



Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada

Trust in

GOD'S
TIMING



“Each Moment holds Sacred Potential”

Dear Friends of St. Thérèse,

Patience stands at the center of St. Thérèse’s Little Way, yet it remains one of the most difficult virtues to practice. To be patient means allowing life, people, and even our own growth to unfold in their proper time. This can feel uncomfortable in a world that values speed and instant results. We often expect quick answers – not only from others, but even from God.

St. Thérèse understood this struggle. In her early life, she had to learn that she was not in control of everything. Like us, she came to realize that her desires did not determine reality. This lesson becomes even more challenging in prayer, when we might expect God

will respond according to our plans and timing.

Yet God is not bound by time as we are. While we measure our days by schedules and deadlines, God sees all things in an eternal perspective. We are invited, instead, to be present – to truly live in the moment – but distractions often pull us away, leaving our minds restless and unfocused.

Each moment holds sacred potential. Through Christ, God entered into our human experience, making every moment an opportunity for grace.

God is not distant; He is with us here and now.

Still, we often try to take control, forgetting that God alone is sovereign.

Patience calls us to trust in His timing, even when it differs from our own.

St. Thérèse teaches that patience is not about willpower, but about love. Her Little Way invites us to surrender, trust deeply, and do small things with great love. In this, we begin to recognize that grace is present in every experience and moment.

Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm. 



Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.
Director, Society of the Little Flower

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Patience

If I'm being honest, patience has never been easy for me. I like to see things moving forward, problems getting solved, and plans falling into place. Waiting, especially without clear answers, can feel unsettling. That is why the theme of this issue, Trust in God's Timing, feels so close to my heart.


St. Thérèse teaches us that patience is not simply sitting still and waiting. It is choosing to let life unfold as it will, without trying to manage or control every detail. That can be difficult in a world where everything is fast and immediate. We get used to quick replies and instant results, and we can carry those false expectations into our prayer life. When God seems quiet, the silence can leave us wondering what is happening.

I have had those moments myself, times when I questioned whether my prayers were being heard. But when I look back, I can often see that something was taking shape beneath the surface. Even when nothing appeared to be changing, there was growth happening in ways I did not recognize at the time.

We tend to measure our lives by schedules and deadlines, always looking ahead to what comes next. God, however, is not limited in that way. There is a steady and gentle pace to how He works. Some of the most important things in life, like healing, understanding, and faith, cannot be hurried. They take time, and often it is in the waiting that we are being changed.

Being present is not easy. I can begin a moment of prayer with good intentions, only to find my thoughts drifting in every direction. It takes effort to return and remember that God is not somewhere else. He is here, in this moment, whether I feel it or not.

What draws me to St. Thérèse is her simplicity. She did not depend on having everything under control. Instead, she leaned into love. She embraced the small, everyday moments, especially the difficult ones, trusting that God was present in them all. That kind of trust is not instant. It develops slowly, shaped by experience and grace.

Perhaps patience is less about having answers and more about holding onto trust. Trust that even when we cannot see it, God is present, gently working within the unfolding of our lives. 



Mary Therese Lambert
Editor of *Between Friends*

Ordination of FILIBERTO OREGEL ÁLVAREZ, O. CARM



The Very Reverend Bishop Ronald A. Hicks, then Bishop of Joliet, IL ordained Filiberto Oregel Álvarez, O. Carm. to the priesthood of Jesus Christ at the National Shrine of St. Thérèse in Darien, on January 17.

The Carmelites gathered to celebrate with Father Filiberto. A native of Mexico, he did his Carmelite formation here in the USA and presently is serving on the faculty of Mount Carmel High School in Chicago. Besides being a Brother of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (the official title of the Carmelites), Father Filiberto has great devotion to Mary as Our Lady of Guadalupe, as depicted in his ordination chasuble. The ordination was the last ritual here for Bishop Hicks, as he was named and is now installed as the new Archbishop of New York. The members of the Society of the Little Flower helped support Father Filiberto's formation by their prayers and donations. Let us pray for a long life journey of service and holiness for Father Filiberto.



Rooted in Love

It seems as though, nowadays, everything is about getting immediate answers and results. Our world is fast paced with expectations of instant gratification.

It is different when we pray. Trusting God's timing and answers to our prayers is one of the most challenging aspects of our Catholic faith. Our faith teaches us to trust His timing, to surrender our control, and let His plan unfold. God is never absent. He is working in ways we cannot see and most often do not understand. When we learn and choose to trust, we also learn humility and hope.

The lives of the saints are a powerful example of trust amid suffering. Our dear friend and intercessor, St. Thérèse, exhibited a powerful trust in God was ever powerful. Now that she dwells in the land where there is no more tears, she places the prayers closest to our hearts at the feet of God with the perfect trust of the saints.

God's timing and will is always rooted in love. And as time goes by, we look back and realize that He answered and continues to answer our prayers more profoundly and beautifully than we ever could imagine - reminding us that His timing is never late and always perfect.



Mary Zacharias
Special Gifts Officer

BY MARY ZACHARIAS

DO I *REALLY* NEED TO PLAN MY ESTATE?

Perhaps you have thought, “I don’t need to plan my estate, I’m not wealthy!” But if you have savings, investments, a home, retirement accounts, or life insurance, estate planning is important. Having an estate plan helps to ensure your assets are used thoughtfully during your lifetime, protects your family if something happens, and makes sure your belongings go to loved ones or causes you care about after you are gone. Without a plan, taxes, fees and other costs can reduce what you leave behind.

To make things go smoothly, you will need to complete a written estate plan, which usually includes:



A Will and Trust

As the foundation of your plan, a will outlines how you want your assets distributed and protects your family’s future. A trust helps manage your assets and offers flexibility, such as ensuring your family gets income or reducing taxes and costs.



Living Will or Health Care Power of Attorney

These documents guide your family and doctors if you’re unable to make health care decisions.



A List of Important Information

This will provide your executor or trustee with details like the location of your will, insurance policies, online accounts, and funeral preferences. This helps avoid confusion for your loved ones.



Coordinating All Your Assets

Make sure all your assets – like life insurance, joint property, and retirement plans – are included. These assets typically do not pass through your will, so they need to be handled separately.




Charitable Remembrances

Including gifts in your estate plan for charities you care about, like the Society of the Little Flower, is a meaningful part of estate planning. You can include these gifts in your will, trust, or through a beneficiary designation.

Estate planning isn’t just for the wealthy – it’s for anyone who wants to make sure their assets are used wisely and their family is cared for.

To help with your estate planning needs, we are offering the friends of the Society of the Little Flower our guide, the Estate Plan Checkup. Please see the following page to complete your checkup.

Should you wish to discuss any questions you might have, please call our Special Gifts office at 888-996-1212. 



Dan Pritchard
Special Gifts Officer

Estate Plan Checkup

When it comes to estate planning, Americans fall into one of two categories: either they have a plan or they don't. And for those who have a plan, you need to keep in mind that all plans are not created equally.

We invite you to take the quiz to the right to assess how well you are doing with your plan. You can rate your score using this scale:

- 1 = "I'm in great shape."
 2 = "I'm doing ok, but there are a few details I need to tend to."
 3 = "I should make an appointment with an attorney today."

Our Special Gifts Staff in the US are always ready to assist you with any questions. To discuss a planning idea, to send you a gift illustration.

Special Gifts Office
 Society of the Little Flower
 1313 N. Frontage Rd
 Darien, IL 60561
 888-996-1212

Circle the number that reflects your situation after each item.

Will or Living Trust: I have my estate plan in place and it was created by an attorney.

1 2 3

Review: I review my plan once a year and contact my attorney if changes need to be made.

1 2 3

Executor/Trustee: I have named an executor/trustee and a successor executor/trustee.

1 2 3

Access: my executor/trustee is aware of the location of my plan.

1 2 3

Family/Loved Ones: I have discussed my plan with those whom I love so that they understand the reasons behind the bequests I have made.

1 2 3

Personal Property: I have designated the recipients of items and heirlooms that are dear to me.

1 2 3

Power of Attorney: I have assigned both a durable power of attorney and a power of attorney for health care, and these people are aware of the assignments.

1 2 3

Beneficiary Designations: I have completed the appropriate forms to name beneficiaries for my bank accounts, IRAs, life insurance, etc.

1 2 3

Charitable Bequests: I have designated gifts to the charities I care about most deeply.

1 2 3

"Ethical Will": I have written a letter to those I love, sharing favorite memories, important events in my life, and people who made a difference to me.

1 2 3

TOTAL SCORE: _____

Rating:

1-15 | Well done; you understand the importance of good planning and take the appropriate measures to ensure your plan is current.

16-25 | Overall, you are doing okay, but there are a few areas of your plan that need a tune-up; consider scheduling an appointment with your attorney in the near future.

26-30 | It's time to get serious about your planning; schedule an appointment with an attorney as soon as possible.

When God Is Running Late

Who among us, with a desperate prayer in our heart, doesn't feel the urge to call out to God, "Why are you taking so long?"

Of course, we know that virtually every great saint, including St. Thérèse – known as the greatest saint of modern times – seems to agree: we must trust in God's timing. Thérèse encouraged us to trust God with total abandonment, just like a child would trust a parent.

Easier said than done, dear Thérèse.

When we were little children, it was much easier to hold our parent's hand and let go of our troubles. However, life is much more complicated now. We might face family struggles that don't seem to have solutions, health concerns that linger, and financial pressures that never quite let up. But that is all the more reason to trust God with total abandonment.

There is no simple formula for that kind of trust. It doesn't come from flipping a switch, but from returning to God again and again, even when we don't understand, even when the answer seems delayed. The best advice is to remember that God never disappoints; He only wants the very best for us – and always comes through. God's timing is perfect.

Trusting God's timing doesn't mean doing nothing. In fact, it often calls us to act wisely in the present.

Perfect timing was on my mind recently after one of the Society of the Little Flower's friends called our office and posed a straightforward question to me: when is the right time to write my Will?

Without knowing this person's age or circumstances, I had a one-word answer for her: now.

Whether you are in your 20s and taking comfort in the belief that the majority of your life is ahead of you or in your 90s and wondering how many years you have left, it's never too early or too late to write or review your estate plan. Delaying this important task can yield difficult – even tragic – consequences.

To help our friends with their planning, we are pleased to offer a free resource to help guide the process: the "Estate Plan Checkup." It consists of 10 questions that can help guide those who are just starting out or serve as a reminder for those who have had their plan in place for a while.

While God's timing is always perfect, we must also remember that He gives us the responsibility to do our part. When we do, we can move forward with confidence, resting in His arms and in His loving plan. 🌹

Trust in GOD'S TIMING



“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on our own understanding. Seek God’s will in all you do, and God will show you which path to follow.”

One challenging aspect of St. Thérèse’s Little Way spirituality is having patience. Patience means giving people and experiences time to fully develop. But don’t we all like instant gratification?

As a bit of a spoiled child, Thérèse had to learn that she was not in control of life and everything that happens. Her understanding and needs were not the whole world. We want things when we want them. And in prayer, we expect God to respond in our time and way.

Our faith informs us that God is eternal, beyond time. At times, I wonder if God doesn’t have too much time on His hands, especially when He doesn’t respond on my schedule. My arrogance leads me to think that – or that God is not listening to our needs.

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

“ ... being so immersed in a moment that we lose track of minutes and hours and enter a state where only the present moment matters”

We live in time. We measure periods of action, process, or conditions. Nature often helps us set and follow time each day when the sun rises and when it sets when the moon comes out and tides happen. We live with deadlines we have to meet. Yet time is elusive.

One dictionary tries to explain time as a “nonspatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past through present to future.”

In the spiritual world and even the Bible, time is relative; but it is all dependent on the God Who creates, sustains and walks with us. We stress being present: to our breath, what is going on within and around us – being immersed in a moment so that we lose track of minutes and hours and enter a flow state where only the present moment matters. But we get so distracted.

I don't know about you, but my mind goes all over the place when I try to be still and be in God's presence. It's called “Inherit the Wind” swinging from branch to branch, exploring and reliving but not centered in the present, where God is!

The Greeks had a word, *Kairos*, which basically means “God's time” – holy time, fitting time and opportunity. It is used a lot in our New Testament. The enfleshment of God in Jesus transformed and sanctified the human experience. God is truly Emmanuel – “God is with us!” The eternal God beyond time is with us in our time. In the present, now! This Kairos moment is not just time on a clock but God's divine appointed time.

God's eternal covenant is with us – the Divine Love and Presence with us always beyond time. Kairos is the season when

preparation meets promise, and heaven steps into history. The division between sacred and secular fades. As St. Thérèse expressed it at the darkest moment of her life: “Everything is grace!” God permeates all time and space.

But like our first biblical parents, Adam and Eve, we are “created in the image and likeness of God” and the “human soul is the Divine Spark,” which Genesis and Proverbs proclaim. We feel so close to the divine; we begin to suspect that we are the divine. We can be like God and try to control everything – my way, my time! Our Way! Our Time!

But our Triune God is sovereign and the only God! Why do we try to compete with God for control of the universe? If we are being honest, we have to admit that the first Commandment is the most violated: “I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me!” Exodus 20: 2-3. Our jealous God wants us totally for the Divine Embrace. “Come back to me with all your heart,” as the song goes (Hosea 14: 1-2, Joel 2: 12-13)

To attune ourselves with God's timing takes concentrated patience and trust in God's providence and presence. I struggle with this as many of us do. I do a great job being messianic. My Mom told me I was expected to be born on the 25th of the month, but I was born two days early on the 23rd. She asserted: “You came out early and have never stopped being impatient.” I am really impatient with myself, with others, with the pace of life, and with how things happen. Even as an administrator, as nice as I tried to be with co-workers and employees, they often said: We knew when you were speaking that you expected us to have it done as soon

as, if not before, you finished speaking. My impatience got a lot of things done, but it also drove some people crazy. Disappointments, darkness, pain, delay and indifference, I have little toleration of. It was me playing messianic god!

The Little Flower, our great friend and mentor, taught us through her life how we can endure the great sufferings and disappointments that come our way, when we cannot cope with the small or giant annoyances of life. Her Little Way of sanctity is about patience and surrender – of not trying to be “god” but by being moved, motivated and intimately InSpirited by the God of love from within.

As we read her *Story of a Soul* and the reflections of others who knew her in her family or the Carmelite convent, St. Thérèse struggled. Her personality type was artistic, creative, sensitive, expressive, dramatic, self-absorbed, longing and temperamental. She found her value from without – being seen, noticed and affirmed by others. She needed to be special in other's eyes. Her mother abandonment issues with her mom Zélie dying, Rose Taillé, her wet-nurse, gone, and Pauline, her third mother and confidante, going to the convent, heightened Thérèse's longing for a romantic perfection of great love which would fulfill her.

Several experiences taught her to trust God's timing. After her mom's death, her dad, Louis Martin, moved the family to Lisieux to be near his brother-in-law and have support in raising his family. Having retired, Louis loved to go fishing and always took his “little queen” as he called her, with him. One day she got bored and walked around the lake at which they were fishing. Going off the beaten path, she came upon a beautiful flowering plant. She thought: “what a waste – no one could see it.” As she stayed there with the beautiful plant, she thought about cutting it so people could see it at home. But her reflective nature stayed there long enough; and as she communed with the beautiful flower, it taught her that it gave glory to God by

“being,” not by being seen. This was her first mystical experience at age eight. She took time to listen to nature, which is God’s first revelation. Often we miss God’s intimate presence because of our expectations.

After she entered the Carmelite convent, there was a nun in the convent chapel choir near her who irritated her. As she explained: “For a long time my place at meditation was near a sister who fidgeted incessantly, either with her rosary or with something (possibly her teeth) ... I cannot tell you to what extent I was tried by the irritating noise. I remained quiet, but the effort cost me so much that sometimes I was bathed in perspiration and my meditation consisted in the prayer of suffering.”

St. Thérèse had to practice extreme patience – understanding that both were praying, even though she wanted to turn around and chastise the noisy one. As she stayed in perspiring frustration, she surrendered to her irritation and understood it as a symphony of praise to God, even if she did not understand it or like the music. Jesus was smiling on this sister praying because He saw her heart and intention. Don’t we often let irritations disarm us?

Along the same lines, there was an old nun in the convent; and nothing seemed to please her. As she aged, she needed help; and each of the novices took care of her for a month. But she was always complaining and wore them out. When Thérèse became assistant Novice Mistress to Mother Marie de Gonzague, she decided to become Sister St. Pierre’s caretaker to set an example for the novices. Her constant complaints that they were moving too fast or too slow, or her tea was too hot or too cold, irritated Thérèse. But she never demonstrated her impatient irritation. She simply apologized and accepted that God was the artist who created, sustained, and loved this cranky nun as His beloved artwork, even if Thérèse did not appreciate the art. The nun even went to the prioress after 8 months and complained, asking what was wrong


with Sr. Thérèse since she had driven everyone else crazy all these years, so what was wrong with young Thérèse.

These are examples of Trusting God’s timing and presence. This is her “Little Way.” What motivated St. Thérèse was not stoicism or a stubborn desire to conquer her faults but love; God’s love – and God’s love for her sisters in Carmel. She awakened to the Divine love and Presence within her that gave her value. What she craved and longed for was already within her. This is trusting in sacred time.

Her life long struggle with tuberculosis caused her so much pain and gradual physical decline. Severe temptations to doubt her faith and to despair haunted her. These dark nights flirted with feeling abandoned – terror for a person who needed affirmation from beyond. But like most dark nights, God was calling her closer to trust. As she told her sisters: “If you only knew what darkness I am plunged into.” Her patience with God’s ways and timing allowed the Spirit to carry her through the darkness. She described a sense of separation from God in terms of her lack of consolation. She fought the despair and made acts of faith in Jesus’ presence and God’s love for her. The Little Flower shows us it is not easy to trust in God’s timing and ways but

showed us it is possible because of God’s love, always and already present within. There is a great truth we all need to learn: “Without God, we can’t; without us, God won’t!” Wow! What a responsibility and great trust!

Like St. Thérèse we need to get out of our needs, false images of God and our desire to do it all ourselves with our own resources of timing, understanding and ways, stop trying to think our way through pain, to control the uncontrollable, and quietly carry grief, fear and shame on our own. It can be isolating and self-serving – we need to allow God to be God in our hearts, souls and lives in tangible and surrendering ways. Arm wrestling with God for time is a losing effort. Our God of love is the sovereign God of all seasons of our lives, and of human history; and he wants to work in and through us to create the eternal kingdom of justice, love, and peace. Thérèse’s Little Way of confidence and trust – of doing ordinary things with extraordinary love – is the best path. Her patience enabled her to perceive intimately God’s love and presence in every form of suffering.

We pray to learn what St. Thérèse finally accepted and lived from – her primary value was from God dwelling intimately within and around her – and that is more than enough. Her Little Way is God’s path. 



The Perfect Time TO CELEBRATE GOD'S MERCIFUL LOVE IN LISIEUX!

"In Carmel, we don't think twice before celebrating; in Carmel, it is always a feast day"

- SR. MARIE OF THE SACRED HEART, GODMOTHER OF THÉRÈSE

Last year, as I was reflecting before mass in the Chapel dedicated to the European saints in St. Peter's in Rome, I wondered where I would spend Easter on my sabbatical. My priest friends in Ireland had not answered my requests to visit; and I could very well stay in Rome to celebrate the Triduum in the Vatican itself, as many of my sabbatical classmates had planned to do. Out of nowhere, it became obvious: I would go to Lisieux! After all, I would become the new Assistant Coordinator at our Shrine to St. Thérèse in a few months. Not only would this be a great spiritual preparation for my new ministry, but it would offer a unique chance to celebrate Holy Week in Lisieux. When would I ever have the time for such a pilgrimage to Lisieux? The timing seemed clear: Now or potentially never.

With my train tickets in hand (in phone actually) and accommodations in the Hermitage, I made my pilgrimage to Lisieux through the scenic French Alps. It was probably not the same route that Thérèse took home from her famous pilgrimage to Rome almost 140 years ago, but I could connect with Thérèse in our mutual admiration of the mountains. That alpine scenery so absorbed my attention that the seven-hour train ride from Milan felt more like 7 minutes. Upon arrival in Lisieux, I joined in the evening celebrations of Holy Thursday and Good

Friday. I cannot say I understood most of the French language, but I knew what I was worshipping. In fact, one of the pilgrims at the Hermitage asked me why I was there, given my limited ability to converse and understand spoken French. Where else would anyone who loves St. Thérèse want to be? Do we not all speak the "language" of the Little Way, the language of Eucharistic Action, the language of grace of the God of Mercy and Love? No, my lack of French did not detract from my experience in the least bit.

On Good Friday, after my visits to St. Pierre (St. Thérèse's parish church) and the Monastery Chapel and museum, one of the pilgrims alerted me to the presence of another Canadian pilgrim. In truth, it was later in the evening, and I simply wanted to enter into the Sabbath rest of Holy Saturday. Something told me to stay. I was soon introduced to Michelle, a French-Canadian, from a rural area of Quebec. As we broke the ice, Michelle shared, "Well, Father Chris, I guess I was supposed to come to Lisieux at this time. I had been meaning to visit and even planned a trip from Paris over two decades ago. However, my credit card would not work at the train station, and I was unable to purchase a ticket. Funny, though, the card continued to work for the rest of my time in Paris." Perhaps, God wanted us to share this Triduum together. I am grateful that divine timing pulled us together, for I learned that Michelle was one of those countless miracles wrought from the intercession of St. Thérèse.

Imagine a little town of rural Quebec. Michelle was one of 11 babies born in the 1940's who was suffering from a rare respiratory infection in the local hospital. Her mother wrote to the Carmelites in Lisieux to ask for prayers for Michelle's healing. The Lisieux Carmelites responded by sending a relic of St. Thérèse with the instructions to place it in Michelle's crib and to continue praying for her. Michelle was the only one of those babies to recover. As she sat next to me over 77 years later, I could see why Michelle wanted to visit Lisieux.

What a life Michelle had lived! She had been working as a counselor in the mid-1990s in an area of British Columbia, and had taken a sabbatical in 2000 to travel the world and research the counseling services available for women from New York to South Africa to Nepal to Thailand and many points in-between. Her preparation for her globe-trotting research yielded only one reply - Purna, a Nepali woman who started a women's education center in Kathmandu in 1990. Purna gave Michelle the warmest welcome; and a few years after that initial visit, while on a 30-day retreat, a voice told Michelle: You are going to

BY FATHER CHRIS KULIG, O. CARM.

Nepal to work with women! As with any movement from God, resistance can be the initial response.

Michelle, a spiritual woman of faith (who spent the first 27 years of her adult life as a vowed religious in the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary), spoke plainly to God. "Well, God, if you get someone to buy my condominium, I will go!" A friend's mother soon asked to rent Michelle's condo when Michelle was away. After a three-day trial rental, this renter expressed an interest in purchasing it! Michelle agreed immediately. Michelle had not even put her unit on the market, but she had her buyer. Goodbye Kelowna, Hello Kathmandu!

God's timing has a funny way of directing our lives. The term "serendipity" (that phenomenon of everything falling into place with little to no effort) is one which I have experienced so consistently that I often call it my middle name. I will

just point out the three instances of such serendipity which led to my encounter with Michelle – my unexpected post-sabbatical assignment which prompted my fortuitous pilgrimage to Lisieux, Michelle's unexplained credit card problems which scuttled her pilgrimage to Lisieux years earlier and the unsolicited buyer of her property which sent her to Nepal to help women. For it was on one of her overseas trips to Nepal for her work with that she was able to come to Lisieux to give thanks to God for her life and the intercession of Thérèse when she was a baby. As a bonus, she got to meet Your Friendly Neighborhood Carmelite and share her wonderful story, a fascinating tale which began with the fortuitous timing of a relic from Lisieux sent to Quebec to effect who would use that gift of life in service to women in need in Nepal.

As Michelle and I conversed over meals on Holy Saturday and shared

the sunrise vigil, I cannot recall a more joyous Easter Sunday than the one I had spent with her. Come Easter Monday, as I ended my pilgrimage with a morning train to Paris and then the airport, Michelle sent me forth with the gift of sharing her story. Although Pope Francis died that very morning, my sorrow was assuaged by the uplifting conversations I had with Michelle over the last few days. My heart full of gratitude for having heard this continuing story of God's grace active in the world.

Michelle continues to help educate various groups of women, from those in bonded labor and street children to victims of conflict and the mentally challenged – splitting her time between Kelowna, Montreal and Kathmandu in these days of her retirement. She hopes to come visit our Shrine in Darien in the near future; but I suspect that expected visit will also be determined by God's serendipitous timing!

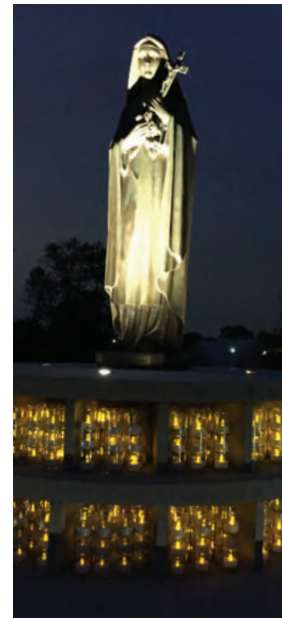
Stations of the Cross

On the Carmelite campus in Darien, Illinois is a peaceful and beautiful Meditation Garden surrounded by the Stations of the Cross – they are Sixteen expanded Stations which include Gethsemani at the beginning and the Resurrection at the end, celebrating the whole paschal mystery. Throughout the year, families and other groups of people pray these Stations, especially during Lent. Every year, on the Friday before Palm Sunday and Holy Week, the Society of the Little Flower sponsors the public Stations of the Cross, led this year by Father Christopher Kulig, O. Carm. The crowds have often been huge, several hundred people of faith, walking with Jesus. Although this past March the gathered group was smaller because of the intense cold and wind, the Mass following was packed. Praying the Stations in community is a grace-filled way of focusing on how much God loves us. He shares our sufferings and opens us to His love and presence to new life.



Vigil Light Prayer

Many people send their prayer petitions to be placed at the Vigil Light area on the lake here at the National Shrine and Museum of St. Thérèse grounds. At night these vigil lights quietly glow, reminding all the good people who love St. Thérèse of her powerful intercession, and Jesus' request that we be the light of the world. Candles extend prayer and presence, for as they slowly burn the wax is consumed, similar to the self-emptying we experience when we surrender our hopes petition, prayers and challenges to God, who is the source and center of our lives. Facing these glowing candles by the lake is the awesome etched window image of the Little Flower smiling from her National Shrine. Your faith in action lights up a world that can often collapse in darkness.



Trust God

IN EVERY SEASON OF LIFE

There's a quote from St. Thérèse that, for me, sums up her whole life and teaching: "I rejoice at being little since children alone and those who resemble them will be admitted to the heavenly banquet." St. Thérèse trusted God in every season of her life. Her Little Way, after all, is her spiritual approach of seeking holiness through small, ordinary acts of love and trust in God, emphasizing simplicity and humility. Like a child.

Although she endured many struggles, setbacks and losses, she spent her brief 24 years striving to be little. It does us good to reflect on "littleness." What do we see as a common characteristic in little children? I think it is TRUST. We grown-ups can learn so much from children because they teach us how to trust in our loving God.

Instead of striving by her own willpower to climb the stairway of holiness, she threw herself into the arms of Jesus, so he could lift her up to heaven, just as an elevator lifts us up with no effort from ourselves. As she writes: "The elevator which must raise me to heaven is Your arms, O Jesus! And for this I had no need to grow up, but rather I had to remain little and become this more and more."

In a world that preaches success, power, and self-sufficiency, St. Thérèse reminds us of the true road to sanctity: humility, simplicity, love, and, most of all, childlike trust. She once had a very moving experience. While walking in the cloister gardens, she observed a white hen protecting her little chicks under her wings. Some were even peeping out from under the mother hen. She interpreted this as a powerful image of God's tender love and protection. She said to her sister Pauline (Mother Agnes of Jesus), "I cried when I thought how God used this image in order to teach us His tenderness towards us. All through my life, this is what He has done for me! He has sheltered me totally under His wings". She placed her weakness into the hands of a loving God. This is how Thérèse tells us to live, with complete surrender and trust in God's mercy and love.

There's a story that has been told often in pulpits and retreats that really opens our eyes to God's love and compassion. It opens our eyes to the beauty and the trust of children. It's called Baby Erik and the Old Man.



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

BY UNKNOWN - PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

We were the only family with children in the restaurant. I sat Erik in a high chair and noticed everyone was quietly eating and talking. Suddenly, Erik squealed with glee and said, "Hi there." He pounded his fat baby hands on the high-chair tray. His eyes were wide with excitement, and his mouth was bared in a toothless grin. He wriggled and giggled with excitement.

I looked around and saw the source of his excitement. It was a man with a tattered rag of a coat; dirty, greasy and worn. His trousers were baggy with the zipper half down, and his toes poked out of would-be shoes. His shirt was dirty, and his hair was uncombed and unwashed. His whiskers were too short to be called a beard, and his nose was so varicose it looked like a road map.

We were too far from him to smell, but I was sure he smelled. His hands waved and flapped on loose wrists. "Hi there, baby; hi there, big boy. I see ya, buster," the man said to Erik. My husband and I exchanged looks, "What do we do?" Erik continued to laugh and answer, "Hi, hi there."

Everyone in the restaurant noticed and looked at us and then at the man. The old geezer was creating a nuisance with my beautiful baby. Our meal came and the man began shouting from across the room, "Do you know peek-a-boo? Hey, look, he knows peek-a-boo."

Nobody thought the old man was cute. He was obviously drunk. My husband and I were embarrassed. We ate in silence; all except for Erik, who was running through his repertoire for the admiring man, who, in turn, reciprocated with his cute comments.

We finally got through the meal and headed for the door. My husband went to pay the cheque and told me to meet him in the car park. The old man sat poised between me and the door. "Lord, just let me out of here before he speaks to me or Erik," I prayed.

As I drew closer to the man, I turned my back trying to side-step him and avoid any air he might be breathing. As I did, Erik leaned over my arm, reaching with both arms in a baby's "pick-me-up" position. Before I could stop him, Erik had propelled himself from my arms to the man's. Suddenly, a very old smelly man

and a very young baby consummated their love relationship. Erik in an act of total trust, love, and submission laid his tiny head upon the man's ragged shoulder. The man's eyes closed, and I saw tears hover beneath his lashes. His aged hands full of grime, pain, and hard labour, gently, so gently, cradled my baby's bottom and stroked his back.

No two beings had ever loved so deeply for so short a time. I stood awestruck. The old man rocked and cradled Erik in his arms for a moment, and then his eyes opened and set squarely on mine. He said in a firm commanding voice, "You take care of this baby." Somehow I managed, "I will," from a throat that contained a stone. He pried Erik from his chest - unwillingly, longingly, as though he were in pain. I received my baby; and the man said, "God bless you, ma'am; you've given me my Christmas gift."

I said nothing more than a muttered thanks. With Erik in my arms, I ran for the car. My husband was wondering why I was crying and holding Erik so tightly and why I was saying, "My God, my God, forgive me." I had just witnessed Christ's love shown through the innocence of a tiny child who saw no sin, who made no judgment; a child who saw a soul, and a mother who saw a suit of clothes.

I was a Christian who was blind, holding a child who was not. I felt it was God asking me: "Are you willing to share your son just for a moment?" when He shared His for all eternity. The ragged old man, unwittingly, had reminded me, "To enter the Kingdom of God, we must become as little children."

My prayer is that we all will heed the example of St. Thérèse. Can we strive to be more trusting, more innocent, less judgmental, and even take the giant step of surrendering our own wills to our God of mercy and compassion? We would all do much better if we could nurture a simple, child-like love in our lives and relationships, especially in our relationship with God. St. Thérèse, pray for us. 🌹

New Statue for Little Flower Office



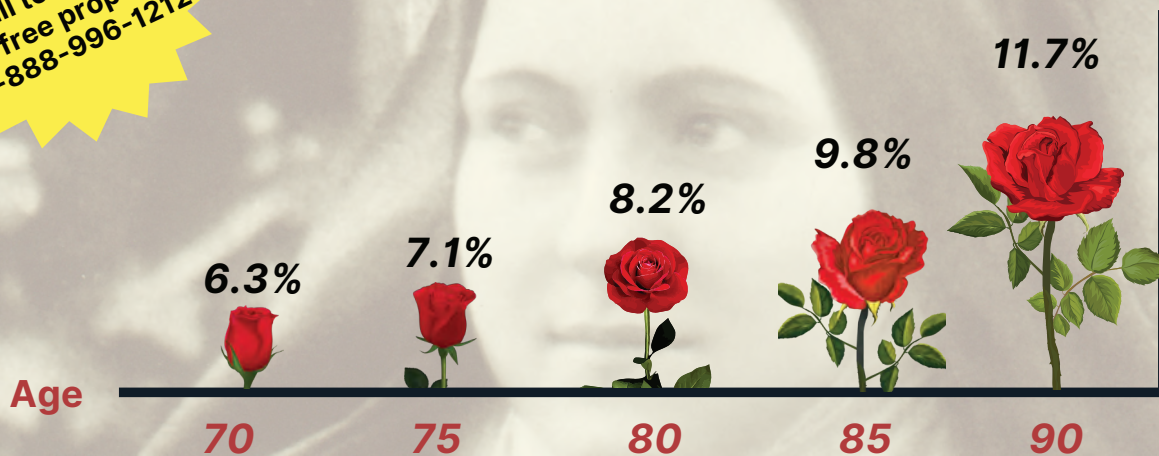
On January 2nd this year, the birthday of St. Thérèse, we gathered at the Little Flower Office in Canada and blessed a new statue. This beautiful statue was made possible through the generosity of Danny and Gen from Harina Bakeshoppe in North York, Ontario. Many family and friends, staff and Carmelites joined in the celebration. May all who look upon this statue be reminded of the love of this young Carmelite nun who continues to touch and inspire many people. And may all who visit our offices and Shrine recall St. Thérèse's holy life and strive to imitate her Little Way, especially of doing ordinary acts with extraordinary love. Thank you Danny, Gen and families.

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