by frustrated Crusaders who were disillusioned by the war and violence in the 12th century.

They gathered at the spring of Elijah on Mount Carmel, rather than return to Europe, to search for God amid the disaster and disillusionment of war. At first, they tried to rekindle their faith alone in private caves. By 1180, these hermits built an oratory on Mount Carmel where they would pray together. They dedicated it to “the Lady of this Place,” knowing that Mary of Nazareth, the Lady of the Holy Land, would open them to God, as she was so absolutely open to God coming into the world. This “Lady” was their “Sister in Faith,” reminding them that God, as Emmanuel, would faithfully be wherever we are. She teaches us that God is faithful and always present. The official name of the Carmelites is “the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.” Carmelites became men of prayer, living in God’s presence wherever they are.

When they fled the Holy Land and Mount Carmel by 1291, they continued to call on the “Lady of this Place” as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. In times of trial, when the Order almost died, Our Lady saved them, in a vision to St. Simon Stock at Aylesford in England. Mary took Simon’s brown scapular and told him that if they wore this in faith, she would protect them. Thus began the powerful sacramental of the Carmelite Brown Scapular, as a symbol of the total openness of Mary to Jesus.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel leads us to seek deep intimacy with God, Who loves us and walks with us through every moment of life, and in faith to work for

the justice of God’s kingdom by living the beatitudes and embracing the poor. Our Lady of Mount Carmel always points us to Jesus, and calls us to silence before God’s whisper.

The Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel has been celebrated on July 16 since the 14th century. 🌹

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL PRAYER

*O most radiant blossom in the garden of God,
Who opened so completely to the seed of Divine love ~
Plant yourself now in the reality of my heart.*

*Turning to you as **sister** ~
take my hand in yours and share with me your gift of faith ...
as we climb the mountain to God, remind me that the
overshadowing presence of the Holy Spirit will open the vision of
my soul to all that I cannot see.*

*Yearning for you as **mother** ~
lift me onto your lap and hold me gently in the arms of hope,
sharing with me the promise of new life, passing from one
generation to the next.*

*Reaching out to you as **patroness** ~
enfold me in your mantle of care; permeate my spirit
with the grace of love ...
may my yield for you be full, and my service to God complete.*

*As **Our Lady of this Place** ~
continue to be my guiding star; ignite in me wisdom ~ that I might
follow your lead ... conceiving the Word within, and bringing Jesus
to birth in yet a new day and time.*

– M. Susan Lautenbach



A GIFT TO YOUR FAMILY

■ When the time comes, you want to make sure your affairs are in order and the process of distributing your assets is done as efficiently as possible. To assist you with this, the Society of the Little Flower is offering a free planning booklet: the *Personal Affairs Record Book*. This handy guide will lead you through the task of organizing all of your assets in one convenient location. To request your copy, call our Planned Giving Office at 1.888.996.1212.

WHY CHARITABLE BEQUESTS **MAKE SENSE**

Over the years, the Society of the Little Flower has received numerous bequests (gifts through a person's will, trust, etc.) from friends who wanted to continue the support they had given during their lifetimes. These gifts came through wills, living trusts and other beneficiary designations. Some friends have told us that they wish to leave a legacy to touch the lives of future generations. They often mention the satisfaction they get from helping to continue our work serving the poor throughout the world, supporting our Carmelite seminarians and promoting the spirituality of St. Thérèse. They know their gifts, both during their lifetimes and through their estates, are vital in ensuring our long-term financial security.

Gifts arranged through your estate plan are extremely practical:

- They can be changed at any time during your lifetime;
- They don't affect your current financial security;
- They may reduce taxes on your estate; and
- They can benefit both loved ones and the Society of the Little Flower.

In addition to providing satisfaction, your bequests can achieve other estate planning goals.

Certain assets – U.S. savings bonds, IRAs and other retirement accounts – are subject to income tax in your estate or in the hands of your beneficiaries, reducing the amount loved ones will receive. The tax can be completely avoided when these assets are left to the Society. Or the tax can be reduced and spread over the lifetime of a loved one, if the bonds or retirement accounts are used to fund a gift that provides them payments for life with future benefits for the Society of the Little Flower.

We hope you will consider a

gift through your estate for our benefit. If you already have a will, you can add a bequest through a simple and inexpensive codicil prepared by your attorney. It's also possible to name the Society as the beneficiary of retirement accounts or life insurance. We'd be happy to work with you to craft a gift that provides you the utmost satisfaction, and the correct legal wording that your attorney will need. We also hope you will tell us of your intentions so we can better plan for our future and express our sincere gratitude to you. 🌹

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

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, Saint Mungo, Stirling, London, Westminster Cathedral, St. Paul's Cathedral, Buckingham Palace, Tower of London, Stonehenge, Aylesford, Canterbury, and Dover.

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



HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

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 your 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

THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN GIFT PLANNING

EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES, but when the error involves an estate plan, the consequences can be especially harsh. Usually, the deficiency isn't discovered until after one passes away, when there may be no way to correct the problem. What are some of the most common estate planning mistakes, and how can you avoid them?

■ **Not having an estate plan** – At a minimum, you should have a will, and possibly a living trust, to direct how your assets are to be distributed at death. Other documents you might want for a complete plan are a durable power of attorney, naming someone to make decisions for you if you are unable, and a living will, making known your wishes regarding medical care. Without these documents, the state in which you live will make the decisions for you, in ways you might not wish.

■ **Not reviewing your estate plan regularly** – Your family situation, assets and even your residence may change over the years. If you don't review your estate planning documents every year, they may be of little good when needed. Is the person named as executor still alive? Have children or grandchildren been born? Have you acquired additional assets? Have beneficiaries died? You can make minor changes to your will with a codicil, drafted by your

attorney. Major changes may require an entirely new will. It's also a good idea to have your attorney review the documents periodically for changes in state laws or taxes.

■ **Not coordinating all your assets** – Certain assets might not pass under your will or living trust. Life insurance and IRAs, for example, generally pass outside probate, going directly to the named beneficiaries. Be sure to reconfirm or change the beneficiaries of these plans when you review your will or trust. IRAs and other retirement accounts are subject to income tax, so beneficiaries may receive less than you intended. Keep in mind that all income tax on IRAs and other retirement accounts is avoided if the Society of the Little Flower is named the beneficiary.

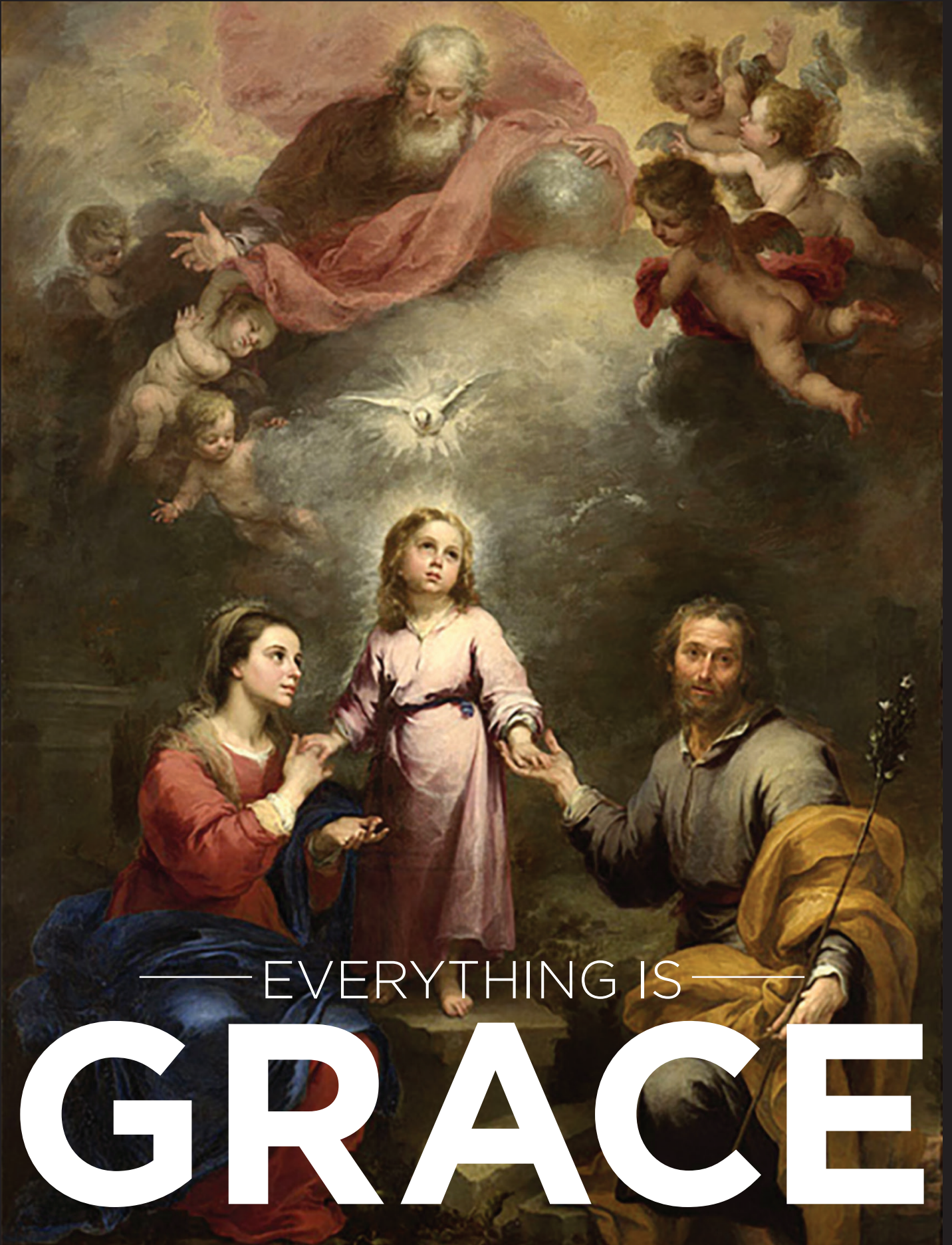
■ **Not letting family members or a trusted friend know where your will can be found** – Even the best will is of no value if it can't be located when needed.

■ **Not writing a letter to loved ones** – A letter can be a final expression

of your love and also a guide to how you would like certain items of personal property to be distributed. The bracelet that has been handed down from mother to daughter for four generations, the pocket watch given to the oldest son, even the set of mixing bowls used to make cookies with a granddaughter – these are items you may wish to pass in a particular way. Your letter can help avoid family disputes over sentimental pieces.

■ **Not telling family members about your relationship with the Society of the Little Flower** – Your support of the Society of the Little Flower has made a difference – far and wide – to countless people who rely on us for education, food, and water, as well as spiritual guidance and direction. Like most of our supporters, your gifts have probably given you comfort and satisfaction. Family members may want to continue that by giving in your memory. Please feel free to contact us if you'd like to know more about including an estate gift in your planning, which will entitle you to membership in *The Rose Garden of St. Thérèse*. 🌹





IN OUR SPRING EDITION of *Between Friends*, we reflected on *Mercy: the Heartbeat of God*. As part of this Jubilee Holy Year of Mercy, we continue to focus our energy on this profound and unconditional gift of God that is at the heart of the Gospel – and all spirituality and Christian living.

In experiencing this transformative gift of mercy from God's gratuitous love, we reflect on what this means in our lives. To experience and accept mercy is to gain a new awareness and higher consciousness of the way we look at life. Mercy led St. Thérèse, our beloved friend, patron and Doctor of Spirituality, to her greatest teaching: "EVERYTHING IS GRACE."

Meditating on God's generous mercy, we are called to reflect on the way we look at and receive life within and around us. Our Christian faith transforms us and challenges preconceived notions of where God is and where God works. Thérèse's powerful and simple answer is: Everywhere!

Most of us were brought up to believe that there is a dualism about life: we judge what is good or bad; what is evil or grace. We easily judge experiences, people, and things to be good or bad – helpful or hindering. Sometimes, we go through life with these limiting and confining judgments. They become the way we receive and experience reality, and the experiences of our lives.

We also know that these judgments limit where we expect God to be. We only seem to find what we are looking for or expecting. And there are places and experiences where we do not expect to experience God.

St. Thérèse's greatest teaching is a challenge to look for and see that God is everywhere – that God Who is Emmanuel, is the God Who is always with us. The flip side of that biblical teaching is that wherever we are, God is! Yes, wherever we are physically,

mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally, God is with us – present within our experience. God is often hidden within our human experiences, as He was throughout our biblical history, clouded in mystery, yet truly present! We simply have to open our eyes and listen with our heart.

What lack of faith in our God, Who longs for us and vowed that "I am always with you!" God's love and presence are so faithful.

Just as God was hidden in the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, He embraced every aspect of our human experience and reality. "For our sakes, God made Him Who knew no sin to

become sin so that in Him we might become the very holiness of God (2 Cor 5: 21). Jesus bridged that awful separation which likes to judge and separate.

St. Thérèse, as a mystic, was given the wisdom to understand and therefore teach: "Everything is grace!" She heard the biblical message: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, neither the present nor the future, neither height, nor depth, nor any other

creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8: 38-39) Wow! God has glued Himself to us!

Paula D'Arcy so powerfully articulated, "God comes to us disguised as our life!" It is her way of saying what St. Thérèse teaches us: "Everything is grace!" God is always present, if we simply look, listen, and be open. What a gift of faithfulness! Divine faithfulness!

We all have parents. Most of you are or have been parents. You know what faithfulness is. You know the

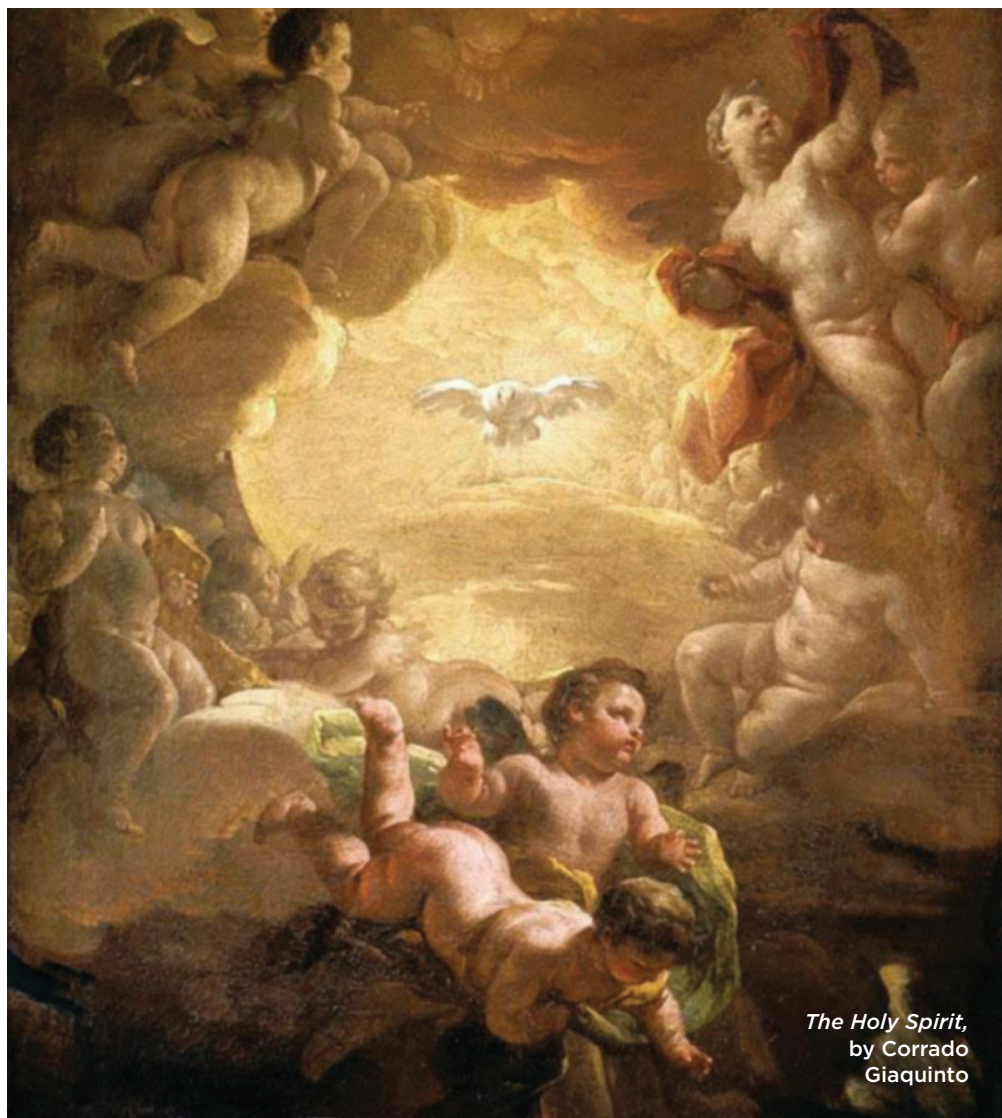


“God is often hidden within our human experiences, as He was throughout our biblical history, clouded in mystery, yet truly present! We simply have to open our eyes and listen with our heart.”

LEFT:
The Two Trinities, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

It always baffles me that some people seem to think that grace is a "thing" – like the gas we put into our car. Grace is God's presence – a sanctifying presence, deep within us and permeating everything. God is the Source and Sustainer of life. Carmelite St. Teresa of Avila imagined God as a sparkling crystal within the interior castle of our soul.

The indwelling presence of God in everyone is so powerful and intimate that we think it is unbelievable. And, therefore, many of us dismiss it and don't believe it.



The Holy Spirit,
by Corrado
Giaquinto

“It is always interesting and inspiring to remember that Thérèse made that statement of faith, ‘Everything is grace,’ in the darkest moment of her life.”

long-term commitment to love and be with your child (children) no matter how good or disappointing they can be. You stick with them, even at their worst. You still believe in and empower their positive possibilities. They are yours, and you love them. Parents are only a veiled and limited reflection of God’s fatherly and motherly love for us, the beloved daughters and sons of God. You don’t abandon in dark and disappointing times. Love is faithful!

It is always interesting and inspiring to remember that Thérèse made that statement of faith, “Everything is grace,” in the darkest moment of her life. She was experiencing a terrible dark night of the spirit as the tuberculosis was gradually killing her and depriving her of the ability to breathe. This high-maintenance child, who liked

to be the center of things, who knew she was living in exile from the heaven she believed she was destined for, experienced a great emptiness within. The intimacy she had known with Jesus seemed to be gone or missing. She received no consolation for almost 18 months. It was a real test of faith for her. She even heard the emptiness cry out that her hopes were empty – there was nothing beyond. In the infirmary, her bed was surrounded by black drapes, to isolate her and possible contagion. Darkness isolated and separated her. She mentioned to the nuns that the dark drapes reflected the darkness and emptiness that was haunting her soul. But her faith prevailed – she did not listen to the voices of despair and empty darkness.

This dark night came to a head when she was no longer able to

receive Holy Communion. As she coughed up the host, the chaplain informed the nuns that she could no longer receive Holy Communion. She was being abandoned by the last visible sign/consolation that God was present. Thérèse was disappointed, but quickly recovered and told the nuns: “Oh that wouldn’t resemble my Little Way. Dying after receiving Holy Communion would be too beautiful for me. ... Without a doubt, it is a great grace to receive the sacraments; but when God does not allow it, it is good just the same, for everything is grace!” What a testimony of faith! The dark night had refined her faith, not diminished it.

Like Jesus on the cross: “Into your hands I commend my spirit!” The great love story of God’s love for all humanity.

Carmelite spirituality has always been about darkness seeking light. The earliest Carmelites were Crusaders disillusioned by the war and violence. They retreated to Mount Carmel in the Holy Land, to the spring of Elijah to hear again the whisper of God amid the darkness that was overwhelming them and hardening their hearts. They even turned to Mary of Nazareth with the hope that she would open them to God’s presence, as she had done in bringing God into our world. They called her “Our Sister in Faith,” Our Lady of Mount Carmel, because she taught them to listen to the darkness – not to fight it or deny it – but to listen! She taught that God was in the darkness and absence – and if they were present, it would teach them and revive the divine spark. The light is always there, but clouded.

Carmelite spirituality is an earthly mysticism – it is experiencing God in the here and now of our lives. We are not about some “other-world” God, but the God Who promised and wedded Himself to us where we are and live. It is so strange that some people believe that they are not going to see or experience God until they die! Don’t we hear the echo of Jesus: “I am with you always

to the end of world!”

Thérèse, our beloved Carmelite Sister, learned and teaches us the same thing. Somehow, “Everything is grace!” God is faithfully present in the most mysterious ways and places.

So we reflect on this great teaching, the manifestation of and response to God’s great and faithful mercy. Just recently, Pope Francis, in his powerful apostolic exhortation *The Joy of Love*, made a seismic shift of focus on this role of mercy at the heart of God and our experience. You and I need to look to what prevents us from believing the unbelievable: “Everything is grace!” Let us reflect on what blinds and limits our ability to embrace the darkness, disappointments, betrayals, and wounds of life – expecting to see the Face of God within our experiences. Mercy helps us understand, accept, and embrace imperfection in ourselves and others, as God does.

Instead of fighting, judging, or becoming hard-hearted, embittered, or cynical, we seek to learn what God is teaching us and inviting us into. Usually it is deeper intimacy with the God Who loves us and lives within us and our world, and accepts us as we are, even as He moves through and expands us. One of the understandings of St. Thérèse is that it is precisely because we are imperfect, little, etc. – that there is room for God. The perfect is the enemy of the good!

Suffering can be a great teacher – absence, disappointment, darkness, disease, and emptiness can teach us so much. Aren’t the suffering and death of Jesus integral parts of the saving plan of God in our Christian understanding of salvation?

My own personal experience continues to teach me to trust that teaching. Fourteen years ago, an infection ate away my spinal cord and was destroying the nerves, with the strong possibility that I’d be crippled the rest of my life. I was so scared – and angry. God had blessed me with so much energy and drive to get things done. The spinal surgery was

a very long recovery – way too slow for me. I was so depressed and angry. It was hard to pray. My soul punishes with silence. I thought God and certainly St. Thérèse had abandoned me. When I finally asked Thérèse for help, all she said was, “Trust God!” That was not what I wanted to hear – “Don’t you have something else to teach me?” It was a long dark time for me. I wasn’t responding well – just fighting it and denying.

But Thérèse knew the secret that I’d dare not believe: “Everything is grace!” Once I stopped fighting and denying it with anger and depression, and started to befriend and listen to the dark emptiness and fear, she taught me to “Trust God” – that somehow God was present. I had to learn that life was not about me feeling “messianic” and trying to control and fix everything. It was a refining humility that God is Savior and that the world would go on without me. I had to trust God, not just myself and my expectations and ego.

Recently, I’ve been treated for prostate cancer – what a shock! I fell back into anger, denial, and impatient irritation. The fatigue was debilitating. How could this happen to me? I work so hard for you. But the emerging lesson of these long treatments is to

face my mortality – and to trust the power of God. It is surrendering to the reality of what is, and trusting God’s presence and providence in the larger world of creation. Humbling – and gentling! Wow, what a relief! I don’t have to carry the whole world! God is truly in charge and knows best!

So what areas of darkness, disappointments, struggles, worries, and pain do we need to look at? Times we suspect we are being abandoned by God and mercy? Struggles that harden our hearts, shrink us, make us angry, and distance us from the loving and merciful God present within these experiences – the God calling us closer to trust, faith and intimacy! Our merciful God is the God “in whom we live and move and have our being!” (Acts 17: 28)

Yes, Thérèse’s teaching, and the teaching of Jesus and the Gospel, is inspiring, yet very challenging. “Everything is grace” – “I am always with you!” What great love and mercy we are blessed with because God is faithful! The mystic and beloved daughter and son in each of us knows this – we just have to believe and experience it!

What are the dark nights of your life and our world teaching you? 🌹

– Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.

“

It is so strange that some people believe that they are not going to see or experience God until they die! Don’t we hear the echo of Jesus: “I am with you always to the end of world!”



St. Thérèse: An ever-present friend

JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, during my travels to Ohio visiting friends of the Society of the Little Flower, I met Mary, a licensed practical nurse who is now retired. She is the mother of two and the grandmother of four; her husband passed away in 2009. Mary is a very devoted Catholic and a dear friend of the Society of the Little Flower who has a deep devotion to St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Mary has had some difficult struggles throughout her married life, including health issues, but she has never lost her deep faith in God's unconditional love and her strong devotion to St. Thérèse, about whom she says with conviction, "Without her, I never would have been able to make it." Mary told me that, in the past 16 years, she has had several instances of St. Thérèse showering her with roses. She shares two of those instances with us:

In the spring of 1999, at the time of my mother's death, I came across a prayer to St. Thérèse in my mother's prayer book. At this time, I was struggling with my marriage and had to make an important decision. That summer, I prayed to St. Thérèse and asked for a rose. If I had received the rose, I would know that my decision was OK and that she would be with me. Within seven days, I received my rose. Going for a walk with my 4-year old grandson Darian, we stopped to talk to a neighbor. While talking, my neighbor turned, picked a large red rose from his rose bush, and handed it to my grandson, saying, "Give this to your grandma." I was overwhelmed and the



tears welled up in my eyes. I could hardly say "Thank you." Thus began my devotion to the Little Flower.

At different times in my life, I've asked for

her roses and received them. Recently after a visit to my doctor, I was at the front desk talking to the receptionist and the doctor came up to

me and asked, "What perfume are you wearing?" I told her I never wear perfume or scented lotion. She shrugged her shoulders and said, "The room smelled of roses after you left." A few days later, I noticed a significant improvement in how I was feeling. Then I realized, St. Thérèse's love came through with the scent of roses to know that she is always with me. My love, devotion, and roses continue. I thank God for His blessings, love, angels, and saints, especially, St. Thérèse.

This testimony from Mary is another example of how St. Thérèse continues to fulfill her promise before she died, "I will spend my time in heaven helping the souls on earth." 🌹

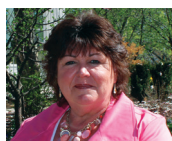


Before joining the Society of the Little Flower in 2013, Joe Voss spent his life serving the Church in various capacities. In the coming years, he is determined to meet as many friends of St. Thérèse as he can, learning of their spiritual journeys and sharing stories of the impact of their support. Joe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



GRACE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

■ *St. Thérèse enters into our lives in amazing ways. Sometimes softly, sometimes boldly. Sometimes out of the blue, sometimes from a family member. Sometimes with a scent of roses, sometimes in the still of the night. And yet – however we learn of or about her – the power of her love and intercession is anything but soft or quiet. And we soon understand why – to bring us closer to God. When visiting one of the Society's good friends recently, Jeanette shared with me her devotion to St. Thérèse. Jeanette shares how St. Thérèse came into her life and how she came to understand one of St. Thérèse's greatest teachings: "Everything is grace."*



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.

My relationship with St. Thérèse began during the late '80s, nearing the time of the Gulf War. I decided to go to Mass one weekday evening, as I feared that my younger brother would be drafted and I felt this would provide me with a sense of solace. As I sat there waiting for Mass to begin, I heard a gentleman ask a woman, "Do you smell that?" I immediately knew what he meant: I could smell the subtle fragrance of fresh-cut roses. As the priest walked to the altar, it was as if a thousand roses had been released into the air. I was awestruck.

The next morning, I shared my extraordinary experience with a co-worker. She said she received something in the mail and



I have smelled the fragrance of roses where there were no roses anywhere. St. Thérèse knows when I need comforting and she is always there for me.

was asked to give it to someone. She left and came back with a prayer card and said she wanted me to have it. On the front of the prayer card was a picture of a beautiful young nun. When I opened the card, it read, "I will let fall a shower of roses." I wondered who is this saint and why is she reaching out to me? I would soon find out. I have smelled the fragrance of roses where there were no roses anywhere. St. Thérèse knows when I need comforting and she is always there for me.

She follows me in unexpected places. Once, while on vacation, I inquired as to the location of the nearest Catholic church. Imagine my surprise when the name of the church was St. Thérèse's! I was overjoyed and had a good laugh. I joked that she followed me, or, should I say, I followed her!

I am so happy that this wonderful saint entered my life. In the latest edition of *Between Friends*, in an article from St. Thérèse's famous autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, she tells us about the graces she had received, especially the "grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering." It is an extremely difficult thing to endure suffering and to see this as grace is almost impossible. However, as I grow older I understand the value of her words. Pope emeritus Benedict XVI said there is no love without suffering. Suffering makes us more human and can fill us with a great sense of compassion for others and increases our spiritual maturity – if we allow it.

When going through an especially traumatic event several years ago, I experienced much mental and physical suffering. My mother and I were extremely close my entire life. She asked me to do something that I was very uncomfortable with, and it was the first time in my life I denied her request. We were estranged almost an entire year and it caused me many a sleepless night and much internal turmoil. As I struggled through it, I began to look at why this had happened to me. I am grateful that, although I endured much pain and suffering for several months, my mother and I have made peace and I emerged a more caring and sensitive individual, especially with my family members. Until that moment, I would not have been able to fully grasp the real meaning of St. Thérèse's simple but powerful words, "Everything is grace." Yes, everything is grace, St. Thérèse. I thank you for your most beautiful and inspiring words. 🌹



The gift of peace

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

MICKIE O'CONNOR PASSED AWAY SUDDENLY before Christmas last year. Although you probably didn't know Mickie, you may have heard her voice; for years, she answered the phone here at the Society of the Little Flower. Mickie and I would occasionally joke around or share a family story. It turned out that, as a child, she and her family knew my dad – his office was near their home. The stories she related about my dad meant a lot and gave me just one more reason to enjoy talking with her.

Unfortunately, I was out of town at the time of her wake and funeral. I wanted to say goodbye and was truly disappointed that I couldn't. A few days later, I returned to the office. I happened to be the last one at the society that evening, and, as I was leaving, I decided to stop by Mickie's desk and say a quick prayer. I ended up quietly talking to her, hoping somehow that she might hear my words.

Within seconds, I was overwhelmed by the smell of roses. Those of us who work at the Society of the Little Flower are used to hearing such stories, and, frankly, I have been a bit skeptical. So here I was, standing at Mickie's desk and the air around me was filled with the smell of roses. I looked high and low for its source, sniffing around like a bloodhound. I found nothing. The next day, it happened again.

As I reflect back on those two incidents, I am struck by the peace that came over me as I stood there. I knew that Mickie was in good hands, resting in the arms of the Lord and comforted by St. Thérèse. We often define peace as the absence of conflict, but perhaps a better definition is "the gift that comes from absolute trust in God, knowing that He will always take care of us."

As St. Thérèse said, "everything is

grace." She was right, but there is only one way a person can discover that. It comes by placing complete trust in God, no matter what, trusting that, even in the most dire of circumstances, God will help us navigate through the storms. Once that belief becomes part of who you are and not simply a good idea, genuine peace flows into your heart. And then nothing can take it away.

Most of us would prefer to leave battling dark nights of the soul to the saints. We need the occasional scent of a rose, the unexplained miracle, or the unexpected kindness of a stranger to keep us going; they confirm that Someone greater is in control. Thankfully, God understands our weakness and is happy to send those consolations our way when we need them.

Where do you find peace?

How do you come to a place that allows you to believe with all your heart that "everything is grace." That can be a tall order, but here's my prescription:

1. Visit the National Shrine of St. Thérèse here in Darien, Ill. I guarantee that you will find that peace here.
2. If circumstances do not allow you to visit, then simply say this prayer:

"O Little Thérèse of the Child Jesus, please pick for me a rose from the heavenly gardens and send it to me as a message of love.

O Little Flower of Jesus, ask God today to grant the favors I now place with confidence in Your hands. [mention your requests]

St. Thérèse, help me to always believe as you did, in God's great love for me, so that I might imitate your "Little Ways" each day. Amen."


■ God's great love for me ... the words of Isaiah offer a comforting image of that love:

"Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have engraved you." (Is 49:15-16)


God didn't just write our name on His palm ... He engraved us there. He holds our hand at all times. It's up to us to hang on, just like a little child holds tight to a parent's hand.

The saints and angels are at God's service. They intercede for us and steer us in the right direction. St. Thérèse promised to send a "shower of roses" to those who need consolation when it is needed most. Believe this: She does what she said she would do, to this very day.

Who wouldn't benefit from such graces? That is why we are investing in the renovation of the National Shrine of St. Thérèse – to ensure that all people, especially the young who are still finding their way, will have a place to turn when the going gets tough.

And when the roses come your way, be sure to stop and smell them. 

■ To find out how you can help with the renovation of the shrine, call our office at 888.996.1212. Recognition opportunities are available at certain gift levels.

A close-up photograph of a large bouquet of roses. The roses are in various stages of bloom and come in a variety of colors: deep red, light pink, pale yellow, and a single white rose. The petals are layered and detailed, with some showing signs of age or wear. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

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