



Carmelite News

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Over A Century of Showers

October 1st is the Feast of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. We will celebrate this Doctor of the Church at our Sunday liturgy, September 30 at 9 a.m., by highlighting the “Shower of Roses” books, first published over 100 years ago, consisting of eyewitness accounts of the manifold graces granted through this beloved Carmelite, the “Little Flower.” As part of our tribute, we offer below some contemporary reflections on her teachings.

The Elevator Of Love “You need to climb the elevator of love, not the rough stairway of fear.”

These words could have been written by any rock star today: Bono, Bruce Springsteen or even Lady Gaga. Instead our little Thérèse coined the phrase “elevator of love” over 100 years ago. Her suggestion was given to Fr. Maurice Bellière, the missionary with whom she corresponded and affectionately called “her dear little brother”. This instruction was written to him in a letter of July 18, 1897, just a little over two months before she died. Thérèse was so fascinated with the elevator, a new invention then, that she transferred it to the spiritual life.

Today, the fastest elevator in the world, in Burj Khalifa, Dubai, travels at a speed of 40 miles per hour. A stairway cannot compare with an elevator’s speed. Really, it has no speed; the speed depends on the person who is climbing. That is Thérèse’s whole point. Don’t depend on yourself—depend on Jesus. In *The Story Of A Soul*, when Thérèse relates the grace of her Christmas conversion she states, “The work I was unable to do in ten years was done by Jesus in one instant, contenting himself with my good will which was never lacking.”

The stairway of fear can be dangerous. Our ascent can be impeded by our doubts, stumbles, falls, or worse, feelings of discouragement. But remember,

TESTIMONY FROM: John Glover; Dumbarton, Scotland; February 28, 1911

My daughter, Hilda May, was lying dangerously ill and dying from pneumonia... I can conscientiously say that from the moment the piece of the garment from Sister Thérèse was placed on the dying child the death struggles ceased, and the child dropped off into a deep slumber. Death was conquered. I may add that I do not belong to the Roman Catholic faith, and did not place any confidence in the healing powers of saints. I am now convinced.

God looks lovingly on our good will to love as Jesus did. God does not judge us on our mistakes or failings. If we follow Thérèse’s little way of confidence and love we can be triumphant like her. Thérèse soars to the pinnacle of love in the arms of Jesus. Now, isn’t that much easier than climbing the rough stairway of fear?

TESTIMONY FROM: Sister Rogatien; Gaboon, West Africa; December 1, 1912

The nuns in our convent had read with intense interest the life of Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus, and had been much impressed with her miraculous power and the influence she seemed to possess over the Heart of the Divine Master. We decided to entrust to her the securing of some girls for our boarding school... The idea came to me to ask for a specific number of pupils, and I decided on six... We began our novena and before it was ended, I received a letter from the Governor of the Ivory Coast asking if we could receive six girls selected by the Administration... We were astounded at this rapid and exact answer to our petitions.

Thérèse: A Steel Magnolia *Thérèse found her vocation in the heart of the Church to be love. What is your vocation? How will you realize your desires? How will you follow your heart?*

Thérèse’s immense desires were fulfilled in her life of love and prayer. But Thérèse also acted out her vocation to be love in her daily life. Her little acts of love were exactly that, acts. She did not always FEEL like loving her sisters. But she knew that is what Jesus wanted of her. Loving is not always just feeling. Love is a choice. When we make a choice to love our neighbor as Thérèse did because of love of God it takes on more than we can imagine. We then love because of the reflection and the face of God that we see in another. Love becomes not about us and our feelings, but about Jesus’ commandment to love one another.

Sometimes we can equate Thérèse with her nickname “The Little Flower.” We can imagine her full of humility, self-effacement and simplicity. No doubt she possessed

all of these qualities. But she was anything but little when it involved her desire to love as Jesus loved, and to make him loved to the ends of the earth, even after her death. If Thérèse was a “flower” she was a “Steel Magnolia.”

Row, Row, Row Your Boat *“Jesus was sleeping as usual in my little boat; ah I see very well how rarely souls allow Him to sleep peacefully within them.”* Our Thérèse writes these words at the beginning of *The Story of A Soul*, Chapter 7. She is speaking of the aridity of her retreat taken before she is to profess her vows as a Carmelite. She says: *“Jesus is so fatigued with always having to take the initiative and to attend to others that He hastens to take advantage of the repose I offer to Him. He will undoubtedly awaken before my great eternal retreat, but instead of being troubled about it this only gives me extreme pleasure.”* One might think Thérèse would have had flowery, sweet overflowing joys as she prepared to fulfill her dream of being a Carmelite. But instead she is filled with doubts, until she confides in her novice mistress and the prioress. Then, in her words, *“The act of humility I had just performed put the devil to flight, since he had perhaps thought that I would not dare admit my temptation.”*

Most readers will know that Thérèse had few consolations in her religious life; the words *“Jesus was sleeping as usual...”* certainly convey that sentiment. But in a way those words can give consolation. First, if Jesus is asleep in our boats maybe He knows He can trust us and is comfortable enough to sleep peacefully in the presence of a faithful friend. Second, when Thérèse is confronted with anxiety and anguish about an important decision she has made, she is not afraid to be humbled by voicing her fears to those in whom she has confidence. Sometimes it may seem Jesus “oversleeps”. But not really: our perseverance, our faithfulness and our prayer wake Him up eventually. Until then our task is to row our boats with the oars of good will, confidence and love. Just as the swishing of the waves may have lulled Jesus to sleep, the sound of our prayer will wake Him up in time to save us.

**Please join us to celebrate
Thérèse of Lisieux and Teresa of Avila**

Sundays September 30 and October 14, 9 a.m. Mass

The feast days of our Order’s great doctors of the Church, Thérèse and Teresa, fall on Mondays this year (October 1 and 15). To allow more of our people to share in these feasts and in our prayer, we will celebrate these saints at our Sunday liturgies.

SAVE THE DATE

On Sunday, November 4, 2012, our good friends and recording artists Kim & Reggie Harris will be with us to help teach a musical setting of the Mass composed by Kim and just published by GIA, the *Welcome Table Mass*. This exciting new expression of the 2010 English missal translation is based on beloved Spirituals.

We would be so glad if you could join us!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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