

Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada



*FANNING
THE
FLAMES
OF HOPE*

Like Thérèse, we are invited to lift our eyes beyond the struggles of today



Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.
Director

Dear Friends of St. Thérèse and the Society of the Little Flower,

Hope is the light that carries us forward, even in life's darkest moments. St. Thérèse, in the midst of her own sorrow, looked up to the heavens and saw more than just stars – she saw a promise. She recognized that she belonged to God, that her name was written in heaven. What a powerful reminder that our hope is not in fleeting things, but in the eternal love of God who walks with us.

As we journey through this Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis called us to be Pilgrims of Hope, to live with the trust and confidence that sustained St. Thérèse. Hope is not merely

an emotion; it is the conviction that God's grace is present in our daily lives, guiding us in ways we may not always see. It is in the stillness of prayer, in acts of kindness and in our trust that God is working through us.

Like Thérèse, we are invited to lift our eyes beyond the struggles of today and rest in the assurance that God's love surrounds us. May we take her lead – placing our hand in the Father's, walking forward with trust, and fanning the flames of hope in our own lives and in the lives of those we touch.

With prayerful gratitude,

Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm. 

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Year of Hope!



Dear Friends of St. Thérèse,

Haven't we all experienced those transcendent moments – those flashes of divine light – that remind us we are part of something far greater than ourselves? These moments, often fleeting yet profoundly real, lift our hearts beyond earthly struggles and root us in the deep, abiding presence of God. They are moments of joyful hope, much like the one St. Thérèse experienced on that night in Lisieux when, in the midst of grief, she looked up at the night sky and saw a cluster of golden stars forming the letter “T.” In that celestial wonder, she recognized a truth that carried her through life's trials: her name was written in heaven.

This simple yet extraordinary moment encapsulates the heart of our faith. It is a reminder that we are not alone, that we belong to God, and that hope is not just a passive feeling – it is an active trust in His

presence, His promise and His plan. As we embrace this Jubilee Year of Hope proclaimed by our late Pope Francis, we are called to live as Pilgrims of Hope, seeing with eyes of faith and trusting in the unseen reality of God's grace at work in our lives. I would like to mention that our own National Shrine of St. Thérèse here in Darien, Illinois has been named as one of the places for Catholics across the world on pilgrimage to visit and commemorate the Jubilee Year of Hope.

Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, we, too are called to reflect God's light in the world, even when shadows surround us. Hope is that light – it is the divine spark within us, lifting us beyond despair and into the joy of knowing who we are.

St. Thérèse teaches us that everything is grace, even our struggles. Her “Little Way” of confidence and trust is infused with

the hope that sustains us through life's uncertainties. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of St. Thérèse's canonization, let us take to heart her lesson: hope is not found in grand gestures, but in small, daily acts of faith, love and trust.

May this jubilee be a time of renewal, a time to embrace the liberating power of hope, and a time to fan the flames of divine love in our hearts. Let us walk together as joyful Pilgrims of Hope, hand in hand with our loving Father, just as Thérèse once did with hers. 🌹

With faith, hope and joy,
Mary Therese Lambert



Mary Therese Lambert
Editor of *Between Friends*

Someone you Should Know

DIMITRI

My name is Dimitri. I was born and raised in Korçë, Albania, in a middle-class Christian Orthodox family with strong family values. Growing up in this culturally rich city, I was deeply influenced by the traditions, history and strong sense of community that defined my hometown, which is often called the Little Paris of Albania, with its vibrant intellectual and artistic scene. Its high elevation and nearby destinations are popular for their winter resorts, hiking trails and charming old villages with rich Orthodox Christian heritage.

I was raised by my grandparents while my parents were busy providing for the rest of the family, which embedded in me a deep respect for faith, hard work and close family ties. Those values continue to shape my personal and professional life, guiding my ambitions and relationships.

My family ran a small candle-making business that supplied candles for all the religious traditions and specialty occasions such as birthdays and baptisms throughout the city and other regions. With Albania's religious diversity and tolerance, business flourished so much that at a young age I was asked to help on busy seasons when not in school.

Beyond my roots, I have built a passion for art, technology and business, always seeking growth and new opportunities. Whether through work, travel or personal pursuits, I remain proud of my heritage. At the age of 15, I had asked my father



about the idea of opening my own business next door to our candle factory. It wasn't for candles; it was video games. It was successful but little did I know, the U.S. was calling.

The Green Card Lottery is a U.S. government program that provides a pathway for individuals from countries with low immigration rates to the United States to apply for a permanent resident visa (Green Card). The program is part of an effort to diversify the immigrant population in the U.S.

My mom was always applying for it every year, only because it was the

trend and all her friends did it. At this time, we were focused in growing our businesses and had never imagined that one day our path would point across the Atlantic Ocean. I remember my mom saying with hopeless grief: "This is the last time I apply." The reason was that I was turning 18 that year and the family could not travel together with me being an adult in case we were chosen. I'm guessing "someone" heard her prayer that day and sent her a "rose."

It is now 2025 and it is my 18th anniversary working for Society of the Little Flower and has been 21 since

reaching the U.S., becoming a citizen in 2010. I have spent more time in the U.S. and nearly more time at the Society of the Little Flower than in the place I was born. It is really touching remembering this.

After coming to the U.S., I started working as a mailman. One of my daily pickups, at 3:30 p.m., was the Society of the Little Flower. I loved my job, being able to work independently and outdoors. Driving through unknown streets gave me an opportunity to explore and learn the place I was calling my new home. But again, my path was pointing in a different direction. Racking up 200 miles daily and extra hours on the road, especially in the harsh winters of the Midwest, my family had become worried. To be honest, I was anxious, too.

It didn't take long until I was notified by a Society of the Little Flower employee that they were hiring in the Mailroom Department. The only thing that came in my mind was: "How happy would my mother be if she hears am not on the road anymore." I gave it a shot, even though I was not looking for a job, but I've heard people say when opportunity knocks, you have to let it in.

I started working at Society of the Little Flower in March 2007 in the Mailroom. I had no idea who St Thérèse was and why was she so famous as a saint. At the beginning, it was just a job, then one day I decided to stop at the Carmelite bookstore, across from the Society of the Little Flower offices. Almost immediately, I spotted a book with a picture of St. Theresa of Calcutta, and with her being a famous Albanian saint, I didn't hesitate to go through the first two pages of the book. In one of the first paragraphs I learned that she was named after St. Thérèse of Lisieux. That was it for me. I did not read further and to this day I embrace that moment as a sign of hope that this could work and accepting her to be my boss.

After a decade, I starting helping in the Information Technology Department for a few years, when Mary Lambert, our International Development Director, with the support of Father Thomas Schrader,

our Director, offered me the Office Manager position, which I have been doing since 2021.

As one of the perks, I was able to join a pilgrimage to Lisieux, France, with Father Bob and a group of devoted friends of St. Thérèse. We visited her homes in Alençon and Lisieux and many other historic locations. The highlight of the trip was when I was miraculously allowed to enter inside the walls of the famous Carmelite cloistered convent.

Because Father Bob had business with the archivist Carmelite nun, and needed help, I was given another blessing: a private tour throughout the convent by this very friendly cloistered nun, who I will always be thankful for. Being able to walk inside St Thérèse's cell where she spent nine years of her life gives me goosebumps to this day. I spent precious hours in the convent's archive room going through her relics, helping organize and absorbing as much as I could. I was definitely taking my time. My relationship with Thérèse grew closer. I have been inside her house and the convent, stepped on every single tile she had stepped on and touched every door knob she had touched.

Given the close relationship between the Society of the Little Flower and the Lisieux Carmel, we were allowed to borrow a few relics to bring back to the States and display in our St. Thérèse Museum in Darien. In fact, a Sister asked for help to open up and spread out vestments that were made from St. Thérèse's bridal gown and veil when she entered the convent. It was a

challenging job. After reviewing them, I had to fold, lift and return them to their protective cabinets. Father Bob, who was watching all this, commented: "Dimitri, you spent more time with her wedding dress than she did." Did I feel special!

Since I was the guardian of the Museum on the weekends and welcoming visitors, it was a raw experience that I shared with almost everyone who visited. I could see the interest elevates every time I shared my stories and ignite their hope that one day it will be them walking the same path.

I couldn't be prouder of being a part of this team here at the Society of the Little Flower. The dedication and passion to promote her teachings and provide comfort for many people in difficulty, especially during the dark times of the pandemic, proved once again the roots of this family go deep into the soil that St Thérèse has carefully seeded.

She believed that even the tiniest, most unnoticed acts of love – like a kind word, smile, or a silent sacrifice – can have immense value in the eyes of God.

I was married in June 2021 at the new National Shrine of St Thérèse in Darien. My wife Michelle and I are blessed to have a 3-year-old beautiful daughter, Samantha Maria. She is our little stubborn angel and the hope that keeps us going. We are both grateful and thankful to family and friends who have blessed us in our lives with friendship, guidance, hope, grace and trust.

“

I embrace the moment as a sign of hope that this could work and accepting her to be my boss.”

JOSEPHINE CATUNAO PALACIO

My name is Josephine, but I'm better known as "Josie." I've had the honor and privilege of working here at the Society of the Little Flower since 2000. While my path and time here have been paved by the works of the Lord and St. Thérèse of Lisieux, this path has had its own obstacles, twists, and turns. To begin with, my journey here in the United States started back in 1992. I immigrated here from Manila, Philippines. My home country is where my faith was taught and instilled. I carried it proudly here to this new world of mine, in which I became a U.S. citizen in 1999.

The Philippines is home to the third-largest Catholic population in the world, and our Catholic practice is robust across the country. It's no surprise that my Catholic faith and my current role at the Society have crossed paths. There are many things Filipinos and their culture are known for: their food, hospitality, vocal talent and many others. But above all, we stand out most for our devotion, passion and our faith.

I was raised by two loving parents and three siblings, all of whom practice and share our Catholic fervor with the next generation of our family. When I made the decision to start a new life in a new country, I was fortunate to have gotten a job working at one of the biggest bookstores here in Illinois. During my seven years' experience working as a shipping clerk, I began to learn the ropes of this role and what my duties entailed. Little did I know, this role would help me find and excel in the role I have had for the last 25 years.

Throughout my time navigating this new country, customs and a new way of life, I got married at the beautiful age of 34 and was truly blessed by God with my one and only daughter. While I knew my future plans were in the works, I knew my daughter was my gift from the Lord, and because of this, and the help and guidance of my beloved Aunt Carmelita, I named my blessing Carmela. All of these small signs of the Carmelites, St. Thérèse, the Lord and the Society were hidden in plain sight, showing me where my path was leading me and what I was called to do. Little did I know, of course, but through my faith I was reminded to consistently work hard and keep believing, and then I would be granted with blessings. The obstacles I

bore came and went nonetheless, and many times my faith was tested. When my daughter was around 5 years old, I was faced with a new test of faith and patience with my marriage. While this road had come to an end, I knew another one was ahead. I had left my bookstore shipping clerk role and set my eyes on new horizons. After all, my primary goal was to create a happy and fruitful life for my daughter, provide her with an education and, of course, instill a passion for the Catholic faith, much like I was raised and taught to do by my parents.

I then began to work at the Society of the Little Flower as a receptionist. At first, I didn't know too much about St. Thérèse or the Society of the Little Flower. I quickly learned about this organization, her life and connected with the strong community of faith of her followers. People would call not only to speak about their trials and tribulations but also to share their profound faith and hope in St. Thérèse and the Society. Over time, through hard work and dedication, I had made my way up to the position I still hold today: Supervisor of the Society's Shipping Department. This department is crucial, as we are responsible for fulfilling orders coming from followers, donors and patrons of St. Thérèse. These orders contain religious articles such as rosaries, books of St. Thérèse, statues and prayer cards. Not only was



I in a role that exemplified the work of faithful service, but I also had the honor of continuing to share the passion of the Catholic faith through St. Thérèse. From the outside looking in, my role may seem to be merely shipping and handling to others; in my eyes, shipping and handling such unique items on behalf of the faith about which I am so passionate help to also spread blessings, good faith and the words of St. Thérèse. Shipping and distributing these works not only nationwide but worldwide, further helps make God known and spreads His blessings from the Society and St. Thérèse to the ends of the earth.

I truly believe God's plan led me to where I am today. I also believe St. Thérèse had showered me with her beloved roses, and called me to do what I felt I was meant to do all along.

After 25 years of devotion, I know the most profound moment in my life was in 2023, when her and her parents' relics had come to her Shrine and Museum in Darien. During this time, I was given the opportunity to sew a tablecloth specifically for where those relics were to lay. This moment alone touched my heart and helped me understand the true meaning of doing ordinary actions, but with extraordinary love. It is truly inspiring and humbling to know that every day I spend with St. Thérèse's guidance, love, legacy, and blessings, I am following her "Little Way." 🌹

One staff member of the Society of the Little Flower who has worked with Josie for many years comments: "Josie helps everyone and joyfully. She even helps out at other ministries here on the St. Thérèse campus. Her generosity and conscientious work reveals her deep faith and life of service. In many ways, Josie is like a Filipino St. Thérèse."



Tending the Garden

Does the name Jerry Baker ring a bell?

For many years, Jerry was a well-known figure in the gardening world. Known as “America’s Master Gardener,” he promoted gardening techniques that used common household items. He was a back-to-basics kind of guy.

Jerry also knew that even with a good deal of effort and know-how, gardening is also an exercise in hope. There are no guarantees that all will go according to plan.

St. Thérèse, affectionately known as “Heaven’s Master Gardener,” wanted to be a beacon of hope for anyone who turned to her when things weren’t going according to plan. She saw herself as the “Little Flower of Jesus,” and promised to send a Shower of Roses to those who sought her intercession. To this day, she continues to come through on this promise!

Hardly a week goes by at the Society of the Little Flower without receiving letters from our friends letting us know how seemingly impossible situations were resolved through St. Thérèse’s intercession. She yearns to send her Shower of Roses to comfort those who turn to her, and her answer is often unmistakable, even to the extent of sending the scent of roses to some as a sign of answered prayer.

Both gardening and a life of prayer are labors of love; instant gratification is typically not part of either exercise. They each need tending; otherwise, neglect can allow weeds to creep in, either in a garden plot or in one’s spiritual life.

One of the most enduring gifts we can give to our children and grandchildren is to teach them of the hope that is possible by living and growing in one’s faith.

In order to help our loved ones develop a close relationship with the Lord, we must teach them that for a “spiritual garden” to flourish, soil must still be tilled and seed must still be sown. An effective way to do that is by sharing one’s own stories of the spiritual journey.

The Society of the Little Flower is pleased to offer our friends a free booklet, titled “My Life’s Memories,” in which important memories, pivotal moments and stories of faith can be recorded. The booklet can serve as a living testament – even after you have left this world – to that which made you the person you are today. To request your copy of “My Life’s Memories,” please call our Office of Special Gifts at 888-996-1212. 🌹

BY DAN PRITCHARD

FANNING THE FLAMES OF HOPE



Getty Images/Abositi Tahara

BY FATHER BOB COLARESI, O. CARM. | SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR



There was especially one cluster of golden pearls (stars) that attracted my attention and gave me great joy because they were in the form of a ‘T.’ I pointed them out to Papa and told him my name was written in heaven.”

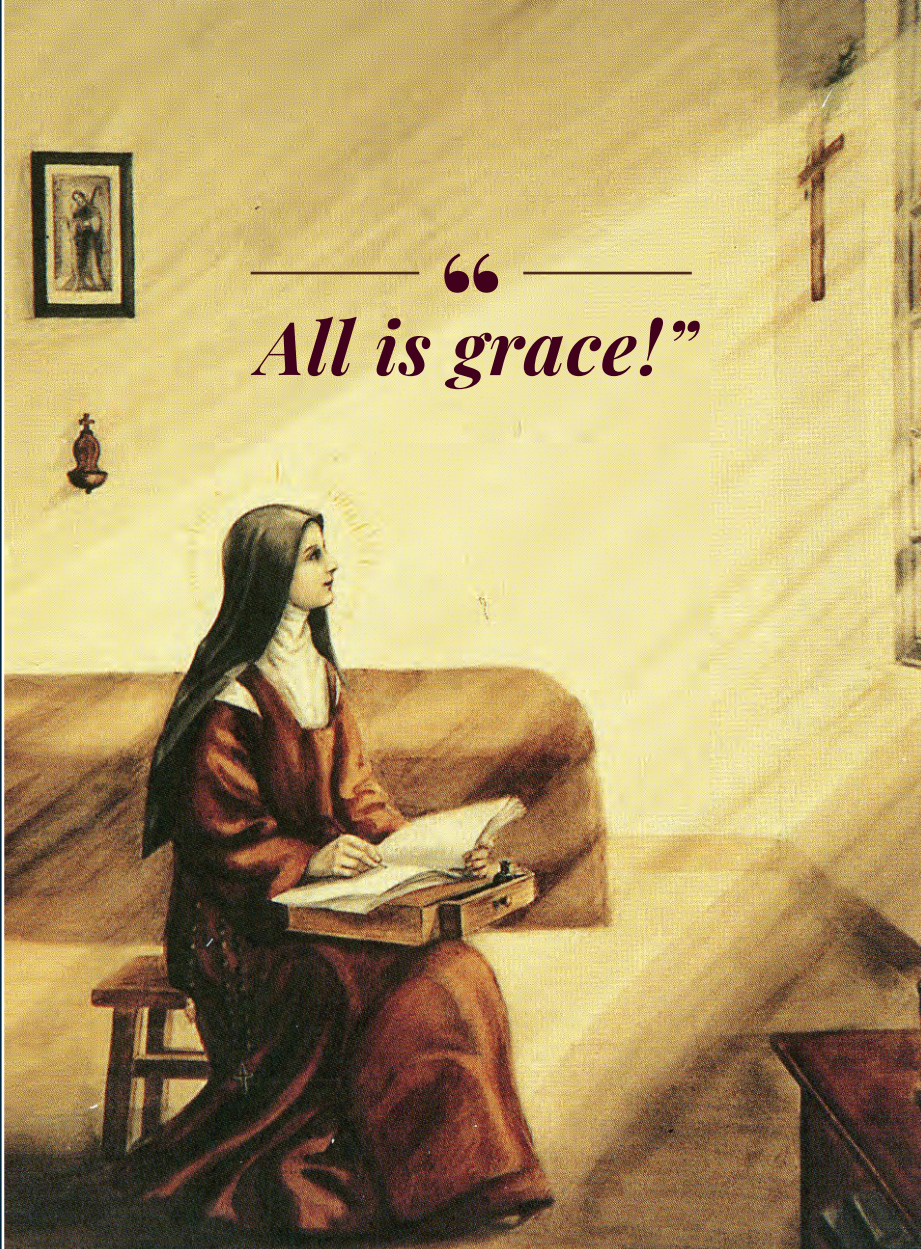
- ST. THÉRÈSE, THE LITTLE FLOWER

DEAR FRIENDS OF ST. THÉRÈSE,
HAVEN'T WE ALL HAD TRANSCENDENT MOMENTS OF
AWE WHICH MADE US FEEL BIGGER THAN WE ARE AND
FULLY ALIVE IN "WHOSE WE ARE"? THESE MOMENTS CLARIFY THE
DARKNESS AND CONFUSION OF LIFE. THEY ARE MOMENTS OF
JOYFUL HOPE EXPLODING WITHIN US.

Despite the struggles of her life, our beloved heavenly friend was a person of great hope. As St. Thérèse wrote in her *Story of a Soul* autobiography, during the painful time of grieving the death of her mom, walking with her dad one night in Lisieux, she looked up at the beautiful sky and was fascinated by what she called "a cluster of golden pearls." Her response to those sparkling stars was: "My name is written in heaven!"

Young Thérèse knew what heaven was proclaiming: she belonged to heaven – to God!. This was the hope that carried her through the ups and downs of her life.

"Whose we are" is the basis of hope! It is especially important that we focus on hope in this Jubilee Year of Hope which Pope Francis has proclaimed to encourage us to be Pilgrims of Hope. We grow and mature in energizing hope rooted in God's presence and promise.



“
All is grace!”

The Little Flower's youthful experience enlightened her that she was bigger than her self-created fears, hopes, insecurities and joys. She belonged to another world: the world of God, Who indwells and permeates her, everyone and everything. All is grace! Her greatest teach is "Everything is Grace" at the darkest time of her life. Her faith and hope knew there was more because she trusted the presence within, confirmed by her contemplative, attentive prayer and the sacraments.

St. Paul, in his Letter to the Philippians, reiterates that despite our pre-occupation with the physical world we live in, and all our boundaries, borders and sovereignty issues which can become shamefully self-destructive, "our citizenship is in heaven." We belong to God, and God chooses to live with us, The mysteries of the Transfiguration and Resurrection reveal this profound truth, as Jesus reveals our human experience and truth: "The Lord Jesus Christ, will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into completion in himself." (Phil 3: 20-21)

The Little Flower learned this hope-filled lesson in faith at an early age – and it is a lesson most of us still struggle to believe and accept. Faith and spirituality are about transformation in hope!

Sometimes the truth revealed by Jesus and confirmed by St. Thérèse is so unbelievably hopeful that we don't believe it. We get trapped in a small world and don't look at the heavens and the stars! Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, one of our present-day mystics, so admired by Pope Francis, reminds us: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience." Yes, we are spiritual beings trying to have a joyful, hopeful and full human experience! The Spirit blows where It wills, which fans the flames of hope! Many think this hopeful transformation happens when we die, but the Incarnation of Jesus proclaims that it is happening in our life here. God is always with us, carrying us, holding our hand and making us tabernacles of His love and presence.

Recently one night, I went out to see the monthly full moon. In the stark darkness, it was glistening with purity and clarity. I laid down on the lawn and watched, as the magical attraction of this "reflected light" mesmerized me. The stillness and awe penetrated my soul. As this light embraced my attention and presence, I felt bathed in reflected light. Somehow I was one with the universe, as if I merged with it. In real ways, we are all the same material of energy, matter, liquid and gas. All creation is inSpirited by Light. The source of everything is God, who creates and sustains us in so many different forms.

That powerful experience of reflected light in the full moon reminded me of the Little Flower's heavenly experience of

her name being written in heaven. As I lay bathed in light, I felt more connected with the universe, and God felt so close. Intimately close! I experienced Whose I was, as St. Thérèse did. Yes, we've all had those transcendent moments of awe, which we easily dismiss, because it is hard to wrap our heads around. In fact, the Divine Light is wrapping us in unifying divinity, which we call grace.

My friend Barbara sent me a poem by Emily Dickinson which starts: "Hope is the thing that feathers, that perches on the soul, and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all." Poets can speak to the elusive reality of hope. Feathers lift and fly, when we get stuck below! Feathers of hope perch, sing and never stop.

The Gospel of John is so clear: "I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I in you ... that all of them may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. I have given them the glory You gave Me, so that they may be one as We are one - I in them and You in Me - that they may be perfectly united, so that the world may know that You sent Me and have loved them just as You have loved Me." (Jn 17). Our hope is rooted in God's trust, making us truly the Body of the Risen Lord, here and now!

One of the special celebrations of this Jubilee Year is that it is the 100th anniversary of the canonization of St. Thérèse. How quickly her fame swept the Church, making spirituality so available to everyone. She has so many friends like you, because she teaches us the holiness of the ordinary human journey. The hope of knowing God is already realized, as God is present within and around us, if we just look and see with hope, expectations and faith.

The Letter to the Hebrews beautifully defines hope and faith: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb 11: 1)

Following St. Thérèse and living a life of faith according to her Little Way of confidence and trust, is permeated with hope. When Pope St. John Paul II declared her the youngest Doctor of the Church, he wrote: "Read the Scriptures through this young girl's heart: A particular radiance of doctrine shines forth from her writings which, as if by a charism of the Holy Spirit, grasp the very heart of the message of Revelation in a fresh and original vision, presenting a teaching of eminent quality." (*Divini Amoris Scientia*)

Her emphasis on merciful hope reflects St. Paul to the Corinthians: "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are

seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Cor 4:16-18)

This Jubilee Year of Hope challenges us to be Pilgrims of Hope. In the Bible, jubilees are rooted in the Jewish Sabbath every seventh day as a time of rest and refreshment. It is a time to take a break and re-evaluate our life and soul to what is most important, looking beyond the productive work of the moment to see all activity in light of God's presence and plan. Eventually, it expanded to a sabbatical year every seventh year to forgive debts and hurts, free slaves or release burdens placed in others. Even the land is supposed to rest and lie fallow for the soil to be replenished. Jubilees are a protection against our unfettered and destructive desires for more and more productivity, when we become what we do, not who we are - and whose we are. God made us human "beings," not human "doers."


Jubilees eventually were held every 50 years (a lifetime in those days) - following the seven times seven years of forgiveness. Debts were removed and forgiven, land returned to the community that originally owned it. People were liberated to start over. The overriding emphasis of a jubilee is that everyone and everything belongs to God, who gifts us. At times, it creates injustice; sabbatical jubilees rectify injustice. Remember Jesus' inaugural homily at his home synagogue in Nazareth when he quoted Isaiah: "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free and proclaim a year of the Lord's favor." Jesus' mission is ours, rooted in the presence of God who is our hope, by being present within and around us.

Some focus jubilees on indulgences and pilgrimages, but Pope Francis encouraged us to focus on hope. Hope is not naïve optimism, but an awareness and insistence to seek the common good, anchored in God's will - to see the difficulties and injustices clearly and renew our commitment to follow Jesus and pursue liberating action, rather than live in despair. Hope overwhelms the indifference of hopelessness.

In the Psalms and throughout biblical history, there is the mantra of faith: "Our hope is in the Lord, Who is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone." (Ps 33)

So how are we living this Jubilee Year of Hope? How are we making a difference in other people's lives? Who and what do we forgive or release? What social or personal burdens are we lifting or liberating? How do we truly practice being citizens of heaven? Does our faith in God's presence ("Everything is Grace") give us hope to be people of transfiguration and resurrection?

Who and what are the people, prophets, poets, friends, situations, experiences and surprises that trigger hope in us - allowing feathers of hope to perch and fly in song? As prayerful people present to God and life, we must be sensitive and attentive to the moments and situations that ignite hope when we feel down and pessimistic. When are we silent enough to listen and watch and experience that we belong to Someone embracing us with hope? The demonic likes us to be addicted to the negative - to curse the darkness instead of be the light God is in us. "The Human Soul is the Divine spark! (Prv 20:127)

Hope is that elusive and undefined courage and conviction to walk in liminal space because God is walking with, within and around us - this is the hope experience that lifted Thérèse's soul in dark and empty times. It is important to notice is that while this happened, her father Louis was holding her hand. She wrote: "I pointed them out to Papa and told him my name was written in heaven. Then desiring to look no longer upon this dull earth, I asked him to guide my steps; and not looking where I placed my feet I threw back my head, giving myself over completely to the contemplation of the star-studded firmament!" Abba, our God and Father, is holding our hand in every experience breath, situation, joys, disappointments and relationships of our lives. This is our hope and truth. This divine handholding is fanning the flames of hope! 

Age has its Advantages

BY DAN PRITCHARD

If you are age 70 ½ or older, this article is meant for you. A number of years ago, a law was passed that allowed those older than 70 ½ to make gifts to their favorite charities through what is referred to as a “QCD,” or *Qualified Charitable Distribution*. Even those who don’t itemize charitable gifts on their tax return can benefit.

Making a Qualified Charitable Distribution involves a simple two-step process:

1. Contact your IRA plan administrator and explain that you would like to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution to the Society of the Little Flower. Your administrator will want to know our contact information and if we are qualified to receive a QCD (we are!). Be sure to request that your name be put on the memo line of the check; otherwise, we may never know the gift came from you.
2. Decide on the amount you want to give. The maximum amount for 2025 is \$108,000, but it can be for any amount less than that. Although the IRS does not allow a charitable deduction for your distribution to us, it will not be taxed as ordinary income when you file your tax return. Please note: you should not take the distribution yourself; it must come directly to the Society of the Little Flower from your plan.

If you are age 73+, you must begin taking a Required Minimum Distribution (called an “RMD”) from your IRA. The amount that is distributed to you will be taxed at ordinary income rates. However, by making a QCD to the Society of the Little Flower, no tax will be incurred on the distribution, and it will allow you to free up cash for other purposes. For some, making a QCD could potentially place them in a lower income tax bracket by lowering their reportable income (as compared to taking the entire distribution personally).

Here’s an example: Let’s suppose you are required to take a distribution of \$15,000 from your IRA this year. You decide to use \$10,000 of that distribution to benefit the Society of the Little Flower. Only the \$5,000 you receive to be used for your own purposes will be treated as ordinary income when you file your tax return next year. If you are in the 24 percent tax bracket, you would only pay \$1,200 in tax on the \$5,000 you personally received, rather than having to pay \$3,600 in tax if you took the full \$15,000 for yourself.

Finally, you may also use a Qualified Charitable Distribution to create a gift annuity. The gift annuity would pay you income for the rest of your life at a very attractive payout rate. The Society of the Little Flower offers some of the most generous gift annuity rates you can find. Special rules apply for this type of gift, so please call our office at 888-996-1212 for the details.

As we get older, life does present its challenges. But it also has its benefits, one of which is the ability to make a tax-wise gift to the Society of the Little Flower through your IRA. To learn more about this opportunity, please call our Office of Special Gifts at 888-996-1212. 🌹

SHARING FEELINGS OF HOPE

Each time Father Tom and I return from our visits, we are filled with an overwhelming sense of hope. The devotion and generosity of St. Thérèse’s supporters and the Society of the Little Flower continue to inspire and uplift us.

MARY ZACHARIAS

Wherever we go, we are welcomed with open arms. We are deeply moved by the faith-filled stories shared with us – testimonies of hope, perseverance, and trust in God through the intercession of St. Thérèse. Over and over, we hear the word “hope.”

Some invite Father Tom to bless their homes, praying for protection from storms and hurricanes. Others place their hope in continued good health, the gift of a child or the return of loved ones to the Church. Their stories remind us that hope is not just a feeling – it is an active, living prayer.

We would love to hear your story of hope. You can write to the Society of the Little Flower by mail or email, but even better – consider inviting us for a personal visit! There is nothing more meaningful than sharing these moments together in faith.

Imagine if every time we said the word “hope,” we turned it into a prayer. How much more powerful our faith would be, and how many more hearts would be lifted toward God!

May God bless you, and may St. Thérèse intercede for the hopes closest to your heart. 🌹

THÉRÈSE LIVED IN HOPE: *Fanning the Flame!*

Do you remember the first time you met heartache in this life? Do you remember how you moved past it? I was 14 years old when I was mature enough to understand what it meant to receive heartbreaking news. My perfectly healthy grandmother had just been diagnosed with cancer and told she had months to live. Yet in the face of what was terrifying news for my family and me, I remember being astonished at her seemingly limitless courage and gratitude. How could someone be so steadfast in the face of death?

Speaking her answer only with her actions, I now realize my grandmother was filled with a type of hope that can only stem from a life lived with deep faith and love. It was this hope, a hope rooted in the belief God is always with us, that carried her and me through that challenging moment.

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis called each of us to be Pilgrims of Hope that dare to not merely find God's presence in those challenging moments of life, but to be God's loving presence for others in those moments. I believe Thérèse would call this daring to be God's love at the heart of the Church. I don't know if my grandmother knew about the "Little Way," but I know this seemingly simple homemaker put all the love she had into the everyday ordinary things of life as she and my grandfather raised their six children on a cement truck driver's salary.

From her and Thérèse, I learned how to cultivate the type of hope in my life that is rooted in faith and love. I learned to dare to hope that one day I could help others see the Jesus in the world that not only loves us in spite of our brokenness, but the Jesus that carries us through the moments in life when we know we don't have the strength to do it ourselves. As the Vocation Director for the Carmelites, I dare to hope that there are other young men who share my hope to build our Church and help others encounter this Christ. I dare to hope that you might help encourage Carmelite vocations wherever you are, the same way my grandmother did.

While I can't imagine what challenges you are facing in your life today, I pray that your heart is filled with the type of hope that carries you through whatever the moment demands. Because I have dared to hope, I have been filled with life and love. Because I wish the same for you, I ask what hopes has God placed on your heart today? 🌹

FATHER MICHAEL JOYCE, O.CARM.



Fanning the Flames of Hope

In his last book, *Hope*, Pope Francis wrote, “To hope, then, is to welcome this gift that God offers us every day. To hope is to savour the wonder of being loved, sought, desired by a God who has not shut Himself away in His impenetrable heavens but has made Himself flesh and blood, history and days, to share our lot.”

This is a beautiful description of hope. And God knows we live in challenging times, confusing times, dark times, where we certainly need more hope. We need to cling to hope. Despite darkness, there is always light. However dim, there is always light. That’s hope. Absolutely nothing is hopeless with God. As the old saying goes, “If we lose hope, we lose everything.”

It has been 100 years since the canonization of St. Thérèse. She gave the world so much hope. In her short life she endured much illness, suffering and hardships, but she knew, to use Pope Francis’ words, that we have a God who *shares our lot*.

Thérèse’s life was marked by a deep sense of surrender and abandonment to God’s will. She believed that by trusting in Him, she could achieve great things. What a different world we could have if we all surrendered to God’s will. That’s where we need humility. And most humans are not good at humility. While some want to view themselves as a majestic oak tree, Thérèse saw herself as a “Little Flower,” a humble vessel through which God’s love could be expressed. How much more simple can we get!

Her spirituality of the “Little Way,” emphasized the importance of doing ordinary tasks with extraordinary love. She saw herself as a simple flower in God’s garden, reflecting His love. What hope we could have, if we all reflected God’s love. Fanning the flames of His love! Our families need it. Our communities need it. Our country needs it. And our world needs it.

Among some of the greatest gifts from St. Thérèse are her substantial writings. Not only did she write an autobiography, but we have her last conversations, as recorded by her sisters. She left many letters, plays, prayers and poems. These give us deep insights into her life, her mission, her spirituality, and certainly her hope for the future. And in turn, she gave us hope! Hope in a God who is ever present, and hope in a God who shares our lot.

Despite facing much pain and darkness, St. Thérèse remained steadfast to the end, in her faith and hope in God’s mercy. One of her poems from 1896, entitled “My Hope,” expresses that beautifully.

My Hope

Though in a foreign land I dwell afar,
I taste in dreams the endless joys of heaven.
Fain would I fly beyond the farthest star,
And see the wonders to the ransomed given!
No more the sense of exile weighs on me,
When once I dream of that immortal day.
To my true fatherland, dear God! I see,
For the first time I soon shall fly away.

Ah! give me, Jesus! wings as white as snow,
That unto Thee I soon may take my flight.
I long to be where flowers unfading blow;
I long to see Thee, O my heart's Delight!
I long to fly to Mary's mother-arms, —
To rest upon that spotless throne of bliss;
And, sheltered there from troubles and alarms,
For the first time to feel her gentle kiss.

Thy first sweet smile of welcoming delight
Soon show, O Jesus! to Thy lowly bride;
O'ercome with rapture at that wondrous sight,
Within Thy Sacred Heart, ah! let me hide.
O happy moment! and O heavenly grace!
When I shall hear Thee, Jesus, speak to me;
And the full vision of Thy glorious Face
For the first time my longing eyes shall see.

Thou knowest well, my only martyrdom
Is love, O Heart of Jesus Christ! for Thee;
And if my soul craves for its heavenly home,
'Tis but to love Thee more, eternally.
Above, when Thy sweet Face unveiled I view,
Measure nor bounds shall to my love be given;
Forever my delight shall seem as new
As the first time my spirit entered heaven.



Father Gerard Power,
O. Carm. Director
in Canada of the
Society of the Little
Flower.

And we know her great promise! I will spend my heaven doing good upon earth! This is a time when we need to plug into the hope and promise of St. Thérèse. As we celebrate 100 years since her canonization, it is wonderful that we have this Jubilee Year of Hope. The theme is "Pilgrims of Hope." It began on Christmas Eve 2024 with the opening of the Holy Door in Rome and continues until January 6, 2026.

We are all called to be pilgrims of hope. As His Holiness Pope Francis so beautifully expressed, "We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision."

Yes, no matter how dark and challenging times may be, we each must embark on a pilgrimage of hope. And never lose hope. St. Thérèse knew she was never alone. And I'm sure she was quite familiar with the writings of St. John of the Cross, who said, "Live in faith and hope, though it be in darkness, for in this darkness God protects the soul. Cast your care upon God for you are His and He will not forget you. Do not think that He is leaving you alone, for that would be to wrong Him."

May St. Thérèse shower us with hope. Just as St. Thérèse gave witness to the light and mercy and hope of Christ, so too must we spread hope and love to everyone we encounter, especially to those who are struggling. And always remember, the same loving God who takes care of us today will take care of us tomorrow. St. Thérèse, pray for us. 🌹



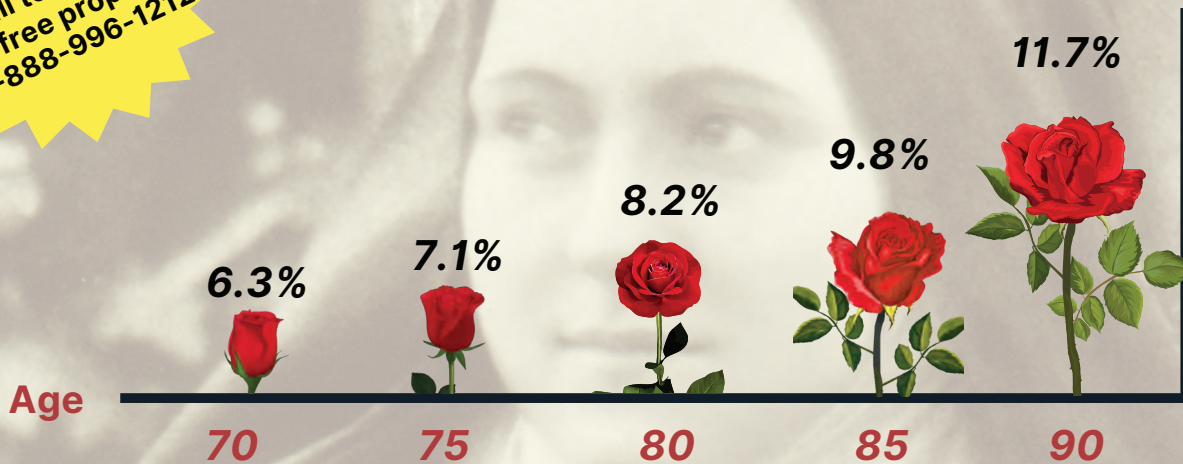
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