

# Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of

the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada

*Passing on*

St. Thérèse's

Legacy

# Heartfelt Gratitude



**Rev. Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.**  
Director

## Dear Friends,

I hope this message finds you well. I'm writing today to express my heartfelt gratitude for your incredible support in helping us share the legacy of St. Thérèse. Your contributions, whether through donations, volunteering, or simply spreading the word about our mission, mean the world to us.

It's heartwarming to see how Thérèse's message of love and compassion continues to touch the lives of so many. As we move forward, I'm filled with hope and excitement for the ways in which we'll continue to grow and make a difference, all thanks to your ongoing support.

Thank you for being a part of our journey and for helping us pass on the blessings we've received. Together, we can continue to spread love and kindness in St. Thérèse's name.

With gratitude,

**Father Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.** 🌹

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# Her “Little Way”

**St. Thérèse of Lisieux’s simple yet profound message continues to resonate, urging us to embody Christ’s love in our everyday lives. Through personal stories and reflections, we are reminded of her enduring impact.**

From childlike exposure to St. Thérèse’s imagery to adult distrust, one person’s journey mirrors our own struggles with faith and surrender. Through challenges and doubts, St. Thérèse’s wisdom eventually breaks through, teaching us to trust God even in the darkest times.

Her “Little Way” emphasizes ordinary acts infused with extraordinary love, challenging us to recognize God’s presence in the mundane and confusion. By embodying compassion, forgiveness, and joy, we become vessels of grace, spreading light in a world yearning for hope.

St. Thérèse’s legacy isn’t confined to the past; it’s alive in each of us as we strive to be Christ’s hands and feet on earth. In embracing her teachings, we cultivate a deeper connection with God and each other, fostering a more inclusive and compassionate world.

Let’s honor St. Thérèse’s memory by embracing her message wholeheartedly, knowing that through our actions, we continue her mission of love and grace. 🌹

*Mary T Lambert*

“

*By embodying compassion, forgiveness, and joy, we become vessels of grace, spreading light in a world yearning for hope.”*



**Mary Therese Lambert**  
Editor of *Between Friends*

# CARMELITES

## You Should Know

### BROTHER NEIL CONLISK, O. CARM



Brother Neil Conlisk lives and passes on the legacy of St. Thérèse by trying sincerely to be his best self and listening to where God is leading him through his life experience. Just as St. Thérèse had to discern God's voice and presence in challenging and surprising ways, Neil continues to discern amid the joys, generativity and difficulties of his life.

A native of LaGrange, IL, Brother Neil is one of three children, he has two sisters. His father was an electrician, and his mother was high school guidance counselor. Education and faith were values in his family. He studied political science at Marquette University and worked for a while in Milwaukee.

A conversion experience during his college years awakened him to become passionate about his Catholic faith. Reading a lot of spiritual and devotional works, he was trying to discern what God wanted him to do with his life. Being a priest seemed attractive, but eventually he was ready to pursue a religious vocation. Being familiar with Carmelite spirituality he connected with the Carmelite community in Hyde Park, Chicago, where he eventually joined.

During his Carmelite formation years, he visited the Shrine of St. Thérèse and kneeling before her relics, "I felt confident that I had been led to the Carmelites in part by her," Brother Neil explains.

As an intern, he taught at Mount Carmel High School in Chicago and learned a lot even though it was challenging. During his theological studies, he sang in the choir of a local parish, visited patients at a local hospital and participated in bible study groups in the local jail. His scope of what the Carmelite charism of community, prayer and ministry were about expanded.

Music is one of the ways Brother Neil engages life. He plays piano, guitar and even drums. He loves sharing this gift to accompany liturgical music. He taught music at the Boys and Girls clubs, did liturgical music while in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and leads music in community prayer. He knows that singing is praying twice and engages people prayerfully. He is currently leading the music ministry at Joliet Catholic Academy where he is on the faculty.

While his first teaching assignment was difficult, this second time around he is more confident about teaching. He is still discerning about religious life, but is coming to understand his vocation within his vocation. "In prayer, I came to the realization that when I was a teenager I needed guidance to help me make good decisions, set realistic goals, work hard and achieve some success that would make me happy and proud of my life," he shares. Aware of how much he needed guidance, Brother Neil explains: "my purpose now is to help teenagers mature, set realistic goals for life, and make good decisions so they can develop a life they will be happy and proud of." Like St. Thérèse, he knows to be where God has planted him and blossom in a generative way.

"Teenagers can be difficult and frustrating at times ... but I have learned to negotiate with them ... give them some slack to be teenagers. Through them I'm learning patience and mercy," Neil explains.

Brother Neil strongly believes that St. Thérèse played a role in his Carmelite vocation. He appreciates the fact that his Carmelite community prays for the members of the Society of the Little Flower every morning and evening. "It is part of the culture of our Province and I cannot imagine us not praying for the Society members," he relates. He even learned the hard way. He was on a planning committee for one of our Carmelite chapters and prepared the prayer services. Somehow amid all the intentions and work, "I neglected to include the members of the Society of the Little Flower, and Father Bob Colaresi was furious."

"I am settling into being a high school teacher. I don't have higher aspirations or plans than simply trying to become a better teacher and helping students and colleagues in an ordinary way, in whichever way I can. I am reminded of St. Thérèse's Little Way because this seems like a humble but realistic way I can help students during the years of their lives."

Brother Neil Conlisk passes on the legacy of St. Thérèse by his life and ministry in humble and generous ways. He is a Carmelite Religious Brother you should know and be inspired by.



### REV. LUIS ENRIQUE VARELA- NUNGARAY, O. CARM

Father Enrique Varela had a long name which is usual in his native culture,

but most people call him "Ki-Ke." He is the oldest of four children, born and raised at the Tijuana-San Diego border. His first eight years of school were in Tijuana, and he finished high school in San Diego - having a foot in both worlds.

Getting his B.A. degree in Education, he taught at a girls' only high school served by Carmelite Sisters. He taught



***The most critical aspect of Thérèse's spirituality is her ever-abiding sense of God's presence in her, which made her life prayerful. This is the Carmelite contemplative stance I always try to live by and communicate in my ministry.*** - FATHER ENRIQUE

Spanish and English as a second language. What a gift in the reality of the Catholic Church today.

Explaining his Carmelite vocation, he states: "I decided to join the Carmelites after reading "La Noche Oscura" (The Dark Night) poem and commentary by St. John of the Cross. I love how John of the Cross describes the human soul's longing for the divine. The longing for divine intimacy with God through prayer caught me. Carmelite spirituality offered me the means to achieve what I was looking for."

He was first assigned to Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in Joliet, IL. Then, he was asked to go to Mexico City to be the formation director of the pre-novices. After four years, he moved back to Chicago and worked as a mental health counselor in the Cook County Department of Corrections in a program aimed to lower recidivism among young adults. Then, he was assigned to St. Cyril of Alexandria Parish and School in Tucson, AZ, for two years. Then he was reassigned as the pastor of Our Lady Mount Carmel in Joliet, the largest Hispanic parish in the diocese, with about 1,500 active families and 10,000 members.

"Because I think as an educator, I'm constantly planning and organizing programs to help our people. ... I like people to feel welcome. When I meet with the different groups in the parish, I try to make them feel as if they are gathering with friends and family and not just to discuss business. Another gift I share with the people is my love for Carmelite spirituality and prayer. I always try to incorporate them in my ministries."

As a Carmelite priest with a pastoral heart, Father Enrique tries to listen to people sharing their problems, doubts and sorrows like Jesus did when he talked with the Samaritan woman in the Gospel. "I try to listen to people attentively and without judging them. I teach, preach to and feed the flock God entrusted to me, with compassion."

Highlights of his life as a Carmelite Religious and Priest have been the people he met and places where he has served. "My first mission experience in El Salvador in 2002 changed my life forever. The simplicity and the love of Salvadorans touched my heart. Working as a mental health counselor with young adults at the Cook County Department of Corrections was another blessing. Prison is not a pretty place. It can be smelly and dirty at times. It can be challenging to deal with the system, the correctional officers, and some occupants. Nonetheless, being able to touch the souls of my clients and know that I could help them avoid problems with the law with just a minor cognitive restructuring was awe-inspiring."


"Ki-Ke" comments how very generous people are when they are served with love. He has learned that the more physical and spiritual needs they have, the more generous they are. They have a deep thirst for God but don't know it sometimes, especially the youth. They try to fill their spiritual void with the internet and friends. As a Carmelite, he feels called to teach them to balance life and prayer.

He learned about the Society of the Little Flower and its members early in formation and how they support our students, and especially when the community prayed for them and their intentions every day. As he explains: "With the generous support of the Little Flower Society, we can have quality pastoral education and serve people in ministry. Thanks to the pastoral and theological formation we receive through their generous support, they keep making an impact on those whom we serve, especially the poor and underserved."

"Ki-ke" admits that he knew little about St. Thérèse before entering Carmelite formation, and, therefore, he did not have a relationship with her. When given a copy of her "Story of A Soul" in his pre-novitiate year, he did not even want to finish it "because it was overly sweet and childish." But my formation director insisted that I finish it. "Thankfully I did because I cried when I finished reading the book! I was taken by her trust and confidence in God, even in her darkest moments. I was in awe when I thought how such a young woman could have such depth in the knowledge of God's love for us. While studying theology, I prayed to her before writing my papers. Nowadays, she inspires me, especially when I feel lost or have wandered off from God. I don't beat myself up; I humbly ask Christ to accept me back into his loving arms."

Father Enrique explains: "The most critical aspect of Thérèse's spirituality is her ever-abiding sense of God's presence in her, which made her life prayerful. This is the Carmelite contemplative stance I always try to live by and communicate in my ministry. No wonder she wanted to be 'LOVE in the heart of the Church!' The backbone that sustains the Body of Christ and the attitude that keeps us centered despite our storms in life."

Regarding his ministry among Catholic Latinos, he reflects: "Catholic Latinos tend to be scrupulous and emotional, like Thérèse in her earlier years. Her childlike mindset and her little way are good examples for us Latinos to be more relaxed in the hands of a loving God who is a father/mother holding us in a loving embrace. Another aspect of her spirituality that fits in with Latinos is her love and confidence in the Blessed Mother. We are Marian at the core of our beings! We identify with Thérèse in her love for our Mother. Nonetheless, we may benefit from learning that "Mary is more Mother than Queen." because there is also the tendency to put her high up on a pedestal instead of relating to her like another human being."

Father Luis Enrique Varela-Nungaray, O. Carm, affectionately known as "Ki-ke," is a Carmelite who consciously is passing on the legacy of St. Thérèse in a bicultural world. He is someone you should know and be proud of and grateful that you have supported and continue to support in proclaiming and living the Gospel. 



## Lighting the Way

**One doesn't have to live for too many years before realizing that life has its share of challenging moments. Whether one is 6 or 60, we all go through some tough times.**

The worries of a 6-year-old might seem insignificant compared to those of an adult who is battling cancer or going

through a divorce or struggling to find a job. But the fact is, dealing with hardships at any age can tear at the heart.

Thankfully, God doesn't compare one person's pain to another. He doesn't put suffering on a scale to determine who will get His attention. For God, if one of His children is in need, nothing can stand in His way. He is there – and stays there. After all, that's what loving parents do.

Parents also come to learn that the


best medicine, whether it is for a broken bone or a broken heart, doesn't require a doctor's prescription. Unconditional, unfailing love can heal a world of hurts. Such is God's love for us.

At the National Shrine of St. Thérèse, people from all over the world come to visit. They come to pray, to offer thanksgiving, and to pour out their hearts to the Little Flower. The depth of their love for St. Thérèse can be seen on their faces.

With eyes fixed on St. Thérèse, they kneel in her spiritual presence, knowing that their quiet prayers will not go unheard. With heads bowed, their tears offer silent supplication. The intensity of their gaze speaks of true gratitude. Thousands upon thousands visit the American "home" of St. Thérèse here in Darien, Illinois. What a sign of unfailing devotion to our great Saint their presence is!

As the world encounters challenging times, the enduring love of St. Thérèse serves as a comfort as we wonder what the future might hold. It is the faith of a little child that will see us through whatever trials come our way. God never forgets His own.

If you are thinking about your own future, it is critical that you plan ahead. There are many aspects to that planning: emotional, financial and spiritual. To help you with your planning process, we are pleased to offer you our new booklet, the Estate Planning Guide. This handy booklet will walk you through some of the important decisions you must make as you consider the years to come. To request your copy, please call our Special Gifts Office at 888-996-1212.

Finally, should you have the means to include a provision for the Society of the Little Flower in your plan, we would be most grateful. Every gift matters, and any amount matters. Your gift can be made through your Will or Trust, through a life insurance policy or an IRA, or even through a bank or other financial account. Please let us know! We would be pleased to enroll you in our Legacy Society, the Rose Garden of St. Thérèse, with its perpetual spiritual benefits. 



# *The Greatest Thing Since Sliced Bread*

**If you are age 70 ½ or older, you are about to learn one of the best kept secrets about supporting the Society of the Little Flower. You may never write another check again!**

A number of years ago a law was passed that allowed those older than 70 ½ to make gifts to their favorite charities through what is referred to as a “QCD,” or Qualified Charitable Distribution. For several reasons, making a QCD could be considered tax-wise giving. Even those who don’t itemize charitable gifts on their tax return can benefit.

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

Contact your IRA plan administrator and explain that you would like to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution to the Society of the Little Flower. Your administrator will want to know our contact information and if we are qualified to receive a QCD (we are!). Be sure to request that your name be put on the memo line of the check; otherwise we may never know the gift came from you.

Decide on the amount you want to give. The maximum for 2024 is \$105,000, but it can be for any amount less than that. Although the IRS does not allow a charitable deduction for your distribution, it will not be taxed as ordinary income when you file your tax return. Please note: you should not take the

distribution yourself; it must come directly to the Society of the Little Flower from your plan.

If you are age 73+, you must begin taking a Required Minimum Distribution (called an “RMD”) from your IRA. Unless you direct all or a portion of your distribution be sent to us (up to the allowable limit), the amount that you take will be taxed at ordinary income rates. Making a QCD can potentially place you in a lower income tax bracket as opposed to taking the entire distribution for yourself. It will also free up cash you

already have on hand for other purposes.

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

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

Making a gift to the Society of the Little Flower through your IRA could be considered the greatest thing since sliced bread! Don’t hesitate to call us at the number above to learn more. 🌹

**BY DAN PRITCHARD**



*Passing on*  
**ST. THÉRÈSE'S LEGACY**



## WHERE DID YOU FIRST LEARN ABOUT OR EXPERIENCE ST. THÉRÈSE? HOW DID SHE COME INTO YOUR LIFE?

**WHAT ATTRACTS US TO HER?** You and I pass on the legacy of St. Thérèse by joyfully, generously and consciously being the Living Body of Christ – following her “Little Way” and the Beatitudes Jesus taught us. You are passing on her “Shower of Roses” by the prayerful and generous way you support her Carmelite brothers through the Society of the Little Flower.

How are we passing on the powerful legacy we have been given? I’ll share my story to encourage you to relive your own faith story and relationship with her.

My Sicilian grandmother had a picture of the Little Flower prominent in her house. We enjoyed many Sunday family Italian feasts there. Thérèse seemed very serious, pious and distant in the picture. So I ignored her even though she seemed important to the older generation. Then in our Italian Roman Catholic Church of St. Ann in Connecticut, where my parents were married and we celebrated all our Sacraments, I discovered one of the stained glass windows of her. Looking around in Church because Mass was in Latin, I noticed other things. The window of St. Thérèse, as beautiful as it was with roses, was right across from the window of Santa Lucia of Sicily. My Mom was Lucia and grew up in Sicily.

God was subtly revealing something to me through the faith and devotion of my Italian family and faith community. Little did I know that these two women were going to so powerfully influence my life.

When I entered the Carmelites after high school, in novitiate I learned that the “Little Flower” was a Carmelite. I read her *Story of a Soul*, and to be honest with you, she did not appeal to me. Of course I was a naive young man of 18, who wanted to take on and transform the world. Thoughts of “surrender” were not on my horizon. I wondered why my Grandparents and our Church had her featured so predominately. Was it because she would dispense roses petals?

Plus, I did not know how to filter out the pious ways of her French culture and the heretical Jansenism she was working her way through, to get her deeper message. But I never lost the belief that she was touching something inside people and that she was very popular.

Our Carmelite formation taught us to pray. Yes, public and vocal prayers like Mass, Divine Office and the Rosary, but also to learn silent prayer of being with God and present to God within. We were challenged to listen to the “whispers of God” speaking and working in and through us.

Of course, some of the obstacles were poor, unhealthy and haunting images of God as judgmental and angry. We had to learn and believe that God is tender, loving, merciful, compassionate, forgiving and always present – a God of love, not a God to be feared.

In 1991, our Carmelite Provincial Rev. Quinn Conners, asked me to take over the Society of the Little Flower. I initially refused, as I wanted to do retreat work, even though I realized how important the Society was, the generosity of so many people like yourselves, educating our seminarians and supporting our lives and many ministries in the Church and to the poor. He was rather insistent. When my final argument was “Look, I don’t even like her,” he simply looked at me and said: “Well, learn to.” Flashes of my Nunna’s picture, the stained glass window and my initial reaction to reading her “*Story of A Soul*” raced through me. I sensed she was after me! She had been hanging around my life for so long.

I started reading the hundreds and thousands of letters, intentions and stories that came from people, like you. I was deeply touched by how important Thérèse was to all the Society of the Little Flower members and friends. They were evangelizing me beyond the cynicism of my youth. She suddenly seemed so powerful and present.

In 1999, we hosted her first USA Relic visit in Darien. The crowds here were overwhelming, as they were for all 121 sites we took her to. The State police almost closed us down because cars were backed up on the interstate near us waiting to see her. I spent hours watching people commune with her: touch her relics, with love, delight, joy, tears, smiles and holiness. The intimacy and the power of their love blew me away – and opened doors within me. Interviewing many people as they waited in line, I saw that there were older people and younger people. Somehow she had skipped a generation of people my age. Their stories were powerful and moving, about how she touched their lives. So many mentioned learning of her from their grandparents. Suddenly I remembered her picture at Nunna’s house. I realized she was attracting me in my youth, even though she never sat and ate the delicious homemade pasta, meatballs, sausage and other incredible Italian food we had every Sunday. She was coming after me.

Right after the Millennium, I started to have serious lower back issues. Doctors could do little. Eventually a doctor-friend from the parish saw me and mentioned I seemed to be getting worse, and he did not want to lose me. After explaining how tired I was of doctors and tests to no avail, he gave me the name of a famous spinal surgeon in Chicago to see. When I did not follow up, he drove to Darien, picked me up with my eight MRI’s and drove me to Chicago. I was impressed by this famous surgeon. He discovered something that seemed urgent, and because of my friendship with his doctor friend, within three days I had spinal surgery, even though he was tightly scheduled through the next six weeks.

“A word or a smile is often enough to put a fresh life in a despondent soul.”

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX



The recovery was slow and painful. He told me that they caught the infection eating away my spinal cord just in time – another week or two and I would have been crippled for life. It was like a miracle. But I was still bedridden for a long time and impatient. This was never supposed to happen to me. Because I do not suffer well, I did not pray well. I was frustrated and felt God and everyone had abandoned me.

Before this all happened, I had committed myself to rewriting updated prayer booklets for St. Thérèse as part of my responsibility as Director of the Society of the Little Flower. To fill in time, I reread her “Story of a Soul,” but this time I was struck by how challenging her life was – her disappointments, health issues, abandonments, darkness, hyper-sensitivity and her background of heretical Jansenism. After very little prayer as I bathed in self-pity, I finally asked her: “Thérèse, how did you get through all that suffering, and still believe in God’s love and mercy?” No answer! Of course I had not been listening to her for a while, wrapped in my own pain, anger and disappointment.

Tired of feeling sorry for myself, I tried a few days later and repeated: “Thérèse, how did you get through all that suffering, and still believe in God’s love and mercy?” I quieted myself down and attentively waited. In the silence I heard a female voice from deep within whispering: “Trust God!” (in English, thank the Lord!) Knowing the voice was hers, I screamed back: “Thérèse, it is easy for you to say – but look where you are enjoying heaven and I’m here crippled in bed with the possibility of never walking again!” No response so I ignored her and continued to feel abandoned. My anger filled the silence and distanced me.

Two weeks later, again tired of feeling sorry for myself, I

looked up to heaven and again asked her: “Thérèse, how did you get through all that suffering, and still believe in God’s love and mercy?” I quieted myself down and again attentively waited. In the silence I heard the same female voice from deep within whispering: “Trust God!” I wanted to snap back but she again said: “Trust God!” That is what awakened me to her healing power and friendly presence.

You see I was looking for physical healing, which came and even healed so well I did not need the second surgery a year later. But the real, more significant healing came in my life. As a young man who got messages that I was inadequate and not good enough. I spent my life trying to prove I have value and was competent. I became messianic in my own eyes. Even as the Carmelites had put me in positions of responsibility and leadership, I was always overdoing everything to prove myself – to my Dad, to God, to the world and to myself! And it wasn’t always gentle, kind or respectful. I was running over people to make things happen and prove myself. It was very self-serving, despite the good that was done. God used my weakness and self-serving false self to get a lot of good things accomplished.

The healing St. Thérèse helped me to experience was that I wasn’t the Messiah – God was still in charge! The Little Flower had learned that lesson of surrender in her own struggles with disappointment, abandonment, darkness and self-centeredness.

Mary Lambert, whom I had hired as Associate Director just a year earlier, stepped up to run the Society and help it move and grow forward dramatically while I was physically and emotionally absent. While it was humbling to learn that, it was freeing and healing. I had to trust God and trust the people God sent into my life. It lifted a heavy burden I had carried unnecessarily. It was not the healing I was looking for,

but the healing I needed to live a more faithful and generative life. That was the great gift Thérèse passed on to me: “Trust God!” So basic! So ordinary! So precious. So freeing!

Our beloved heavenly friend, St. Thérèse, awakens us to the reality that holiness is available to everyone and done in simple, ordinary ways. That is her great gift of simplicity, faith, trust, confidence and availability.

God loves us all – each and every one of us, and is always and already present if we just wake up to the Divine Presence and Love within and around us. Isn't that why she is so powerful! She knows that Jesus wants each of us to bring joy, light and love to each other, and not deal with people as projects to work on or ways to have our needs met.

Inspired by the Spirit of Jesus we are called to be a light to the world – to brighten, delight and deepen the Reign of God in our hearts and world. We are to pass on the love and mercy by which God loves us to people who need a smile, touch, comment and non-judgmental presence.

Our world is crying to hear and experience the Good News - the Gospel of God's loving presence and the dignity of every person created in the Image and Likeness of God. Jesus' trust of us in echoed in the Little Flower's challenge to believe and live that “Everything is Grace!” God permeates the universe and is always present. God never turns His back on us.

How are you and I passing on her important message? By her “Little Way” spirituality of doing ordinary things with extraordinary love? How are we telling the world and the next generation that holiness and spirituality is not about grand gestures, but simple things like a smile or kind word, pleasant compliment or sincere affirmation. For example, forgiving someone who hurt you or asking forgiveness from someone you hurt or reconnecting with long lost friends that just faded away with a phone call, email or greeting card. Affirm their importance in your life, despite the passing years.

Let us turn our swords into plowshares. These kind simple gestures are God breaking out in us to brighten and affirm people that they are special, holy, blessed and beloved. As we prayerfully meditate on the Divine Presence always and already within us, we will recognize the Divine Presence in each other. Our divine DNA resonates with each other. – and the glory of God sparkles.

By passing on St. Thérèse's Little Way by the way we treat others, we can help build God's kingdom here on earth. We don't always need words or explanation or talk about – we live it and that speaks most loudly and clearly. We will build community, love and justice by effectively affirming everyone who shares this planet with us and sharing the joy of being alive.

Her greatest teaching is “Everything is Grace!” This not a pious phrase – it is an experience of faith – it is trusting God, the sovereign power and sustaining personal and triune energy source of all life. Because we live in the human world where God became one of us, we need to share this love, affirmation and forgiveness and joy in simple human ways. Real life is where God is and where God is passing divine love, presence and grace in and through us.

Named after Carmelite St. Teresa of Avila, Thérèse of Lisieux


came to believe the prayer and teaching attributed to St. Teresa, her name sake:

*Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which He looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are His body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

Because we believe that we are the Body of the Risen Lord, it is important that we accept Jesus' expectation that we be the instruments of grace – embodying His presence by our love for one another and creating a more just world for those who fall through the cracks and feel excluded. What a grace to be trusted by God to be Divine compassion and mercy in the world. St. Thérèse learned to do and be that joyful and generous compassion within the small world of the Carmel. She also knew how to embrace the whole world with all its disappointments, pains, woundedness, darkness and injustice. Her vocation was “to be love in the heart of the Church.” In the most ordinary ways she made a huge difference in people's lives. And she is still doing it today for us, in us and through us.

We praise and honor the glory of God. We glorify God by reverencing the essence of Who God is – not through fear but the God revealed as Life, Love, Mercy – and ecstatic union of persons who so flow in and out and through each other that they are one – One God. And we are created in God's image and likeness!

We live in a world of separateness. The first word Jesus spoke when he rose from the dead and breathed on them was: “Shalom” – that means “be whole, be complete, be connected, be one”: within yourself (how complex and paradoxical we can be) and in the people and world around you – with the universe (taking care of the earth). Who of us hasn't had moments of looking into the heavens on a clear night and being overwhelmed, awed and expanded by the awesome wonder of the universe we live in - and being one, connected and in communion in God who creates and sustains us all – who is always and already present. We pass on the legacy of St. Thérèse by joyfully, generously and consciously being the Living Body of Christ – following her “Little Way” and the Beatitudes Jesus taught us.

Friends of St. Thérèse, you are doing a good job. Let's enhance our efforts in the stressed and challenging world of today. Delightful Little Flower energizes us to be messengers of her “Shower of Roses” – doing good on earth consciously, freely, joyfully and lovingly. The world will know we are all being held in the tender and loving hands of God. 



# The Lord Calls us

**I**n 2001, I had the honor of visiting the National Shrine and Museum of St. Thérèse in Darien for the first time. A religiously enthusiastic and ignorant teenage boy, I had no idea what was happening that day. I thought my classmates and I were there to learn about God and do some prayer and maybe some other activities. I was right and also very wrong.

We had Mass. We prayed. We even had some time to just relax and enjoy the beautiful campus here. Where was I wrong? Little did I know that the story of my life was being linked up spiritually with the Carmelites and with the Little Flower.

In one of the talks we were instructed to pray to a Saint. Hmm, I thought, “this is something new for me. I’m in!”

The Carmelite brother leading the talk had some instructions:

1. Pick one male and one female Saint.
2. Pick Thérèse as your female Saint because we are at her Shrine.
3. Say their names in your head.
4. Pour your heart out to them like they are good friends.
5. Tell them what you want as long as you are willing and able to do the work to make it happen.
6. We make the sign of the cross and begin.

That afternoon in 2001, I prayed ardently:

*“King David and Thérèse, I want to be a Carmelite. But, not for my whole life. A few years would be great. And let me teach at a Carmelite High School as a friar. And, then let me teach at a Carmelite High School as a layperson. And, then let me come help run this place, and get married and have a family! If all this can happen, that would be really great.”*

Sure enough the Shepherd Boy turned Great King, and the Little Flower over about 20 years made all of that happen. Of course they worked with the grace of God and his tender hand guiding me. This is a story I share with most tour groups and want to share with you. No matter how hard life gets, I know that prayer works, just not always exactly how we expect it to work.

You might have noticed that part of

that prayer was to work at the National Shrine and Museum of St. Thérèse. That and all of the prayer came true, years and decades later. It was a bumpy and wild ride at times, and other times were very boring or just dull through those years. So much was really a grand adventure!

One thing I did not realize so well back then was that whether as a friar or a spouse, life with the Lord calls us in directions beyond our knowing. Recently, my beloved wife was given a great work opportunity that demands

we move. It’s been hard to accept, I love this work, and I love the whole Society of the Little Flower. It is time for me to move on to new work and life circumstances, but I will always hold you “my friends” in prayer.

As a tour guide here and through my days I learned a lot from the people I led and worked with:

1. **Don’t sweat the small stuff, and it’s all small stuff.** I made too many little mistakes. Sometimes I would take it home with me and brood at the dinner table. I think the Little Flower would agree that a mistake is not worth indignation.
2. **Everything is Grace, even the tough things.** The 2023 Family Homecoming event was one of the most rewarding and challenging moments of my adult life. Even in the most stressful moments, I could see God’s hand at work making all thing good.
3. **When you have a bad day, you have no right to make others have even a bad moment.** St. Thérèse did a lot to make room for others even when she was struggling. She lived in a way that helped others thrive, even if it wasn’t her first inclination.

**4. It's important to just have conversations with people.**

I got to speak with Father Bernie every morning. Sometimes we lost sight of work and would talk for 20 or 30 minutes. That was more important than most of the "work" that we did. Our chats were where the Spirit had room to make God's reign here among us.

**5. Thank you dear readers for all your support.** It's been an honor to write for you these last several years and to share so many of the great things happening here at the National Shrine and Museum of St. Thérèse and the Society of the Little Flower. Let the conversation continue, be joy to others, see all as good, and do not worry too much. 🌹



## THE LEGACY OF ST. THÉRÈSE

**When reflecting on the many years that I have been a part of the Society of the Little Flower, you, the donors, are at the forefront of my thoughts. Your faith, generosity, kindness, friendship, and most of all your devotion to St. Thérèse is incredibly beautiful, humbling, and deeply powerful. It is beyond words the ways that you have touched so many people's lives with your support and prayers.**

When the many visitors walk our campus here at the National Shrine they see so many names of people whose legacy is being carried on because you have chosen them to be a part of our holy and inspiring space. Along with the legacy of St. Thérèse on our sacred grounds, throughout the campus are the names of your mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, and yourself who are part of the tradition here and whose legacy will be carried on for generations to come. What an incredible act of love and devotion to be remembered forever alongside our dear friend and intercessor.

We continue to honor requests of donors who wish to be named or wish to honor a loved one with a legacy naming opportunity. There are many options available to personally memorialize yourself or a loved one and carry on your and their legacy.

If you would like more information on naming opportunities, please reach out to the Special Gifts Team by calling 888-996-1212 at the Society of the Little Flower.

Thank you again for your generosity and support and for carrying on the legacy of your loved ones here at the National Shrine of St. Thérèse.

You and the intentions close to your heart are remembered in prayer every single day by Carmelites worldwide.

God Bless you for all that you are and all you do.

Your friend in St. Thérèse,  
Mary Zacharias 🌹

MARY ZACHARIAS

### Tradition

It is not all the little things  
that take up space in our places.

It is not all the smell and bells  
that light up our imagination.

What we hand on to others

Is

What is

Most important

LOVE.

Our Little Flower and her memory

Is full of little moments;

Is a grace in all the ways;

Is the odor of charity;

Is the ring of hope to our days;

Lighting up every nation

full of love, and love, and love.

We hand on to others

from what we've received,

what is worthy:

mercy,

goodness,

love!

PASSING ON THE

# Legacy of St. Thérèse

What is the legacy of St. Thérèse? What is it about her life, her writings, her experience, that we want to pass on to the next generation? What are the important things that we want others to know, and teachings we don't want others to forget?

## DISTURBING TREND

Over the past twenty years I've noticed a trend that is somewhat sad. And that is, when a senior passes away, family members gather up many of their religious items and drop them off at the parish office. While it is great that they don't throw them away [thank God], what about passing these items on to our children and grandchildren while we are still living. We receive items of many saints and frequently included are St. Thérèse prayer cards, rosaries, small statues and novenas.

Are we missing a wonderful opportunity to teach the next generation about our Saints? Especially one of the most popular Saints of our time, St. Thérèse. While we are living, we could be sharing her story with the grandchildren. Give them a religious article. Tell them to cherish it, and teach them to turn to St. Thérèse in times of need. Share her story with them.

Tell them about her spirituality, her simplicity, her "Little Way." We must do our part to keep St. Thérèse' legacy alive for generations to come.

## MY INSIGHTS INTO ST. THÉRÈSE' LEGACY

I have always been drawn to St. Thérèse because of her simplicity. Having read her autobiography, *The "Story of a Soul,"* at different times in my life, and having studied about her through courses and by attending lectures by Carmelite scholars, what has always struck me was the workings of God's grace on this humble and trusting soul.

Here was a young woman who devoted her entire being to the complete embrace of God's will for her life. And that's not easy to do. Sometimes we want our own will to be done. We can be experts at telling God what to do for us, and even how to do it. Thérèse had a profound

“

*At last I have found it.  
My vocation is love.”*

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

trust in God! And trust is an area that this new generation grapples with.

Another element that is paramount to me when reflecting on St. Thérèse' life, is that no matter what hardship she endured, her faith was unshakeable. She found meaning in suffering. It had a redemptive power. And of course that's not a popular value in today's culture. This spiritual trait remained right to the end. Thérèse knew great things were to come. Having suffered so much during her life, and especially with tuberculosis at the end, her faith was so inviolable that she was able to proclaim, *"Yes, I'm like a tired and harassed traveler, who reaches the end of his journey and falls over. Yes, but I'll be falling into God's arms"*.

St. Thérèse is best known for her "Little Way." And it would be great if more young people could learn this. Her "Little Way" is a spirituality that seeks to do everything, no matter the task at hand, no matter how insignificant, with great love. She did ordinary things with extraordinary love. Her simple and practical approach to spirituality through her "Little Way" has a huge impact on so many people. That's what led to her being declared a Doctor of the Church on the 100th Anniversary of her death in 1997.

Well, enough about what I think! What do you think? What do you say?

## WHAT YOU HAVE SAID

In the course of writing this article, during an unusually warm Niagara winter, I decided to talk to a few people and ask certain questions to get at the real 'meat' of St. Thérèse' legacy. I asked questions like, "What is the most important message of St. Thérèse that you want the next generation to know?"

What is her legacy that you don't want others to forget? What is the most important thing about her life? Why are you drawn to her?" This got people thinking. And it was a deeply spiritual and fun exercise.

### GOD IS RIGHT THERE

I spoke with a woman in her 80's. She has been a devotee of St. Thérèse for many years. She didn't think St. Thérèse was a simple person, because her life seemed so complex. But she feels that St. Thérèse' message was very simple, and that everyone can relate to her. If someone thinks that God is out of reach to the average person, then they're totally wrong. We can find God in our everyday life, in our every activity. But we need to focus. God is right there, and is involved in every part of our lives, if we allow God in. St. Thérèse did. And this woman hopes that the next generation does also. Everyone, if they put their mind to it, can do small acts with great love. This woman hopes that this is a path that the next generation can strive to follow.

### HUMILITY

I had a conversation with another woman who has been a life-long devotee of St. Thérèse. She has always been drawn to Thérèse' humility. She said St. Thérèse was so humble about everything. And we can learn so much from her. She said that she always turns to St. Thérèse, and puts herself in her hands. There's even a prayer she says over and over again, "*St. Thérèse, Little Flower, show your power in this hour.*" She said that she trusts herself to her on a daily basis. And whatever God has in store for her, she knows that St. Thérèse is right there with her.

The mystery of *Roses* always intrigues this woman. "*I will let fall from Heaven a shower of Roses.*" She said we can get a *Rose* in many ways, a sign of her intercession, of her eternal vocation. St. Thérèse also said, "*I will spend my heaven doing good on earth*". This woman finds such a great comfort in this, and she likes to hear other's stories about

'Roses.' She said she truly places herself and her intercessions in St. Thérèse's hands, and it gives her solace.

### MY VOCATION IS LOVE

In speaking to an elderly man, he said that the most important thing for him, is St. Thérèse' words, "*At last I have found it. My vocation is love.*" This, he says, is his hope for the next generation. If everything we do, comes from love, an authentic love, than we will have a much brighter future. Encouraging our young people to delve into the lives of the Saints like St. Thérèse, is so important. She can teach us so much. He said that if we are authentic followers of Christ, then our vocation must be love.

This was a beautiful insight by this man. And it brought St. Thérèse' words home to me when she said, *You know well enough that Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them.* And this is so important for the next generation to learn. Never underestimate those little actions we do. There's great holiness in that. We can practice holiness everywhere. We must strive to miss no opportunity to make some small sacrifice, by a smile, a kind word. And this can be practiced at home, at work, even while driving.

### MY NAME IS THERESA

I spoke with a woman whose name is Theresa. I asked her why she was given this name. She said that her mother had a deep love for St. Thérèse. All during her life, her mother turned to St. Thérèse for everything, and she had great faith in her. She was her go-to Saint for all the trials and tribulations she had endured.

There were pictures of St. Thérèse

throughout their family home. Her prayer cards were in every book, especially in her mother's prayer book and Family Bible. Now in later years, her daughter admits that she doesn't know much about the life of St. Thérèse. In her mom's honour, she recently read The "Story of a Soul," and she has perused many articles on the life of St. Thérèse. What strikes a chord in her heart is that God is everywhere, and we can encounter God in our daily activities.

### HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

In his Apostolic Letter on the 150th Anniversary of St. Thérèse' birth, Pope Francis, in pointing out St. Thérèse' enduring relevance, wrote that "in an age that urges us to focus on ourselves and our own interests, Thérèse shows us the beauty of making our lives a gift. At a time when the most superficial needs and desires are glorified, she testifies to the radicalism of the Gospel. In an age of individualism, she makes us discover the value of a love that becomes intercession for others."

The Holy Father continued, "At a time when human beings are obsessed with grandeur and new forms of power, she points out to us the little way. In an age that casts aside so many of our brothers and sisters, she teaches us the beauty of concern and responsibility for one another. At a time of great complexity, she can help us rediscover the importance of simplicity, the absolute primacy of love, trust and abandonment."

My hope is that we will each do our part to spread the message of St. Thérèse far and wide. May she continue to intercede for us on our journey of faith, our journey to the Author of Love.

*Tout est grâce.* 🌹



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

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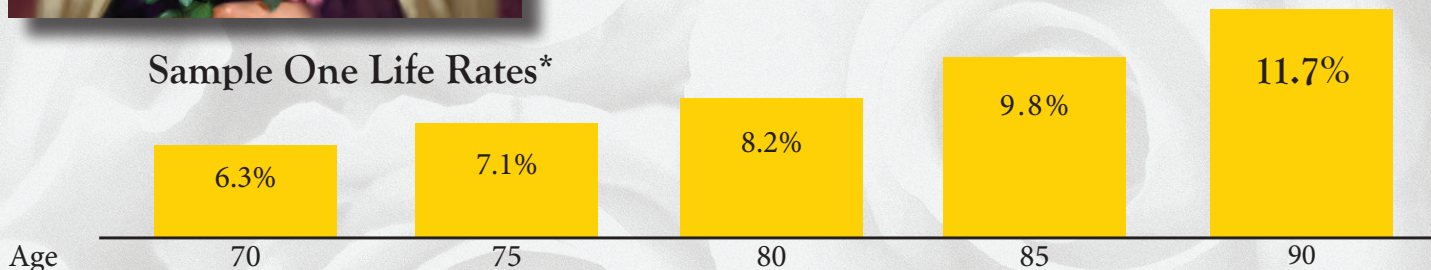
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