

Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada



*“Unless you become like
a little child, you shall
not enter the Kingdom
of God.”* JESUS - MATTHEW 18:3

SIMPLICITY *in a Complex Age*

Heartfelt Gratitude



Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.
Director

Dear friends,

We extend our heartfelt gratitude for the unwavering support and great interest in our mission. As we reflect upon this time last year, we fondly recall the sacred ordination of a new Carmelite priest within the sacred walls of the National Shrine of St. Thérèse. This year, let us pause to express our profound appreciation for the boundless love bestowed upon us by God, and celebrate our return to the cherished rhythms of everyday life.

As the warmth of summer unfolds and gracefully transitions into the vibrant hues of autumn, may your hearts be filled with abundant blessings found in life's simplest and most cherished moments. With the intercession of St. Thérèse, may fragrant roses of joy and grace envelop your path.

In the embrace of the Little Flower's heart,
Father Tom Schrader, O. Carm. 🌹

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The beauty of simplicity

DEAR VALUED READERS,

Words cannot express the joy that fills my heart as a part of the remarkable *Between Friends* publication. As your dedicated editor, it is my utmost privilege to craft and curate issues that resonate deeply, connecting your soul with the beautiful essence of St. Thérèse. This particular edition holds a profound significance, as it delves into the very essence of the Little Way spirituality, a path diligently developed and embraced by our beloved Little Flower.

Within these pages, you will find a treasure trove of articles and works that illuminate the beauty of simplicity in an increasingly complex world. I implore you to savor each piece and allow them to beckon you further along the journey of faith, placing your trust in the tender hands of our illustrious and compassionate St. Thérèse.

May the gentle heartbeat of the Little Flower echo within your being,

Mary T Lambert 🌹



Mary Therese Lambert
Editor of *Between Friends*

from the **editor**

CARMELITES

You Should Know

internship in a Carmelite parish in Tucson, Arizona, where he was serving people whose language was different than his native tongue. "This experience allowed me not only to experience the universality of the Church in a multicultural environment, but also to experience firsthand the various ways in which we live our faith," says Father Jorge.

While his solemn profession as a Carmelite and his ordination to the diaconate took place in Washington, DC, Father Jorge had the great blessing of being ordained as priest four years ago in his native Guatemala. Currently, he is serving as a parochial vicar in Phoenix, Arizona, and was elected to the Carmelite Provincial Council this past June.

"Throughout my years of formation and now as an ordained minister, I have been learning that in each parish, in each person I have met, God has spoken to me in a unique way and has let me know that I am not alone in this faith journey because I am part of a community; that there are people who care about the people of God and who with their contribution make the mission of the Carmelites possible," Father Jorge explains.

At an early age, Carmelite friar Jorge is learning Thérèse's experience that "everything is grace," and "the nearer one gets to God, the simpler one becomes!"

"Although it has not always been easy," Father Jorge says: "Thérèse reminds me, reminds us, that things can be seen from another perspective, that things can be seen with simplicity if we truly open our hearts to God."

At that time, I was used to seeing things 'in black and white' as in a process. But everything changed when I started working with one of the Carmelite youth groups in Peru. I remember two events, in particular, that prompted that change in me. The first one was when I learned that 'Vacare Deo' (which was the name of the group) in the Carmelite Spirituality refers to the process of stripping away everything that is not God.' And secondly, when I read Thérèse's *Story of a Soul* for the first time.

"In her 'Little Way,' Thérèse tells us that prayer 'is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.' This teaching undoubtedly helped me see things from another perspective, particularly in a world where simplicity seems to be overrated.

"In our life, many times, we tend to believe/feel that having an encounter with God is way too complicated, that praying is something that only some kind of people can do, that living in a community is impossible. However, Thérèse's little way invites us to see things from another perspective, to see things with simplicity."

The Carmelites' Saints and Doctors of the church kept calling and forming Jorge Monterroso. He studied theology in El Salvador and later in Washington, DC. His



FATHER JORGE DEMETRIO MONTERROSO-MÉRIDA, O. CARM.

A native of Guatemala, Father Jorge Monterroso began his Carmelite journey very early in life. He was drawn to the spirituality of the Carmelites by reading the biographies of both St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. These Spanish Carmelite Doctors of the Church and Spirituality led him on a journey of looking, learning, and searching to be a part of this spiritual tradition - the simpler life of poverty, mystical prayer, community, and ministry.

Father Jorge's challenge was not easy. With no Carmelites in Guatemala, he "googled" for Carmelite connection, leading him to our Most Pure Heart of Mary Carmelite Province here. So his call to follow in the footsteps of Jesus moved

him to Mexico, where our Province has a presence, and began his in-person immersion in Carmelite spirituality. "I learned of the various ministries the Carmelites do but also this led me to open my heart to God more profoundly," Father Jorge explains.

As part of the Carmelite formation, his novitiate was in Lima, Peru, where he made his first vows. He was beginning to understand the importance of being open to seeing things from another perspective in a Carmelite Province and Order that was international.

Father Jorge explains: "Before joining the Carmelite Order, I worked for many years as an IT person (Information Technology) in a multinational company.



FATHER JEFFERY SMIALEK, O. CARM.

Father Jeffrey Smialek is a Carmelite who listens to the Holy Spirit whispering in his life. He was born and raised on the south side of Chicago, Ill. to hard working and faithful parents. For his sister and himself, attending Sunday Mass was non-negotiable. Catholic was the culture he was immersed in. He attended Sacred Heart Elementary School and then Mount Carmel High School where Jeff met the Carmelites, who made a wonderful and lasting impression on him.

After college and university graduate work, Father Jeff talks about being at a crossroads about what the Lord was calling him to be and do. "The thought of a religious vocation was always on my mind since I was young ... I remember saying; "Gee, Mom and Dad, I think I want to be priest when I grow up. Fortunately, my parents would both smile and just say: 'you be anything you want to be.'"

Jeff made the decision to enter the Carmelites because of his connections and good memories of them at Mount Carmel High School. More personally he explains: "it was a fellow Carmelite through whom the Holy Spirit called me. Out for dinner with Father Tim Andres, who had taught

me in high school, I shared my struggle with vocation discernment. He looked me in the eye and said: 'the world has enough college professors, it does not have enough priests!' That hit me like a ton of bricks and I knew what I had to do."

Entering Carmelite formation on 1999, Father Jeff professed his solemn religious vows in 2005 and was ordained to the priesthood in 2007. He was assigned as campus minister at Salpointe Catholic High School in Tucson, Arizona for four years and then to Joliet Catholic Academy in Joliet, Ill. from 2011 to 2022. Then, listening to the Holy Spirit through the gentle persuasion of the Carmelite Provincial, Father Jeff was made pastor of Our lady of Mount Carmel parish in Darien, Illinois where he serves today.

Father Jeffrey gives witness to the Holy Spirit: "I believe the Holy Spirit has blessed me with empathy and compassion that I try to show to all my students and parishioners. There are so many struggles in life and one never knows what a person is going through, so I try to share kindness and the gentleness of God with my parishioners, students, and all that I serve. I hope that people can see the Spirit acting in me

through prayerful celebrations of the Sacraments and in my treatment and approach to them. I try to share the love of God with all and try my best to keep a smile on my face.

"I have been blessed with many wonderful experiences and graces in my Carmelite life. Some of the things I look most fondly on are all the weddings that I have done for former students. It is an absolute honor when a former student comes back many years later and asks me to preside at their wedding or baptize a child. In most cases, I have not seen or heard from the person in many years, but then comes a phone call or email out of the blue. To hear them share what an impact I made on them while as a student and that they would love for me to officiate at a marriage or baptism because of the memories they had. That is such an honor. In most cases, I feel that I did nothing special, I treated them as I did every other student, which I guess was special enough."

St. Thérèse's "Little Way" teaches us that the simplest and most ordinary things done with love is the basis of Jesus' message and the good news we all need to hear and believe. Be and practice the goodness of God's love.

Father Jeff also listens to the Spirit of Jesus in his students and the people he serves. "My students taught me empathy and they taught me to listen. Many times the young person had a huge burden weighing him or her down and just needed a listening ear and someone to confide and hear 'it will be all right.' Those were the most rewarding moments of my teaching career and my ministry."

Like many of us, St. Thérèse became important, but not

immediately. "As many people experience, I was not too impressed at first with her. I first read *A Story of a Soul* when I was a postulant. I remember putting the book down and thinking 'this is so sappy.' However, St. Thérèse has a way of planting a seed and letting it grow. I reread her writing many times since and while in studies took a course on St. Thérèse in the Carmelite Studies program. It was primarily during the course and really digging into her works, that I began to realize that she is right after all. It was an inspirational moment when the Little Way started to make sense. She continues to inspire me to live and work simply and to do all the small things because they are what matters the most.

"Thanks to all the members of the Little Flower Society who support the Carmelites in our formation and all our ministries. We couldn't do it without you and St. Thérèse. My mother was a member and contributed what she could occasionally and always loved reading the *Between Friends* magazine. She met many Carmelites over the years, when she saw one pictured in an article, she would call me and say I saw one of your friends in the magazine. I think it really made her feel good. I will continue to hold all the members of the Society of the Little Flower in my prayers and ask that you please pray for me."

Father Jeffrey Smialek, O. Carm, knows and believes that the Holy Spirit is God's sanctifying presence, dwelling and revealing deep within us and all around us. The Spirit manifests the simplicity of what St. Thérèse teaches us: "Everything is Grace!" 

SIMPLICITY

in a Complex Age

*“Unless you become like a little child,
you shall not enter the Kingdom of God”*

JESUS - MATTHEW 18:3

WE ARE CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ST. THÉRÈSE'S BIRTH, THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF HER BEATIFICATION, AS WELL AS THE 100TH YEAR OF THE SOCIETY OF THE LITTLE FLOWER. The relics of St. Thérèse and her parents are visiting here in Darien to renew her presence in our lives. We take this opportunity to refresh ourselves about her teachings and simple spirituality.



Newborn babies are fascinating, aren't they? They touch something deep inside us. Knowing experientially where they came from, newborns explore the new world they have entered, with curiosity, wonder, attentive simplicity and joy. Their smile lights up everything.

When we mature and grow older, life becomes more and more complex as we explore the world. Somehow we lose the innocence and simplicity of a child. The wounds of life and struggles of conflicting needs overwhelms the simplicity and goodness we experienced.

We experience mistrust, diversity, disappointments, anxiety, and separation. Life can seem cruel at times. The complexity of diverse expectations, hopes, selfishness, and needs creates confusion. We become hesitant and suspicious. Recently I was looking at a picture of myself when I was in third or fourth grade. My innocent, hopeful smile made me cry. The little boy in me was asking: "what happened to you?" It made me stop and reflect.

Our heavenly friend, St. Thérèse, the Little Flower, lived and taught her "little way of confidence and trust." As a mystic, she cut through the complex layers of laws, rules, obligations and boundaries which religion often imposes. Our beloved Thérèse got to the heart of things, as Jesus did.

When Jesus was flaunting or questioning some of the religious exclusionary boundaries, obligations and laws, people felt threatened. Their security needs overwhelmed their faith. God's unconditional love seemed to shrink. In their minds, God was a lawgiver and stern judge. God's presence as Shepherd and Companion was lost.

Because Thérèse learned to trust her intuitions of grace and experience of God at an early age, she came to realize and teach "The nearer one gets to God, the simpler one becomes!" This is profound insight. God is one, despite being a Trinity of Persons! God is the Source and Sustainer of all life and creation is the unifying principle of the universe. The permeating presence of God is like the pace-maker of the rhythm of our heart and the heart of the created universe.

In her beautiful, poetic, and mystical way, she taught, at the darkest moment of her life that "Everything is grace." So centered was she in the indwelling sparkling presence of Jesus within and around her that everything is infused with the Divine. Despite her superficial, negative feelings otherwise, she looked for and saw the good – and God's face and fingerprints everywhere.

Her spiritual focus from the eyes and heart of God had that unifying simplicity. She experienced a profound oneness of presence that was real, even if hidden. Like most mystics in our Christian Catholic tradition, there was a simple awareness that God is sustaining our life, breath by breath, in a most intimate way. Trusting this experience of faith, all the separate, disparate, and conflicting events, experiences, and people all are somehow one. The Presence of God was breathing in her and everyone she saw and experienced. The Jansenistic people, Nuns, and Church culture around her were horrified. Jansenism promoted a moral rigorism and scrupulosity that affected popular piety by projecting an angry God who was vengeful and vindictive, who needs to be satisfied and pleased, but who was never quite happy – a God ready to pounce in judgement – a religion of fear that negated any personal relationship with God. Fear, guilt, shame, and obedience were the essence of religion. Jansenism proclaims that God loves us if we are good – instead of the good news that God loves us because God is good!

St. Thérèse's graced mystical experiences taught her intimacy, not fear. When we are open to God's will and love, including the sufferings of life, we hear and listen to that vital spiritual whisper that weaves the lives of all of us into an inseparable bond. God's Spirit makes reality whole. It gives communion, connection, and relationship to all of us. When you think about it, that means that loving our neighbors is true union, not just a little anecdote or possibility. With the movement of the Spirit, it is inherent to our being. Where the Spirit abides, there's always simplicity and unity. The Oneness of God prevails and is reflected in the universe.

The Jansenistic environment created a complex world of holy and unholy, good and bad, right and wrong – categories that divide and separate. In our individualistic age where we seem

to believe it is all about me, the only unifying principal is my ego – not God.

One of the greatest gifts of the Little Flower is her simplicity. St. Thérèse realized how sinful, self-centered, flawed, weak, and powerless she was – how imperfect she was in the Church (God) and world that demanded perfection. Yet her inner graced experience was that God loved her because she was imperfect (not in spite of being imperfect). That is where the Divine could most affect her. Leonard Cohen, in his famous Anthem song, sings: "Forget your perfect offering; There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." In our broken imperfection God works well as light. St. Thérèse learned this lesson early and throughout her life, despite the constant voices that screamed: "be perfect." God could be close and intimate and make her whole and complete, which is what the biblical command is.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we would believe that God loves us in our imperfection because that is where God can most intimately embrace us? Jesus embraced every part of our human experience, including our fears, frustrations, imperfections, limits, anger, fragility, misunderstandings, mistrust, betrayals, compromises, addictions to destructive darkness, and controlling complications which have all created a complex and confusing world. Yet, with all Jesus went through, he offered us to God in his death and resurrection. God knows how confusing, complicated, and wounded we can be - how vulnerable we are and how we hurt and destroy others. Because we have at times experienced controlling, manipulative, and toxic relationships, we learn to be careful,

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"The nearer one gets to God, the simpler one becomes!"

suspicious, distancing, protective, and mistrusting of love.

Jesus' first word after God raised Him to life was a simple: "Shalom" – which means "be whole, complete, connected." It does not mean "peace" but a sense of seeing the simplicity, integrity, breadth, and unity of everything in God. He breathed Shalom onto His scared disciples. The universe was transformed; he was awakening them. Shalom is the simple, profound, and challenging teaching of St. Thérèse: "Everything is grace." Grace is simply God's intimate, powerful presence. Grace is not something, but Someone! "I am. I am with you! Always!"

That Someone we call God is Love. God is one and simple. We are created in the Divine Image and Likeness, so we were created in and for love, to be uncomplicated and simple. We are not the center of the world! God is! God sustains us breath by breath with mercy, love, presence, and challenging compassion. The breadth of God's permeating presence is the unifying center of our complex world. Young Thérèse's experience of the newly invented elevator moved her to experience Jesus as the elevator. "I wish to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus, for I am too small to climb the rough stairway of perfection," she explained. "The elevator which must raise me to heaven is your arms, O Jesus!" She simply had to accept her powerlessness and have absolute trust in Divine Mercy.

St. Thérèse, the "wild Little Flower," created her "little way of confidence and trust" as a way to teach her novices to pray with intimacy and presence. She also teaches all of us to learn to do the "ordinary things of life with



extraordinary love.” She had a simple yet powerful understanding of God’s permeating presence to, in, and with everyone and everything. This kind of simple faith changes the way we experience life and see through the complicating complexity that we seem to create. She did not like long, wordy prayers. “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look towards heaven, it is a cry of recognition,” St. Thérèse explained.

It is no wonder her religious name in Carmel was Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. She understood Jesus saying “unless you become like little children,” and she was always looking for the Face of Jesus amid the darkness and tears.

Nature is the first bible – the revelation of God. The powerful beauty and simplicity of nature is that it just is; trees and flowers are not competing to be something else. At about eight years old, young Thérèse had her first mystical experience with a beautiful flower she came upon while her dad was fishing. Being a person who perceived her

value from being noticed, she thought the beautiful flower was such a waste because no one could see its beauty. But as she communed with the flower in silence, Thérèse realized that it gave glory to God by just being, not by being seen or doing something.

God creates us as human beings of the same elements of the earth and the universe. Our complex bodies and person have a unifying quality that we identify with. But we become human doings, always trying to make it about me, what I can get out of something or merit. We forget to simply BE. The God Who revealed self as “I AM” wants us to BE – simply be God’s beloved dwelling place as daughters and sons. Love grounds our very being, and God is love.

Ultimately, it comes down to learning to be present to our lives, aware that God is breathing life in and through us. We need to be more mindful and aware of everything happening within and around us without judgement. We often get lost second guessing or regretting our past or radiating anxiety about the future instead of just living in the now

– the present moment where God lives and reveals!

That awareness and presence opens us to faith that God is still with us, within us, and around us, controlling, guiding, loving, and delighting in the whole universe. It is living in the sacrament of the present moment. It simplifies our lives and attitudes and gets us to the heart of issues which is God’s faithful Presence, always and already present.

If we spend less time in prayer telling God how to be God instead of listening to God’s whisper and letting God be God in our lives, it would transform the world.

When we meet people who seem genuine and sincere, loving and innocent (without the wound), they are always refreshing, calming, selfless and delightful. We feel safe. They seem to be more alive with an enthusiasm and wonder that inspires and attracts us. They are simple people who refuse to be defined by the complexity of life. Sincerity means being authentically you – who you are – and in faith, who we are in God. It is simple to be sincere, and what a difference it would make in the world if we all live with simplicity and sincerity. Without our complicating false selves, the reign of God here on earth might seem more apparent and real. It is simply done by listening quietly to the God dwelling within and around us. Stop talking God to death and listen more to the One within Who is love. As Thérèse teaches us: “The nearer one gets to God, the simpler one becomes!”

Thérèse was in touch with Jesus who taught us the simple eight Beatitudes, instead of the 613 laws of the Torah. This was Jesus who asked his disciples to become like innocent children when they got confused or tried to fit his simple message into their complex religious background.

As friends of St. Thérèse and followers of Jesus, we should all strive to make a difference by living authentically with simplicity in our complex age. With God on our side as our source and sustaining friend, who can be against us! (Rom 8:13)

Thank you, St. Thérèse, for inspiring simplicity and your “little way” in us! You teach us to ride the elevator of grace! 🌹



SHAWN F. SHAW/GETTY IMAGES

Oasis of Peace in the Heart of the Little Flower

Every day, somebody comes to the National Shrine and Museum of St. Thérèse because they are looking for peace. Most people who did not come here looking for a sense of peace do leave with a refreshed soul. Inside and out, our campus was designed in the spirit of St. Thérèse. Her spirit is one that nourishes the whole human person.

Her understanding of God and how we relate to God, the “Little Way,” sees that that our prayer is as important as our play. Thérèse understood well both the need to be active and to work balanced by the need for sleep, rest, and relaxation.

Entering the campus, visitors and pilgrims are impressed by the carefully planted and tended landscapes. Naturally moving paths around the Shrine and campus are dotted with cherished statues of Carmelite saints and the holy family. Tucked on the north side of campus, one can find the tranquil meditation garden surrounded by a 16-piece stations of the cross. A gazebo and pond situated in the center of the garden offer respite and a soothing reflective atmosphere.

In recent decades, we are becoming more aware of the need for younger

generations to receive the faith that was handed on to us. Here at the National Shrine and Museum of St. Thérèse, we are opening the doors of the “Little Way” to school groups and church youth groups more and more. We are seeing young people filled with joy and the graces of the Holy Spirit as they come closer to God through the Little Flower.

We are excited and thrilled as we anticipate school groups and university groups alike during the Family Homecoming – relics visit from September 17 through October 1, St. Thérèse’s feast day. Do you know a group of young people (or grown ones) that could benefit from the peace, grace, and serenity we have to offer? Come, spend some time with St. Thérèse and grow with us in faith at the National Shrine and Museum of St. Thérèse in Darien, Illinois.

Breathing in Simplicity

When all about me is frayed and spent:

I take a moment to rest;

I take a rest to breath in simplicity.

Simplicity comes in and the worries
fade away into nothing.

Simplicity goes out and the world
laid out becomes more loving.

I breath in simplicity.

All the odds, ends, and fancy things

Do not let me breath, the same

As I do in life’s calm and easy.

At day break, I gaze on the rays

of pure sunshine, waking refreshed.

At nightfall, I glean the moon’s beam

Made of sleep and yawns, resting in peace.

Simple. Easy. Take life in and live. 🌸

Patroness of the missions

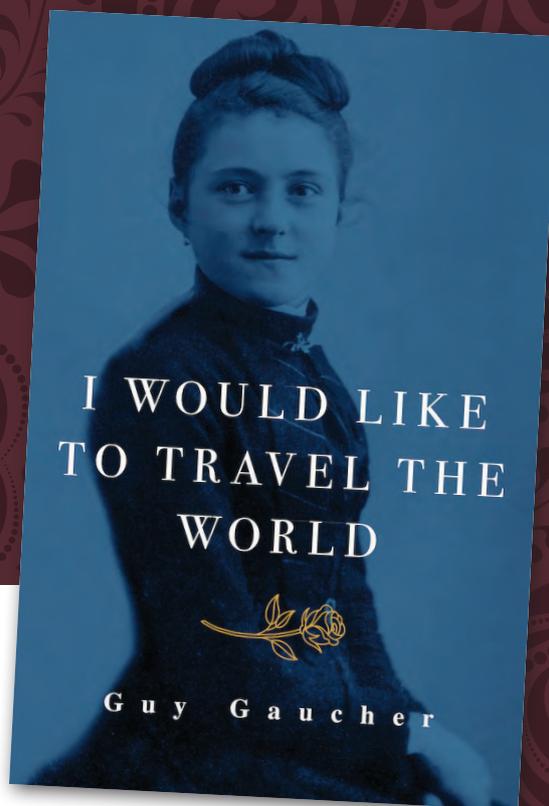
A look into another 'Little Way' of St. Thérèse

In a recently translated book *"I Would Like to Travel the World - Thérèse of Lisieux: Miracle-Worker, Doctor and Missionary,"* Guy Gaucher, OCD, offers a look into St. Thérèse's missionary zeal. Guy Gaucher, a auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Bayeux-Lisieux from 1987 to 2005 was an international authority on St. Thérèse until his death in 2014.

Just one year before St. Thérèse's death, in 1896, she wrote, "I would want to preach the Gospel on all the five continents simultaneously and even to the most remote isles. I would be a missionary, not for a few years only but from the beginning of creation until the consummation of the ages."

It is this miracle worker Thérèse that Guy Gaucher presents through numerous testimonies. At the end of the 1997 World Youth Day in Paris, John Paul II announced to an enthusiastic crowd that Thérèse would be proclaimed a Doctor of the Church. It is as a privileged witness that Guy Gaucher recounts this process which led the little Norman Carmelite to become the third woman in the history of the Church to receive this title. Therefore, the missionary momentum that inflamed the young nun will resume throughout the world. From the Philippines to the United States via Iraq and Siberia, the relics of the "patroness of the missions" will thus touch the hearts of men at the dawn of the 21st century.

Along the way, readers get a rare look at spirituality of one of St. Thérèse's most ardent devotees and how God's love for her shaped his life and the lives of millions who have been inspired by her famous "Little Way," leading Gaucher to conclude, "Jesus said: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it was already kindled!' (Luke 12:49) St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face kept burning with this flame of love until September 30, 1897. Since she entered eternal life, she hasn't stopped communicating it to the world." 



Simplicity in a Complex Age

UNDOUBTEDLY, WE LIVE IN A VERY COMPLEX AGE. So much has happened in the past 30-40 years with the digitization of colossal amounts of information, the capacity to communicate instantly across the globe, and the surge in social media. Connectedness bringing dis-connectedness! With the advances in technology, comes chaos. A leap into the unknown! The world has probably always been complex, but not quite like this! There are so many risks, so many leaks of sacred and confidential information, so many breaches of privacy. And of course, so many scams, as the Devil continues to prowl about like a roaring lion, preying on the vulnerable.

Life has become so complicated with these technological advances causing numerous sociological changes. Alienation. Abandonment. It's scary. Even doing business, providing entertainment, and communication have all changed. Oh, how we long for the simple days and simple ways again!

Living in a post-pandemic climate, so much has changed. Some people now prefer 'virtual' liturgies. Churches are struggling to get back to pre-pandemic attendance. Some people have turned inward and have become more cynical. Experts in recent years tell us that more people claim to be 'spiritual' as opposed to 'religious.' That's a whole other topic! Some want to push God aside. Nothing is easy any more. Nothing is simple. Every word we utter is weighed and measured, lest we offend someone. Complex times? Yes indeed. And may we never forget that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. Praise God.

When we look at the life of St. Thérèse, we must remember that she grew up in late 19th century France. Complex times? You bet it was. I remember one of the lectures given by Father John Russell, O. Carm., at a Carmelite Formation Program in the 1990's. I took copious notes as I have always had a deep love for St. Thérèse. Father John broke open her life and her

times with such grace and skill. He was a great teacher, a wonderful Carmelite.

Well, in Thérèse's life (1873-1897), France was still suffering from its loss in the Franco-Prussian War (July 1870-January 1871). God was viewed as a judge who was punishing France for its sins. So what was the spiritual climate? A call for reparation, mortifications, and prayers of atonement. Coupled with this, Jansenism was rampant in France. [This heresy claimed it was impossible for humans to obey God's commandments and experience redemption without God's special, divine, irresistible grace. It denied the role of free will in the acceptance and application of grace.] Our Church teaches that "God's free initiative demands human's free response." This means that we can freely accept or refuse God's gift of grace.

This spiritual climate certainly had an influence on young Thérèse. Yet she was able to rise above all this. All is grace, she said! Good for her. That's why she's a Saint! She came to know a deeply personal and loving God through her reading of scripture and from her life



experiences. Some of her experiences were painful. She came to know God as a God of Love. She allowed God to be at the very center of her life. And there's nothing preventing us from doing the same thing, no matter how complex our world is.

I love one of her Christmas Eve experiences. When she received Holy Communion at Midnight Mass at the age of 13, she was rejuvenated. She felt charity enter her soul, through the Eucharist. And she knew that God was directing her journey. And she allowed God to do this. What freedom. She was open. She was receptive. Nothing complicated about that! She got out of her own way, her own will. Let go and let God!

While our age tends to complicate everything, Thérèse taught about finding God in the ordinary, everyday life. She

had a deep relationship with Jesus. She challenged us when she wrote, how can anyone be afraid of a God who became a child. A great insight for any of us who tend to complicate our relationship with God. God is love. As simple as that.

Whatever Thérèse did, she did with love. She showed her love for God in her dealings and interactions with the nuns in her convent, and some of them were not easy to deal with. Everything she accomplished was because of the generous love of God in her life. A God of mercy. A forgiving God. An understanding God. An approachable God. We can learn so much from her 'Little Way,' her simple way.

In this complex world, Thérèse teaches us that holiness is within reach of everyone. We need to get out of our own way and let God in. Let God re-create us. Whether we're a CEO of a large company in a fast-paced world or selling goods at a market, it doesn't matter. Even in a complicated world, the spiritual path must be a path of childlike wonder and joy. "Unless you become like a little child," says Jesus. Everything can be accomplished in union with God. If we ever feel we are too big for God, we are in trouble. Thérèse showed us that. We will always have challenging times in our lives, as Thérèse did. But the more complicated we make it, the more difficult our journey will be.

A very simple recipe for a happy spiritual life is to do like Thérèse and surrender ourselves to God's will. Today. Not in the future. "The good God does not need years to accomplish His work of love in a soul; one ray from His Heart can, in an instant, make His flower bloom for eternity." Wise words from Thérèse. We need to make room to accept this 'ray' from God's heart!!!

I think this age struggles immensely with the idea of being dependent on God. We want to be in control of everything. We are bombarded with so much noise. Can we quiet the voices in our minds? The clamour around us? Can we regain a sense of calm? Sure we can. Ask St. Thérèse to help us. Even with our prayer lives, we can re-establish a good relationship with God.

Prayer doesn't have to be complicated. Thérèse wrote, "I have not the courage to force myself to seek beautiful prayers in books; not knowing which to choose, I act as children do who cannot read; I say quite simply to the good God what I want to tell Him, and He always understands me." Prayer is conversation with a friend, according to St. Teresa of Avila. What we need is the simple heart of a child, always available to God's presence, speaking plainly and from the heart. It's the heart language that speaks to God.

Oh yes, we may be living in complex times, turbulent times. But we don't have

to be complex and turbulent people. The value of life does not depend upon the place we occupy, it depends upon the way we occupy that place. In a prayer of St. Thérèse, she says, "Jesus, help me to simplify my life by learning what you want me to be, and becoming that person." We all need to be reminded that we have a God who listens, a God who responds, a God who answers, a God who always pays attention. No matter the complexity of our lives. May God rain down fresh hope on our hearts, and may St. Thérèse shower us with Roses of Simplicity.

Intercession OF ST. THÉRÈSE IN 1925

My grandfather's sister, Hanorah Mary Power (born 1906), left Newfoundland for Boston in the early 1920's. As her story goes, while working as a maid in Boston, she made a Novena to the newly canonized St. Thérèse, for God's will to be done in her life. On the Ninth Day of her Novena, she found herself standing on the doorsteps of the Franciscan Convent in Newton, Mass. She was interviewed

right there on the steps and was accepted the same day. When she returned the next morning with her few earthly possessions, her two sisters, Hilda and Marion, were in tears as they looked up at this big monstrosity of a building on the hill. They tried to talk her out of it. She told them, "This is the happiest day of my life!" She became Sister Mary Regalata Power, OSF, and served over 70 years as a Franciscan. I'm convinced she was a closet Carmelite! She always had a deep love for the Carmelites, especially St. Thérèse and St. Titus Brandsma. I met the Carmelites through her in 1990 on a visit to her convent in Tenafly, N.J. She prayed me into a vocation! The most powerful prayer she taught me when I was as a little boy was, "Jesus, take over for me today." Every morning I pray that simple prayer. Sister Regalata died at the age of 98 in 2004. I had the honour of celebrating her funeral with several Carmelites in attendance. 🌹



Father Gerard Power, O.Carm.

Director in Canada of the Society of the Little Flower.

Embracing Simplicity:

Following in the Footsteps of St. Thérèse

In contemplating the title for this edition of *Between Friends, Simplicity in a Complex Age*, the concept of simplicity resonated deeply within me. Upon exploring its meaning, I discovered that simplicity encompasses the idea of submitting oneself to God. Immediately, my thoughts turned to St. Thérèse, a shining example of someone who wholeheartedly surrendered herself to God and embodied simplicity in its truest form.

Simplicity can be defined as purity, discipline, patience, sincerity, and clarity. Isn't our dear friend and intercessor the epitome of all these qualities and more?

"Do small things with great love"—these simple acts hold tremendous power.

In a world rife with complexity, the presence of faith and appreciation for the simple things seems to wane. Thankfully, St. Thérèse serves as both a gift and a spiritual guide, demonstrating unwavering faith, simplicity, and an abiding love for God.

The gracious donors I have had the privilege of knowing possess many of the qualities and characteristics associated with "simple" people. They embrace gratitude, finding joy in life's little blessings. They are genuine, exemplifying honesty, sincerity, and authenticity. Their hearts overflow with kindness, compassion, thoughtfulness, and a generous spirit. Deep-rooted faith is their cornerstone and humility their guiding principle. Driven by purpose, they seek to impact the world by embracing what St. Thérèse taught us - the art of "doing small things with great love."

Imagine the profound pleasure it would bring to God if the world, collectively, embraced simplicity to a greater degree. 🌹

Words *matter*

I NEVER FELT LIKE I COULD WALK IN THOSE FOOTSTEPS. Not because I was pressured, or felt intimidated, or anything like that. I just never thought I could measure up. Those were big footsteps. They were my dad's.

He wasn't an overly complicated man. He didn't have a prestigious job, nor was he famous in a celebrity kind of way. But he was my dad. Watching him, through my boyhood eyes, I knew his was a tough act to follow.

It still is.

He was part of what Tom Brokaw called the "Greatest Generation." It's a perfect term. Many of the finest people I have met in my life were part of that generation.

Born in 1916, my dad grew up on a farm. In the ethic of his day, kids did what they were supposed to do. And they kept their mouths shut. That was my dad.

But, for him, words did not matter as much as actions. Character and integrity mattered. You had to stand for something strong and good and honorable. And you had to be there when the chips were down. For anyone – and everyone. That was my dad.

As a loving father, he wanted what was best for me. I knew I could always count on him. I think I will always remember the whisker-rubs before I went to bed each night.

But as I grew older, and as the inevitable independence of the teenage years took hold of me, the words "I love you, dad" became less and less frequent.

It got so that saying those words became almost impossible for me. I wish I knew why. In my dad's later years, I began to pray that I would have the courage to say "I love you, dad" just one more time.

One day, almost unexpectedly, my dad became quite ill and shortly thereafter

ended up in intensive care, struggling for his life. There was medical equipment everywhere. The family gathered, and he was given the last rites. We all left the room praying for just one more day. And in the back of my mind, I was reminded of my prayer: "just one more time."

I walked back into that room, looked him in the eye and said, "I love you, dad." A tear ran down his cheek as he whispered back, his words muffled by the breathing tube, "I love you, too." These were the last words my dad and I said to each other. When we arrived at the hospital the next morning, the nurse told us that he had just passed away.

As I look back, my dad was wrong about one thing: words do matter! And final words can matter the most: their sound can echo for years to come.

No one knows what their final words will be. But we do have control over a form of our final words: the final testament of our life – our Will or Living Trust.

Many of us only think of our estate plan in legal terms. But that document, lovingly prepared, can also proclaim our heart's deepest feelings. Our estate plan not only instructs how our assets should be distributed, it also lets the world know who and what was important to us during life.

At the Society of the Little Flower, we pray that you will consider including a few words in your estate plan that lets the world know how important St. Thérèse and the Society of the Little Flower have been in your life. By making a bequest for our benefit, so



much could be accomplished! And how grateful we would be!

Our plans for the future remain big: Carmelite seminarians are counting on us for their education. The poor in missions across the world are depending on us. Those who are lost spiritually are seeking answers, and St. Thérèse can show them the way as no other can.

But our plans, and our ability to share Thérèse's spirituality with those who desperately need it, depend on people like you. We pray – that you will pray – for St. Thérèse to guide you in this decision. And as she has countless times in your life, she will show you the way.

To help you prepare or review your estate plans, we have a free booklet that is yours for the asking: "Effective Estate Planning: What You Need to Know." This guide is written in easy-to-understand language and can serve as a practical resource as you prepare for the years to come. Just call our Planned Giving office at 1-888-996-1212 and we will send a copy out right away.

Words can change the course of life. Now might be the perfect time to consider what your final words will be. 🌹

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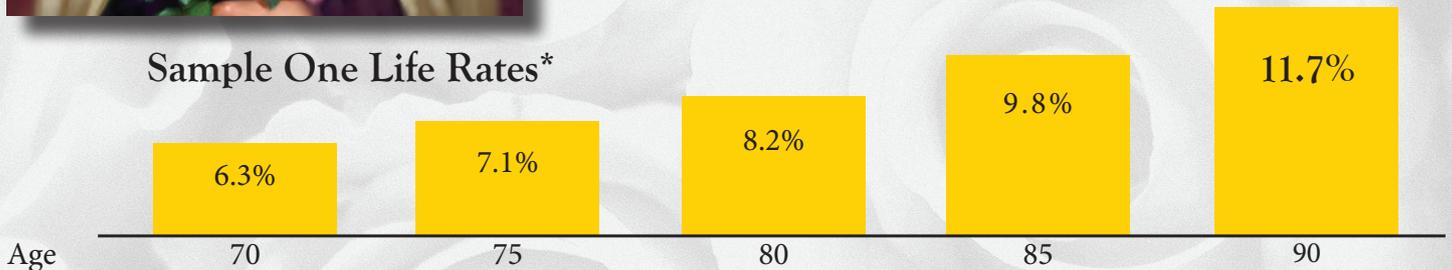
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