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Reinterpreting Thérèse of Lisieux for Today's World

By Colette Ackerman and Joseph Healey

Our Historical Context

In the ongoing history and influence of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, 1987 and 1988 were important anniversary years. November 20, 1987, commemorated 100 years since the 14-year-old Thérèse met Pope Leo XIII in Rome and asked him for permission to enter Carmel at the age of 15. December 14, 1987, marked 60 years since Pope Pius X declared St. Thérèse Patron of Mission and missionaries. April 8, 1988, celebrated the centenary of Thérèse's entrance into the Carmel of Lisieux, France. This year on January 10, 1989, we recalled her entrance into the novitiate—100 years ago.

Various events,¹ as well as the film *Thérèse*, contributed to marking these anniversaries and gave us a chance to reflect again on the writings and testimonies of Thérèse. This reflection gave us the impetus and opportunity to rethink her impact on our own lives and the lives of many others in relation to contemplation and mission in our church and the world today.

In the Summer 1981 issue of *Spiritual Life* we published an article entitled "Bonded in Mission: Reflections on Prayer and Evangelization."² The article included a section on "Thérèse of Lisieux and Martyrdom." Since the life and writings of Thérèse continue to be a formative experience for us, we have decided to organize and share some of our recent thoughts in this present article. Formative experiences are not something to be taken for granted. They are always open to change and hope because "experience in the form of wisdom knows no end."³ Through

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and said dramatically, "I choose all."¹² This all-embracingness of her life allowed her, at the end, to pronounce that "everything is a grace."¹³ With an almost overwhelming enthusiasm she discovered her vocation: "...in the heart of the Church...I shall be LOVE."¹⁴ Thérèse did not say: I will love or I will practice love, but rather, I will be LOVE. She wanted to embrace all vocations.

Her sister Marie asked Thérèse if she didn't sometimes refuse God. Thérèse answered, "No, I don't remember refusing Him anything. Even when I was very little, at the age of three, I began to refuse God nothing..."¹⁵ Thérèse's whole life and identity were shaped by her relationship with God. It was her commitment and fidelity to this relationship and friendship that she knew to be affirmed in her "dream" about Venerable Anne. It was from this relationship to God—that this intimate discipleship with Jesus—that her mission flowed.

Thérèse's prayer was concretized not only in her longings and desires, but in her real works of service and ministry to others. The presence of God to her, though often only a dark glimmer, gave her the strength to be attentive and present to others. She knew well the teaching of Teresa of Avila: prayer is not for ourselves but for the sake of good works. In the prayer of Thérèse, her communion with God, Martha and Mary became one in service.¹⁶ As Schillebeeckx expresses it, "the best and most intimate presence to the world is found in a radical presence to God."¹⁷ Thérèse knew with great clarity that it was God and God's grace that enabled her to live out the ministry of discipleship and spiritual presence in her own hidden life and circumstances.

Thérèse teaches that our very weakness and smallness give us the boldness to offer ourselves completely to God. It is only in becoming like "little ones" that we can enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 18:3). Carlo Carretto, a disciple of Charles de Foucauld,¹⁸ has a prayer that goes: "Teach us to be small and poor in our work and humble and hidden in life." All this is a challenge to our first-world values of success, achievement and fulfillment. The movement away from the "temptations" of domination, expediency and despair toward collaboration, meaning (transcendence) and contemplation is, perhaps, the arena for our practice of the "little way" within the present critical moments of our world. In this world, surrounded with anxieties and frustrations, can we recognize and accept the power of God's grace? Can we accept the limits of our being? Can we be disciples of Jesus Christ as Thérèse was?

2. The Little Way and Presence to Others

In the final chapter of her autobiography, Thérèse relates an incident she calls "an act of charity God inspired me to perform."

It was at the time Sister St. Pierre was still going to the choir and the refectory....At ten minutes to six a Sister had to get up and lead her to the

refectory....It cost me very much to offer myself for this service because I knew it was not easy to please Sister St. Pierre. She was suffering very much and did not like it when her helpers were changed....

Each evening when I saw Sister St. Pierre shake her hourglass I knew this meant: Let's go! It is incredible how difficult it was for me to get up, especially at the beginning; however, I did it immediately, and then a ritual was set in motion.¹⁹

Thérèse then relates her strategy for getting this older sister from the choir to the refectory. On arriving, Thérèse helped her prepare to eat her meal and, before leaving her side, gave her a "beautiful smile."²⁰

This small act and its memory, Thérèse claims, left with her a "perfume" that helped in the practice of charity. She explains:

One winter night I was carrying out my little duty as usual; it was cold, it was night. Suddenly, I heard off in the distance the harmonious sound of a musical instrument. I then pictured a well-lighted drawing room, brilliantly gilded, filled with elegantly dressed young ladies conversing together and conferring upon each other all sorts of compliments....Then my glance fell on the poor invalid whom I was supporting. Instead of the beautiful strains of music I heard only her occasional complaints, and instead of rich gildings I saw only the bricks of our austere cloister....I cannot express in words what happened in my soul; what I know is that the Lord illumined it with rays of *truth* that so surpassed the dark brilliance of earthly feasts that I could not believe my happiness. Ah! I would not have exchanged the ten minutes employed in carrying out my humble office of charity to enjoy a thousand years of worldly feasts.²¹

This "vision" of the gilded drawing room is probably one that comes to each of us frequently in many different forms. One aspect of living in a contemplative community (the style of life Thérèse chose), part of any life really, is the need to deal with the human, the mundane, the ordinary concerns of daily existence. Most of life is not glamorous. Yet as Thérèse so vividly portrays, it is not easy to resist the seductions that might call us away from the commitments of everyday life and the challenge of self-transcendence.

For Thérèse the "little way" is not a passive way or a way of hopelessness in hopeless situations. It is grounded on hope that finds security and confidence in a God who shares great love. It is an active and direct way, spontaneously reaching out in the everyday events of life. At the same time it is a way that recognizes the legitimate place of dependence and vulnerability in our lives. In her way, her journey, a sense of love and hope provided Thérèse with serenity and optimism in her darkest and most frustrating moments.

In the theology of the Second Vatican Council the call to holiness is a call to everyone. The "little way" is a way of spirituality for everyone,

for all of us who are ordinary. It is a universal spirituality based on the Gospels. Through small, daily and often hidden acts of love, service and self-giving, everyone—mother, father, office worker, secretary, student, lawyer, retired person, teacher—can follow the “little way” and be present to God and God’s people.

In a Swahili article on the 100th anniversary of St. Thérèse’s entrance into Carmel, Sister Alfreda Kemirembe, a Tanzanian Theresian Sister, states:

St. Thérèse is a perfect model of life for all people but especially for people of the Third World. She was guided by the “little way,” which is an excellent foundation of Christianity and an ideal way of life that can be easily imitated in the African environment.²²

The “little way” can have special relevance in the spirituality of people who live on the underside of history—the materially poor, the oppressed, the marginated. Whether it is large families living in crowded slums in India, blacks caught in the apartheid regime in South Africa, farmers and factory workers living under military dictatorships in Latin America or women caught in a variety of oppressed situations, these people have a privileged place. Their acts of love and suffering, unknown to anyone, can have a liberating effect on the church and the world. These hidden people of the “little way” can evangelize the rich and powerful.²³

As her life and ministry within her community developed, Thérèse saw more clearly that it is not the act of virtue that is necessarily important. Rather it is the consciousness of knowing what one is about, of making the choice—the choice of grace, the choice that will transform her. She responded to this call repeatedly, with serious discipline, in the ordinary, hidden hours of daily life. Perhaps the major insight or discernment of Thérèse concerning her life and the “smallness,” the “littleness” of her achievement was the belief that her “little way” was liberating; it was not petty. It led to the fullness of Gospel love and freedom.

Thérèse also knew that her life influenced others. She seemed to know by intuition the truth of the connection between self-transcendence and human progress that Lonergan expressed a century later:

A religion that promotes self-transcendence to the point, not merely of justice, but of self-sacrificing love, will have a redemptive role in human society inasmuch as such love can undo the mischief of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress.²⁴

Within the focus of this theological reflection it is reassuring to think again of Thérèse offering herself as a holocaust to God’s love rather than to God’s justice.²⁵

A ministry of spiritual presence, a life of deep prayer, can be an important contemporary sign for our time in the living out of Thérèse’s “little way.” This lifestyle is primarily being rather than doing, sharing with people rather than working for them. It is seeing and listening. It is “being with,” “sharing with.” During their 1975 General Chapter the White Sisters (Missionary Sisters of Africa) expressed the meaning of “presence” in the words “communion” and “incarnation.”

Presence is understood as “being with.” This is a new experience of mission in which we go from the “witness of works” to the “witness of presence.” No longer measured by numbers, not even by activity, it requires a quality of being that involves the whole person. Much more discreet, poor, close to the people, this form of presence calls for lighter, more mobile, less established structures and requires more creativity and discernment....²⁶

One example in the church today is our presence in Asia among the great religions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. This is often a hidden, humble presence. Can each of us, wherever we find ourselves, accept the challenge of Thérèse and the “little way”? Can we choose a presence to the *now* of life—in God—so that we might be more rooted and whole rather than pragmatic and superficial? Can we offer a presence to others that is stable and healing rather than opportunistic and consuming?²⁷

3. *The Little Way and Women’s Concerns*

Thérèse had been a Carmelite for more than seven years when on the feast of St. Teresa of Avila, October 15, 1895, her sister Mother Agnes read her a letter from a student in the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), Maurice Belliere. This future priest and missionary asked for a sister of the Carmel who would aid him in his future apostolate through prayer. Mother Agnes asked Thérèse to assume this responsibility and Thérèse expressed her reaction in these words:

It would be impossible for me to express my happiness. My desire [to go on the foundation to Hanoi], answered in this unexpected way, gave birth in my heart to a joy that I can describe only as that of a child. I would really have to go back to my childhood days to recapture once more the memory of joys so great that the soul is too little to contain them, and not for years had I experienced this kind of happiness. I felt my soul was renewed; it was as if someone had struck for the first time musical strings left forgotten until then.²⁸

In the spring of 1896 Thérèse was asked to become the “sister” of another French priest, Adolphe Roulland, who belonged to the Paris Foreign Mission Society. These new relationships became deep friend-

ships and launched Thérèse on an entirely new phase of her life—her prayer and her experience concerning the mission of the church. Thérèse's correspondence with these two missionaries provides us with a body of writings that present new insights, determinations, and gleanings regarding Thérèse in the light of our contemporary emphasis on women's spirituality.

Thérèse experienced an intensification of her mission in her relationships with Maurice and Adolphe.²⁹ She had desired to go on the French foundation that established Carmel in southeast Asia. In her discovery of her vocation to be LOVE in the heart of the Church, she desired to be a priest, an apostle, a martyr. Particularly through these friendships, she seemed to experience the "living out" of her continual choices for *all*.³⁰ If one looks carefully at the available correspondence, these friendships were experienced with a remarkable sense of equality, playfulness and integrity.

Like St. Teresa of Avila before her,³¹ Thérèse struggles with the language and concepts her culture and church provided regarding the role of women. She writes to Maurice on April 25, 1897, quoting from a biography of St. Margaret Mary and drawing an analogy from the relationship of Margaret Mary and Claude de la Colombière:

[God] made me understand that this union was for His glory, and for this reason He willed us to be like brother and sister, equally endowed with spiritual goods. Then I pointed out to our Lord my poverty and the inequality there was between a priest of such great virtue and a poor sinner like me, and He said: 'The infinite riches of my Heart will make up for everything and will equalize everything.'³²

Thérèse fails to find support for her ideas on earth, so in typical fashion she appeals to heaven! There are other references to, and characteristics of, equality in these letters. To Adolphe she says on November 1, 1896: "I thank you for treating me as a *real sister*."³³ Early in the following year she writes to Maurice: "I feel that our souls are made to understand each other.... United in Him, our souls will be able to save many others...."³⁴ In one of her last letters to him, July 26, 1897, Thérèse writes with great intimacy as well as equality:

Ah! Brother, allow me to say it: God is reserving for your soul very sweet surprises; you have written, it is "little accustomed to supernatural things," and I, who am not your little sister for nothing, I promise to have you taste after my departure for eternal life the happiness one can find in feeling a friendly soul next to oneself. It will not be this correspondence, more or less distant, always very incomplete, which you seem to long for, but it will be a fraternal conversation that will charm the angels, a conversation that creatures will be unable to reproach since it will be hidden from them.³⁵

Within these friendships Thérèse displays the deep sharing that comes with a sense of equality, of knowing and being known. She describes a great many personal details of her life with simplicity and candor. With Adolphe she shares the vivid event of the lobster that escaped in the kitchen.³⁶ With Maurice she outlines a brief history of her family.³⁷ To Adolphe she relates the happiness of keeping his photograph, an "exception" to the Carmelite interpretation of detachment in the late 19th century.³⁸

Thérèse does not hesitate to instruct these friends in her spiritual doctrine. Her letter to Adolphe of May 9, 1897, contains what Thérèse calls "the whole of my thought" about God's justice.³⁹ This particular correspondence of Thérèse with her "spiritual brothers" reveals a great deal about her capacity for relationship and friendship. It also reveals the equality that she believed came from sharing life in the mission of the church. From the evidence of the letters, would it be unfair to suggest that in these relationships Thérèse modeled a discipleship of equals?

Whatever our interpretation, the fact remains that a century later we are involved in an ongoing struggle for equality and we can look at Thérèse's life for the instruction it offers us. In these friendships and relationships Thérèse showed a freedom and creativity within her own historical context. She challenges us to express the same freedom and creativity in *our* historical context. Today what are the possibilities for friendship and mutuality (women/men, women/women, men/men) in the following: equal participation in prayer group leadership, shared homilies, spiritual direction (individual and group), collaboration in writing, intentional communities, support groups and team ministry? Also what are the possibilities for friendship and mutuality in moments of relaxation and sharing life?

Friendship and partnership are first of all a gift—a gift given for the sake of others. In the church today are we able to foster an environment in which women and men (married, single, celibate, ordained, lay) can be free to pursue together the richness of Christian life without domination or subordination—each contributing to the reign of God as partners in the mystery of redemption?⁴⁰ In this context it is well to remember that because of their very oppression women have assets in the area of spirituality that should be recognized and used in a world that suffers from increasing discrimination, exploitation and violence.⁴¹

Thérèse and the Contemporary Theology of Mission

On December 14, 1927, Pope Pius XI issued a Pontifical Decree naming St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus the Principal Patron with St. Francis Xavier of all missionaries, both men and women, and of the missions in the whole world. Francis Xavier had already been named Patron of the Orient in 1748 and Patron of the Propagation of the Faith

in 1904. The choice of a contemplative nun was a surprise to many, given the active apostolic style of most missionary work. Yet Thérèse's selection was (and is) a vivid reminder of the importance of prayer in missionary activity. Thérèse is an inspiration and model in the joining of the contemplative and missionary charisms.

In the 62 years since Thérèse was named Patron of the Missions there have been dramatic developments in mission theology and praxis. A new vocabulary of mission has gradually evolved in three important documents of the Catholic Church on world mission that have been published in the last 25 years:

1965: *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* (Second Vatican Council).

1975: *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI).

1986: *To the Ends of the Earth* (A Pastoral Statement on World Mission by the Catholic Bishops of the United States).

Formerly we spoke of *missions* (plural) in a geographic sense. The *mission lands* were "out there" (outside of North America and Europe). Missionaries were white and went abroad to Africa, Asia or Latin America. In East Africa it is still common to hear the word "missionary" used as the equivalent of "expatriate" or "foreigner"—as though Africa only receives missionaries and it is essential to be a foreigner to be a missionary.

Now we use a new vocabulary of mission: "mission" (in the singular to denote that there are missionary situations in every country), "world mission," "mission in six continents," "mutuality in mission," "mutual dialogue," "local church to local church," "developing churches," "missionary consciousness" and "reverse mission."

In contemporary mission theology and praxis, mission is from everywhere to everywhere. Truly "the whole church is missionary and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God" (Second Vatican Council).⁴² "The very nature of the church is to be missionary" (Second Vatican Council).⁴³ Pope John Paul II refers to "the baptismal vocation as a missionary vocation."⁴⁴ Thus we are *all* missionaries; we are all called to discipleship. "Each local church is both mission sending and mission receiving" (United States Catholic Bishops).⁴⁵ In today's world, mission is more situational than geographic.

Today Thérèse is Patron of *Mission*. She is just as much the patron of Nigerian priests of the St. Paul Missionary Society who have been sent to the diocese of Galveston-Houston, Texas, as of American Maryknoll missionaries who have been sent to Korea. She is the patron of lay missionaries (men and women, married and single) as well as of priests, brothers and sisters. She is just as much the patron of a ministry of spiritual presence in Yemen as of an active justice and peace ministry in Chile.

Prayer is an essential part of missionary activity. The selection of Thérèse as Patron of Mission reinforces the church's emphasis on the importance of prayer in our life and work, whatever the particular type of ministry, place or situation. As Thérèse constantly prayed for, and was part of, the missionary activity of the church, so we can join our prayer with all kinds of missionaries in all kinds of missionary situations. In prayer and union of spirit we can accompany men and women who go "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) to proclaim the Good News of salvation. Remembering that "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world is a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel" (1971 World Synod of Bishops),⁴⁶ we can pray for an end to injustice, oppression and war in such places as South Africa, Central America and the Middle East. We can creatively celebrate our great missionary feasts: Epiphany, Pentecost, Saints Peter and Paul, St. Thérèse, World Mission Sunday (next to last Sunday in October) and St. Francis Xavier. Thus we can all be missionaries through prayer and vessels through which God communicates the power of grace.

Like Thérèse we can be missionaries in our own local situation whether it is our home, our working place, our parish, our small community or our convent. Mission can take place everywhere.

Looking at Thérèse Through African Eyes

There have been various explanations and commentaries on how Thérèse looked at her mission. These have centered on her great desire to be a missionary overseas, her relationship with her two missionary brothers and her constant prayers for missionaries. Now let us examine more specifically how Africa and Africans look at Thérèse.

Example One: An African Congregation Named After St. Thérèse. The Theresian Sisters are a fully African Congregation with headquarters in Bukoba Diocese in Northwest Tanzania. In commenting on why their congregation chose St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus as its Patron, four Tanzanian Theresian Sisters—Sisters Jacintha Nyangana, Modesta Kokunywegera, Alfreda Kemirembe and Rita Ishengoma—gave the following historical context:

In 1923 St. Thérèse was beatified. The year 1925 saw her canonization. In 1927 Pope Pius XI declared her to be Patron of all missionaries. In the following year, 1928, the founder of our congregation, Bishop Burchard Huwiler, M.Afr., was appointed the bishop of Bukoba Diocese in what is now Tanzania in East Africa. Our congregation was approved in 1933 during a period when St. Thérèse was a very popular saint. This had a great influence on our founder, who put the newly born community into the capable hands of a saint who committed herself to missionary work and

whom the church had already recognized as Patron of Mission. She was also chosen as the model of our new congregation because she stood as a shining example of a person who lived the Incarnation in an ordinary way. She was a challenge to motivate the members of our new community to be holy.

In their paper the four Theresian Sisters explain why Thérèse is an important saint in Africa today:

Christianity is an ongoing incarnation of Christ who is not limited to time, place or specific people. Like St. Thérèse we Africans can find values in our African culture. Motivated by love Thérèse applied the rule of full trust and dependence on God as a child does. The atmosphere in which she grew up was conducive to loving, which fosters full trust. In Africa today with many changes here and there and instability in the political, economic and social spheres we need this childlike confidence in God.

Thérèse did not mechanically imitate the historical Jesus. She found new ways of living Jesus. This is what Africa needs today: to articulate the Gospel message and apply it to our way of life. Thérèse is truly a saint for Africa. She did little things that "cost no money," yet these were great things. Africa can do wonders today if it goes back and evaluates its cultural heritage.

As in other continents of the Third World a woman is degraded and disregarded in the African traditions. As a model of liberating women St. Thérèse can remind the local church and African society that a woman has something important to contribute and deserves respect.

St. Thérèse became a missionary although she never left her Carmelite convent to go to foreign countries. She tells us to use our time and to do what is needed to love God and others. She encourages us to make our souls a living image and place of contemplation no matter where we are. In short St. Thérèse encourages us to lead a life of childlike confidence in God. She tells us to live in the post-Vatican II spirit that calls for dialogue and sharing life experiences.⁴⁷

Example Two: Two Kenyan Carmelite Sisters' Attraction to St. Thérèse. In an interview two Kenyan Carmelite sisters who live at the Carmel in Nairobi, Sister Elizabeth and Sister Imelda,⁴⁸ discussed St. Thérèse's importance in Africa. They said that in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's expatriate missionaries from Europe and North America brought to East Africa a strong devotion to St. Thérèse. Many churches were named after her. Pictures of Thérèse could be found in many homes.

The two sisters said that many ordinary Kenyan Christians were attracted to the "little way" of St. Thérèse, especially making small sacrifices in everyday life. Average people found the saint simple and down to earth. Her childlike spirituality was attractive to Africans. African people believed that Thérèse could help them from heaven. She was called "the big saint with little ways."

In the interview Sisters Elizabeth and Imelda said that Thérèse is a great inspiration to African religious sisters. They themselves were drawn to enter Carmel because of St. Thérèse.

Example Three: St. Thérèse's Attraction as a Youthful Saint. St. Thérèse is many things to many people. Many Africans are attracted to her youthfulness. As Julius Manyoni, a Tanzanian priest ordained in July, 1988, said: "Since she died when she was only 24, St. Thérèse is a youthful saint that young Tanzanian boys and girls can identify with."⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that 60% of the Tanzanian population is under 25 years old. Thérèse is one of them. She is a model for African youth and African youth groups. Many Africans choose their Christian names from youthful saints. Teresa (the Swahili spelling) is a popular name. In the Tanzanian parish of Iramba Thérèse is well known and loved. She is patron of the Iramba Choir, which is composed of young people between the ages of 15 and 25.

In reflecting on the attraction of the "little way" to Africans we are reminded of the popular Kikuyu (Kenya) proverb: "A little hidden path is the one that leads to the highway." A similar Chewa (Malawi) proverb says: "It was the mad person who saw the enemy approaching." Africans value the hidden, often paradoxical way that God works in our lives—through weakness, through failure, through anonymity.

Conclusion

These are some of our reflections and considerations in rethinking the life and writings of Thérèse and their influence on our contemporary spirituality. We hope these thoughts will spark other reflections and discussions on Thérèse, her prayer, her mission. It is the task of each generation to incarnate the spirit of Jesus. This means we carry in prayer and in mission the weight of our history: its anguish, its hopes, its problems, its dreams. Through their own histories, people like Thérèse have enlarged our own understanding of mission and nourished prayer in our life. Their message to us—a generation struggling in a world that permits structural injustice, poverty and brutal torment—is to lay down one's life more completely for others.

As we look ahead there are new horizons of prayer and the search for justice and peace. Each day we hear more insistently the voices of the hungry, the homeless, the oppressed. These were the voices Thérèse heard. Can we hear these voices? Can we learn to love as Thérèse loved—with a love that has no boundaries? A love that seeks always the reign of God? A love that may be quiet, secret and unobtrusive—sometimes even troubled—but one that brings deep peace to the human spirit?

One example of a person grappling with the challenge of Thérèse's spirituality for today is Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois. He went to Federal prison for protesting that Salvadoran troops were being trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, "to kill their brothers and sisters." From his cell in 1985 he wrote:

As a modern soul struggling for union with God, I feel that the spirituality of St. Thérèse is as valid today as it was in 1897. A spirituality for all times, for all ages. I wonder what transformation would take place in my own heart, and the heart of the world, if simplicity, trust and self-surrender to God were taken seriously. The more clearly this "modern" soul sees the reality of the modern world he is living in today, the more convincing is St. Thérèse's way of seeking union with God and justice and peace in the world.⁵⁰

Notes

1. One example was the Symposium, "St. Thérèse, Carmelite: An Experience Today," sponsored by the Carmelites of the Ancient Observance in Darien, Illinois, from September 25 to October 1, 1988.
2. For an expanded version of this article see "Bonded in Mission: Reflections on Evangelization and Prayer," *Missionary Spirituality Report* No. 5, which appeared as a Supplement to *Maryknoll Formation Journal* (Winter, 1981-82), pp. 2-30.
3. Dietmar Mieth, "What is Experience?" in *Revelation and Experience*, edited by Edward Schillebeeckx and Bas van Iersel (New York: Seabury, 1979), p. 49.
4. Sr. Margaret Dorgan enlarged on this insight that Thérèse is a real theologian of grace during one of the workshops at the Carmelite Forum in South Bend, Indiana, in June, 1988.
5. *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor*, selected and edited by Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 382.
6. *Ibid.* p. 365.
7. Joann Wolski Conn, "Thérèse of Lisieux From a Feminist Perspective," *Spiritual Life* Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter, 1982), pp. 233-239. Reprinted in *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development*, edited by Joann Wolski Conn (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 318. See also Monika K. Hellwig regarding the prophet/imagination connections in women's spirituality in *Christian Women in a Troubled World* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 21-22 and pp. 48-53.
8. This raises the challenging question: Is Thérèse really a saint for today's world? After examining the definitive editions of Thérèse's writings together with other documentation, such as 47 actual photographs and a professional handwriting analysis, the Carmelite Norman Werling states: "Those who have felt no personal attraction to the 'Saint of the Roses' would do well to look into this new material about the 'Saint of the Renewal'....If we understood her revolutionary spirit we would know how welcome she would be today on any college campus or any ghetto street." See Norman Werling, "St. Thérèse's Handwriting," *Carmelite Digest*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Summer, 1988), pp. 3-4.
9. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1975), pp. 190-191.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-67 and p. 190.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
13. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Her Last Conversations*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1977), p. 57. Parallel to this experience of Thérèse see the dramatic conclusion of the novel *Diary of a Country Priest* by Georges Bernanos, in which the main character, a French parish priest, says at the end of his life: "Does it

matter? Grace is everywhere."

14. *Story of a Soul*, p. 194.
15. *Her Last Conversations*, p. 281.
16. *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, Vol. II (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980), p. 448.
17. Edward Schillebeeckx from an unpublished manuscript quoted in Charles A. Schleck, "Sanctification through the Apostolate," *Review for Religious* (January, 1967), p. 91.
18. Charles de Foucauld, the inspiration for the Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus, was greatly influenced by the writings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. His spiritual teaching emphasizes the hidden life of Nazareth, which is also an important characteristic of Thérèse's teaching about the "little way." See Segundo Galilea, *The Future of Our Past* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1985), pp. 17-18.
19. *Story of a Soul*, p. 247.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 248-49.
22. "Msichana Asherehekea Miaka 100 ya Ukarmeli" (Girl Celebrates 100 Years of Carmel), *Kiongozi*, Toleo la Kwanza, November 1987, p. 5.
23. See *Preferential Option for the Poor*, Declaration of the priests of the archdiocese of San Salvador, El Salvador, July 29, 1979.
24. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), p. 55.
25. In the workshop referred to in footnote 3, Sr. Margaret Dorgan explained that Thérèse's emphasis on love rather than justice transcended both the religious and political views of her time.
26. As quoted in Joseph G. Healey, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Black Christian Values* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), p. 72. For some very concrete suggestions about this form of presence and its relationship to spirituality today see Elizabeth Dreyer, "A Contemporary Spirituality: Blending the Past and Present," *Spiritual Life* (Fall, 1987) pp. 137-143.
27. In this context a recent study by John W. O'Malley presents some valuable historical considerations about ministry. He discusses the "ministry of discipleship" and describes ministries that are not modeled on office but rather on charism and need. There are implications here for the reinterpretation of spirituality and ministry today. See "Priesthood, Ministry, and Religious Life: Some Historical and Historiographical Considerations," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988), pp. 223-57.
28. *Story of a Soul*, p. 251.
29. For an excellent recent study on Thérèse and mission see Donald Kinney, "Walking for a Missionary," *Carmelite Digest*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 43-54. See also the address to contemplative nuns by Cardinal Eduardo Pironio at the Interamerican Meeting of Religious, Montreal, 1977.
30. See John of the Cross's sketch of Mount Carmel in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1979), p. 66-67.
31. See the Introduction to *The Way of Perfection* by Kieran Kavanaugh in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, Vol. II, pp. 19-28.
32. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, Vol. II, 1890-1897, translated by John Clarke (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1988), p. 1084. It is noteworthy that Thérèse shows knowledge of (and invokes the model of) spiritual friendship, which was not uncommon in the great mystics and those immersed in the life and mission of the church: Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Benedict and Scholastica, Francis and Clare, Jane Frances de Chantal and Francis de Sales, Diana of Andalo and Jordan of Saxony. For two recent studies see Wendy Wright, *Bond of Perfection* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985) and Constance Fitzgerald, "A Discipleship of Equals: Voices from Tradition—Teresa of Avila/John of the Cross," in *A Discipleship of Equals: Toward a Christian Feminist Spirituality*, edited by Francis A. Eigo (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1988), pp. 63-97.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 1013.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 1059.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 1163.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 1070.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 1165-66.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 977.

39. Ibid., p. 1092. See also letters of March 19, 1897; April 25, 1897; and June 21, 1897.
40. See the first draft of the pastoral letter of the United States Catholic Bishops entitled *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption: A Pastoral Response to Women's Concerns for Church and Society*. First published on March 23, 1988, and available in different editions, for example, the tabloid edition printed in *The Catholic Telegraph*, Cincinnati.
41. See Sandra Schneiders, "The Effects of Women's Experience on Their Spirituality," in *Women's Spirituality*, pp. 31-48.
42. *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church*, No. 35. Also quoted in *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, No. 59.
43. Ibid., No. 2.
44. "1987 Message for World Mission Sunday," *International Fides Service*, May 22, 1987, p. 4.
45. *To the Ends of the Earth* (A Pastoral Statement on World Mission by the Catholic Bishops of the United States), No. 15.
46. *Justice in the World*, No. 6.
47. Jacintha Nyangana, Modesta Kokunywegera, Alfreda Kemirembe and Rita Ishengoma, *Why Our Congregation Chose St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus as Our Patron*. Unpublished Paper. Bukoba, Tanzania, March 21, 1988, 4 pages.
48. Interview with Sister Elizabeth of the Sacred Heart, O.C.D., and Sister Imelda of Jesus, O.C.D., Nairobi, Kenya, June 18, 1988.
49. Interview with Julius Manyonyi, Iramba, Tanzania, September 25, 1986.
50. Roy Bourgeoise, *Letter from a Federal Prison Cell*, 1985.

Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Secular Carmelites are lay persons and clerics who are called to intimacy with Christ through contemplative prayer and zealous participation in the liturgical life of the Church, in the spirit of the Teresian Carmel. This way of life reinforces their state of life and enables them to offer love and service more effectively. They form an integral part of the Carmelite family. Secular Carmelites attend monthly meetings of the local Group or Community when a recognized Group or Community is accessible. These meetings are strong, positive, joyful aids to spiritual growth in Carmel. Formation facilitation is available at monthly meetings. Those unable to attend meetings receive the same formation by correspondence with the Secretary of the Isolated Membership. We invite you to contact us by writing:

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