

# Between Friends

A publication for the Friends of the Society of the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois, and Canada



**ST. THÉRÈSE:**

*Healing &  
Forgiveness*

# True healing



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

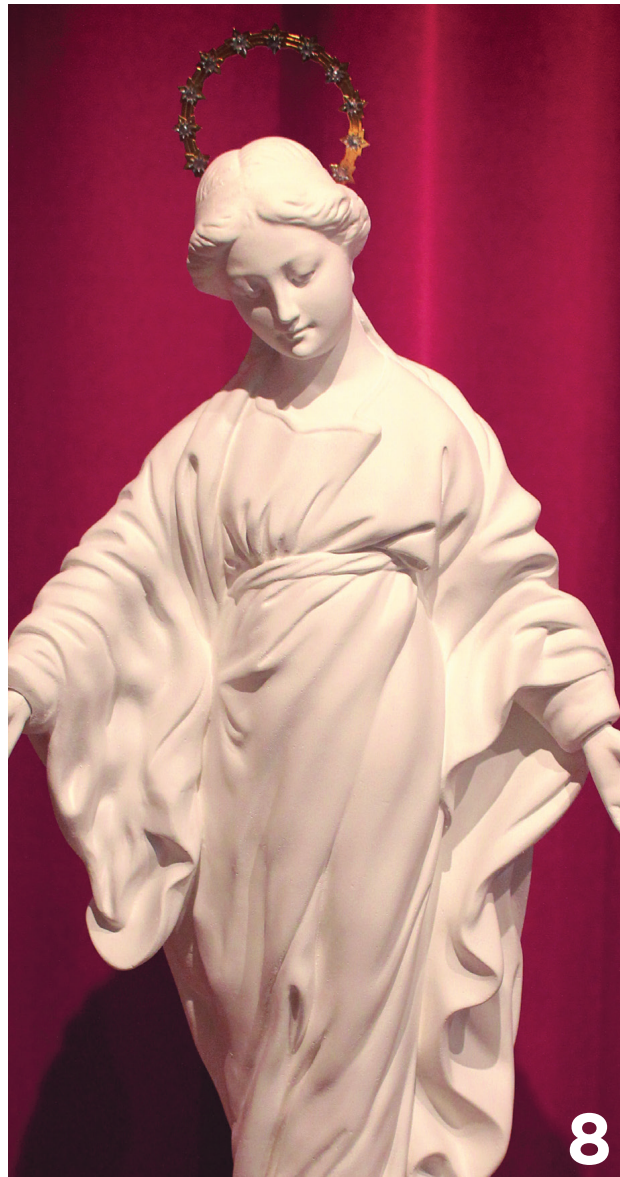
## Dear Friends of St. Thérèse,

As we prepare to celebrate the Feast Day of St. Thérèse, we reflect on the profound lessons she teaches us about healing and forgiveness. St. Thérèse's unwavering faith and boundless love remind us that true healing begins with a heart willing to forgive. Her gentle wisdom, encouraging us to have patience and love, offers a path to inner peace amidst life's challenges. May we embrace her example, allowing forgiveness to heal our wounds and love to guide our actions, creating a ripple effect of compassion and grace in our communities.

**Father Tom Schrader, O. Carm.** 🌹

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 From the director  
True healing
- 3 From the editor  
St. Thérèse: Healing and forgiveness
- 4 Seasons of life  
Lex Ferraiola: The black belt deacon
- 6 From the special gifts office  
Everyone needs a Buster
- 7 From the special gifts office  
'Loyal to the Society, and to its donors.'
- 8 Cover story  
St. Thérèse: Healing and forgiveness
- 12 Look what's happening  
Giving Hope
- 13 Prayer  
Praying with the saints of Autumn
- 14 Canadian corner  
... let that grace carry us.



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Father Thomas Schrader, O. Carm.  
**DIRECTOR/PUBLISHER**

Mary Lambert  
**EDITOR/DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

Father Bob Colaresi, O. Carm.  
Mary Lambert  
Father Gerard Power, O. Carm.  
Daniel Pritchard  
Mary Zacharias

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

**Society of the Little Flower**  
1313 N. Frontage Rd.  
Darien, Illinois 60561-5340  
**800.621.2806**  
littleflower.org

**The Monastery of Mt. Carmel**  
**Society of the Little Flower**  
7020 Stanley Ave.  
Niagara Falls, Ontario  
L2G 7B7  
**800.922.7622**  
ca.littleflower.org

**FAITH CATHOLIC**  
Abby Feldpausch  
**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**





# St. Thérèse:

## HEALING AND FORGIVENESS

### Hello, my Dear Friends of the Society of the Little Flower,


I hope you enjoyed your summer and are preparing for our beloved St. Thérèse's Feast Day! This issue of *Between Friends* focuses on healing and forgiveness, a theme that resonates deeply with many of us in today's world.

Over the years, I have often asked myself how Thérèse would handle various situations in my life. Time and time again, I have felt her whisper, "Mary Therese, have patience and love in your heart and forgive gently." Whenever I heeded this advice, I found that healing soon followed.

Life's challenges can harden us, but by listening to my sister and beloved friend, I discovered that even amidst heartache, love prevails. As we journey together, may we always remember that forgiveness opens the door to healing, and through love, we find peace.

I pray and hope that Thérèse whispers in your ear as well. We all need to believe in the power of forgiving gently and choosing love. In these moments of grace, let us also remember to give back. By sharing our experiences of healing and forgiveness, we can inspire others to find the same peace. Let us reach out, lend a helping hand, and be a source of light in someone else's life. Together, we can create a ripple effect of love and compassion.

With warm regards and blessings,

Mary Therese 



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

Family is the center of his life, the ground of his being ...”

LEX FERRAUIOLA:

# The black belt deacon

**Lex Ferraiola is a 77-year-old permanent Deacon with 32 years of pastoral service at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church (OLMC) in Tenafly, New Jersey. He is no longer able to assist at weekly Mass at OLMC because he is in the final months of a 12-year battle with Parkinson’s disease.**

I had the privilege of serving with Lex for four years when I was asked to be pastor of OLMC in 2015. I had met Lex over the years at various Carmelite and pastoral events, but I had not been aware of the breadth of his pastoral skills until we became partners in ministry.

I would like to tell the rest of his story because it is such a remarkable one.

Lex was raised in New York City as an only child in a single-parent home. He attended St. Anselm’s Elementary School through the 1950s. Lex was a good student and an observant Catholic. During his high school years, Lex wrote and directed 10 teenage musical comedy shows for parish CYOs in New York City. After high school, he attended Lehman College within the University of the City of New York. He majored in philosophy, perhaps because the idea of becoming a priest was a real possibility in grade school and the early years of high school.

It remained a possibility until he met Wanda. He was enthralled and has been ever since. They were married even before he finished college. Lex and Wanda shared 55 years of marriage before Wanda went home to the Lord in 2023 after her long battle with cancer.

Lex has called Wanda his best friend and beloved partner for his entire married life. He referred to her often in homilies and personal conferences. He unabashedly called her his “sweetheart,” his best friend, so often and so publicly, that there is not a moment’s doubt that this is literally true.

Lex and Wanda adopted two children from Korea, Danny and David, in the 1970s. They then gave birth to Julie in 1980. After Julie, they adopted Meg, also from Korea, in 1982. Their children have further blessed Lex and Wanda with three grandchildren.

Family has been the center of their lives ever since, rooted in their steadfast embrace of their Catholic faith. Family was first and foremost, but there is much more to tell.

Lex and Wanda first moved to Bogota, New Jersey, and attended St. Joseph’s Parish, one of the nine parishes served by the Carmelites at that time. As their

family grew, they moved to Tenafly, New Jersey, another Carmelite parish in the Northern Valley.

Many readers of *Between Friends* will remember that the United States was deeply consumed by the war in Vietnam through the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many families were fleeing that country by any means possible. Some even took to the seas in very fragile boats. These “boat people” stirred the hearts of good people all over the world.

Catholics and many others in the U.S. tried to respond. Lex and Wanda were among them. They welcomed a Vietnamese family with two children into their Tenafly home for six months.

Lex and Wanda were also into TaeKwonDo, the Korean martial art, at the very same time. They both earned master level black belt degrees, started clubs in several New Jersey towns, and taught this art under the name “Holy Spirit TaeKwonDo” for more than 35 years.

Family is the center of his life, the ground of his being, but there is much else to add.

After graduation from Lehman, Lex’s professional life began in the burgeoning field of information technology. He enjoyed success in several different roles within the field. And as many young professional families were asked to do, Lex and Wanda even relocated to Switzerland for one year. Their three young children came along. This was before Meg was a part of their lives.

In the 1970s, the Archdiocese of Newark began a program to bring married men into the ordained diaconate. Lex heard the call to that ministry in the 1980s and was ordained in 1992.

He has served for 32 years at OLMC. Lex has had all the usual diaconal responsibilities. He is a very highly regarded preacher and much driven to social outreach. His three volumes of homilies attest to many poignant and personal graces. He has walked the streets of NYC at Saturday nights in search of the homeless whom he has fed and consoled. This ministry changed his life and enriched his preaching.

Lex sated his own hunger for a deeper

“ Family is the center of his life, the ground of his being, but there is much else to add. ”

LEX FERRAUIOLA

and fuller spirituality by pursuing a master’s degree in pastoral ministry at St. Mary’s University in Minnesota. His master’s thesis on synchronicity and the work of the Holy Spirit was awarded with distinction at this graduation,

Never tiring of efforts to grow in the spiritual life, Lex also graduated from the Haden institute for Spiritual Direction from the Mt. Carmel Spiritual Center in Niagara Falls, Canada. He has been on the faculty of that institute since he completed the program in 2012.

The Church has been blessed with many deacons who have rendered years of powerful preaching and service. The reason why I am writing this profile of Lex Ferraioula is because of what I wish to share now:

Lex has had his own crosses to carry through his life. He had rare contact with his father. He had the courage to preach about that in his homilies.

Like many, Lex had to face his own emotional crises. In his mid-20s he dealt with severe anxiety and depression. He attributes his faith and the benefits of group therapy as the saving graces that pulled him through. He emerged from that period knowing through the grace of God that “all would be well.” It became a mantra for his life. So much so, that in his years of hospital ministry and administration, he regularly offered counseling and led weekly peer support group meetings with patients testifying to his own experience.

In addition, I must add my own witness to his unique charisma. Lex has had an ongoing ministry of spiritual direction throughout his years of parochial diaconal service.

He held those conferences in the rectory of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. It was

a frequent experience to discover that one of the rectory offices was occupied because Lex was in it seeing a person for spiritual direction.


In my own personal years of priestly ministry, I have learned that once a pastoral minister becomes known and trusted in a parish, the parishioners share with that minister the “fuller story, as well as the good news.” One learns about the child who is struggling, or the teen who is depressed or the young adult who is battling addiction. All of this comes later, after hearing about the many triumphs of college admissions or scholarships.

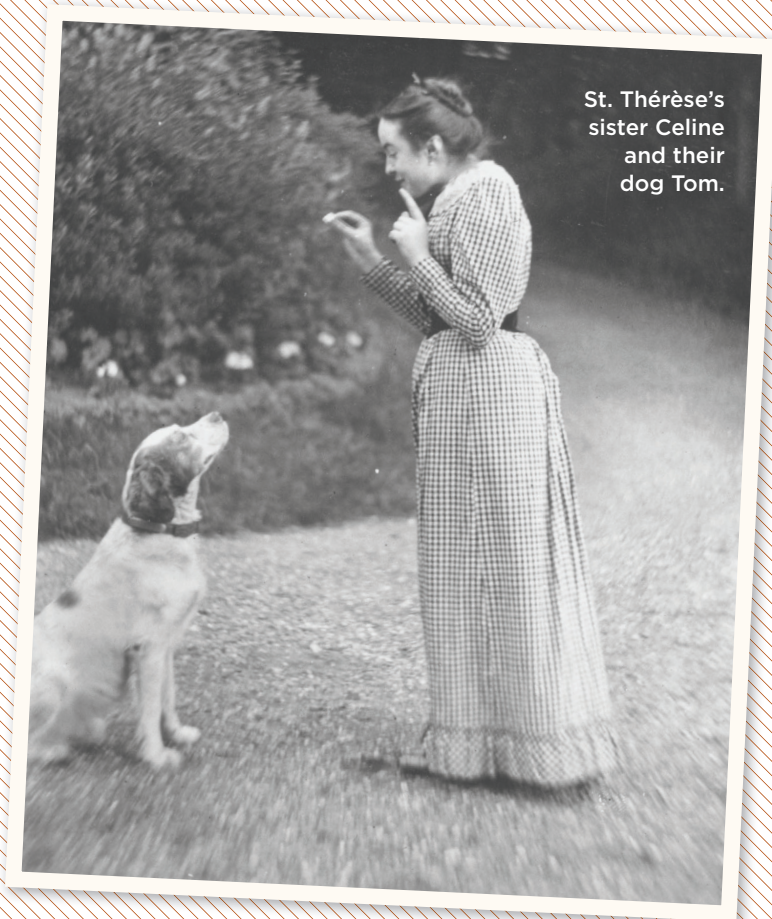
Lex was the minister who was most sought out for the most serious struggles in life: the marriage falling apart, the abusive spouse, the family member accused of crime. Lex was the spiritual companion for parishioners in each of these situations.

Now at age 77, Lex has had to bury his own son David, who recently died. This loss occurred eight months after the death of his beloved Wanda. I and other Carmelites visit Lex regularly. He can no longer answer the door, he can no longer even turn sideways in bed, he cannot stop the tremors of Parkinson’s.

All he does now, when one visits, is thank God for the gift of traveling through life with his soulmate, Wanda. We chat a bit and he receives the Holy Eucharist, and we pray that God will take him soon. He aches to be with Wanda and now David. He knows peace awaits and he yearns for it.

Deacon Lex Ferraioula is someone you should know and pray for.

I believe that one day the Church will also be encouraging us to pray to him as well as for him as a spiritual companion in our own journeys back to the Father. 



St. Thérèse's  
sister Celine  
and their  
dog Tom.

# Everyone needs a Buster

**A number of years ago my son adopted Buster, saving the pup from a certain death. My son nurtured and protected Buster like a parent raising a frail child. He grew into a healthy, strong and loyal friend for my son. Buster is now 9 years old, and, in retrospect, it is clear that he was heaven-sent; many times it was he who did the saving.**

Teenage years can be tough, and sadly those tumultuous years can toughen a child's spirit. They learn to hold in their emotions, to weather self-doubt by retreating inward, creating a façade that they "have it all together."

But almost inevitably, there comes a time when they can't fake it anymore, and the emotional walls come tumbling down. They judge themselves for not

being whomever they think they should be, and that judgment can be harsh.

Thankfully for my son, he had Buster – and thankfully, dogs don't judge. We all need a type of Buster in our lives – someone who is there for us and would never judge us.

The "shoulds" of life, no matter one's age, can place tremendous burdens on our shoulders. For teens, the emotional

impact of their "shoulds" can be life-altering. As life goes on, there will always be "shoulds" that will emerge. How we manage them is one of the keys to contentment.

The healing from life's bumps and bruises has to start from within, and that can be the hardest part. Of course, faith plays a very important role.

In the midst of a lifetime of struggles, St. Thérèse's faith was her "Buster." She never gave up, right up until the end of her short time here on earth. She knew that God loved her unconditionally, even when she felt empty inside. He was her consolation.

As the years pass, it is not uncommon for people to wrestle with feelings of emptiness as they try to find meaning in their lives. Haven't we all heard someone say, "I don't know why God keeps me here." But like St. Thérèse, we are called to never give up. With a bit of soul-searching, we can find our answers. There is meaning in every life.

As a friend of St. Thérèse, you may very well find meaning in the support you give to her and the Society of the Little Flower. Through the sacrifices you make, souls are being saved, the poor served by our Carmelites are being cared for, and hundreds of youth are being led back to the Church each year through our high school outreach and retreat programs.

It's no secret that times are tough economically. Perhaps your budget is stretched to the limit. You may not know that there are ways to continue your support of the Society of the Little Flower long into the future without making an impact on your financial situation today. Future generations will be blessed by your kindness. 🌹

**To learn more, or to request a free copy of our booklet, "A Special Gift Planning Guide for Friends of St. Thérèse," please call our Special Gifts Office at 888-996-1212.**

# 'LOYAL TO THE SOCIETY, AND TO ITS DONORS.'



**A dear friend to me and the Society of the Little Flower recently lost one of its own.**

**Kevin was a part of the Society family for the past 27 years, until his recent untimely death this past March. He was one of those behind-the-scenes people.**

Under the direction of Mary Lambert, our International Development Director and Office Manager, Kevin, played an integral part in the day-to-day operations and functionality of the Society. He was an expert in his field with a brilliant mind, adapting swiftly to the fast-paced advancements in technology to keep the Society of the Little Flower at the forefront. Kevin was extremely efficient, proactive, and retained information like a camera and tape recorder, never forgetting what he saw, read, or heard. He was a contributor to many aspects of the Society as well as for the Carmelites as a whole. He was fiercely loyal to the Society, and to our donors.

Kevin was also a good friend. He was quiet, kind, and had a great sense of humor. He was gentle and always ready to help anyone with anything at any time. He was a true blessing to the Society, our employees, our donors, and the Carmelites. He is deeply missed by his colleagues and friends.

As we learn to heal after his loss, we cherish the memories and the legacy Kevin left behind. May his soul rest in peace. Surely, God and St. Thérèse welcomed him with open arms.

I will always be grateful and thankful for Kevin and the gift of his friendship in my life. He was special to me. The many years of work-related guidance, the laughter, and the wonderful memories will remain in my heart forever.

ST. THÉRÈSE:

# Healing & Forgiveness

**D**ON'T WE ALL WISH TO BE WHOLE, HAPPY, HEALTHY AND PAIN FREE! But life seems to bring us disappointments, disease, darkness, betrayals and wounds.

As children, we live from innocence and hope. "Innocence" means "without the wounds." Isn't that why we love to go back and be in touch with our inner child? That innocence that touched deep inside us, before the wounds and disappointments of life harden our hearts and shrink our soul.

So much of the ministry of Jesus was about healing wounds, diseases and disabilities. He came to heal, reveal and demonstrate to us our relationship with God – one of intimacy, presence and connection. Jesus touched people who were untouchable

He broke down the barriers of those ostracized from society because their dysfunctions, disabilities and diseases were deemed contagious or divine punishment. Jesus healed them and welcomed them back into the family of God's people.

Jesus' prayer was "that all may be one" – he challenges us to heal all that divides and separates. Healing is at the heart of the Gospel – the Good News. We reduce sin to some moral actions, where the great sin is not living from the Divine DNA that is God's Spirit in us. Sin is believing and living as if we are separated and disconnected. Forgiveness is letting our false images go and trusting in God's truth and presence. "I am always with you!" Remember the first word Jesus spoke after God raised him from the dead was "Shalom" – which means "be whole," connected. As he breathed Shalom, he was reconnecting all things.





**“What penetrated to the very depths of my soul was the ravishing smile of the Blessed Virgin. At that moment, all my pain disappeared.”**

ST. THÉRÈSE, MAY 13, 1883



Healing and letting go (forgiveness) was also a huge issue in the life of our heavenly friend, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower. It is essential to her “Little Way” spirituality. Born sickly and hyper-sensitive, life was a struggle for her. She needed to be noticed to have value.

Reading her *Story of a Soul*, and reflecting on it, we learn that the major wound of her life was a mother wound. Thérèse was born the ninth child to Zélie, who was suffering from breast cancer. In her third month, because she could not breastfeed her, in panic Zélie took her young struggling baby, in the middle of the night, 7 kilometers outside Alençon to give her to a wet nurse, Rose Taillé. Of course, as any baby would, Thérèse missed the comfort and feel of her mom. But for the next 14 months, she fell in love with the nourishment from Rose, Rose’s family, the farm, fresh air and animals. Rose Taillé became her second mother as she nursed her to health and renewed life. On Thursdays, when Rose took young Thérèse into Alençon for provisions and to see her

family, Zélie even commented several times that her daughter seemed more at home with Rose and this simple farm people than her own biological family.

Eventually, young Thérèse was brought back to her family in Alençon to reconnect. Her mother’s health was also deteriorating. Thérèse missed the warmth, simplicity, comfort and health experienced through Rose, even as she grew to experience the strong love of her mother, Zélie. But 14 months after her return to her family, her mom died on Aug. 28, 1877. Thérèse was only 4½ years old when she lost her first mother, the foundation of her life.

She was deeply affected and hurt in three areas of her heart: her mom’s passing evoked her childhood memories of separation and being abandoned; she experienced a loss of self-confidence and plunged into the darkness of personal insecurity and melancholy, as well as being enveloped by the shadowy fear of death. Thérèse’s joy, spontaneity, playfulness and smiles disappeared, as her hyper-sensitivity heightened the

pain of these issues. She needed healing. They all realized they had lost their powerful mother.

The two youngest girls jumped into the arms of their oldest sisters: Celine into Marie’s and Thérèse into Pauline’s – each saying, “Will you be my mother?” For the next 5+ years, Pauline would emerge as Thérèse’s third mother, who deeply influenced her growth, education and maturity. Pauline brought needed discipline. Her dad moved the family to live in Lisieux, where his brother-in-law lived and had family for support with his five girls.

Pauline and Thérèse bonded closely and promised to always be there for one another. She blossomed and was smiling, enjoying life again with Pauline’s special love and careful direction. Eventually, Pauline talked with her dad, Thérèse and the family about becoming a Carmelite Nun. With changes beginning to happen, it was arranged that Celine and Thérèse would start going to the nearby Abbey School, instead of continuing to be homeschooled by their older sisters. This was a shock to Thérèse, who did not ingratiate herself with her classmates. On Oct. 2, 1882, Pauline entered the Lisieux Carmel. When Thérèse came home from the Abbey school, she was shocked to find that Pauline was not there anymore. She knew Pauline was becoming a Carmelite Nun, but she did not understand that it meant she no longer lived at home. This kicked off an emotional obsession in Thérèse; another mother loss; it ungrounded her.

Their weekly visits to the Carmel, Pauline, now Sr. Agnes, was behind the grill and there was little contact or notice. Despondent, Thérèse became physically ill, started having hysterical episodes, nervous trembling and enormous anxiety. She seemed to be self-destructing, suffering hallucinations and refusing to eat. In some ways, it was a complete physical and emotional collapse, so devastated was she by the intense mother wound!

Everyone was praying for her, as death seemed imminent. On the Feast

of Pentecost, Sunday, May 13, 1883, everyone was gathered around her bed praying to the statue of Our Lady of Victory, to whom she had been dedicated to on the day of her Baptism. Thérèse in her own words had a miraculous experience:

“All of a sudden, the Blessed Virgin appeared beautiful to me, so beautiful that never had I seen anything so attractive, her face was suffused with an ineffable benevolence and tenderness, but what penetrated to the very depths of my soul was the ravishing smile of the Blessed Virgin. At that moment, all my pain disappeared.”

Her sister Marie remarked that Thérèse was radiant staring at the statue – she seemed to be in ecstasy for four or five minutes. Thérèse was healed – and all rejoiced.

A message was sent to Pauline at the Carmel that Thérèse was cured – and an immediate visit was quickly arranged for her to see Pauline. All the Nuns in the Carmel came to the visiting room, behind the grill, responding to the good news they had been praying about for many months.

Pauline (Sister Agnes) asked her many questions to see if the cure was real or just another hallucination. All Thérèse would say was: “Her radiant smile went to the depths of my soul and all my pain disappeared.”

Wanting more information, some of the Nuns asked her questions to see if it was legitimate. But they were superficial questions about what Mary was wearing, and all she could say was: “I don’t know – all I know is that she smiled at me and her radiant smile went to the depths of my soul.” Pauline and the other Nuns did not believe her. So Thérèse left the visit without receiving the affirmation and confirmation she was hoping for. Don’t we all hope for affirmation and confirmation when we have powerful, significant, mysterious experiences? She had to learn to trust her mystical experience and trust the heavenly healing happening within her. So much of her faith and our challenge is to trust our experiences of God, even

without the confirmation of others. “Trust God” seems to be one of Thérèse’s constant inspirations.

The healing by Our Lady of the Smile was a manifestation of the Divine Feminine. Her core wound was a mother wound, so God had to heal her in a maternal way. God comes to us the way and where we need to be healed. Some people are so focused on the male image of God that we miss the many ways God comes to us. No human image can fully reveal the Divine. Isn’t that the focus of the First and Second Commandments!

Thérèse did not or could not short-circuit the process. She had to let the darkness and pain fully be experienced so that it could teach her the lessons of surrender and trust in Divine Mercy – and become the compassion of God. We have to trust God’s healing because God knows us better than we know ourselves. I remember needing healing of my back at my first spinal surgery. It finally came, but the real healing I experienced was healing my insecure ego and need to be messianic and control everything – learning that life and good things happen even I was not there to control or energize – to trust others and God working in and through them also.

Thérèse was named after Carmelite St. Teresa of Avila, but she is much more like St. Teresa’s Carmelite partner, St. John of the Cross and his dark nights of the senses and soul. She lived through and learned from darkness.

Thérèse’s life was changed. This healing and renewed joy of God’s presence triggered so many more healings in her: of scrupulosity, of the Jansenistic fear of an angry God, the narcissism that draws us into being the center of the world. She was freed and her life was open to the merciful and loving God who loved her and awakened her to the goodness of others. The negative energy that judges self and others was disappearing. She learned to accept and love life as God gifted her each moment and breath. Our Lady of the Smile had touched and healed the depths of her tormented soul.

In the process of trusting and allowing this divine healing to be effective, she had to let go of preconceptions and expectations – like allowing her wound and pain to distort and destroy. She had to trust a mystical experience she could not explain and was not understandable or respected by others.

There is a great psychological and theological truth: If we don’t let the wounds of our life transform us, we will transmit them to others. Our woundedness becomes the demonic within us causing havoc, chaos, violence, pain and further separation. Untransformed pain causes grievance and we scapegoat others to blame.

Jesus taught us this in His life, suffering death and resurrection. “Father, forgive them, they know not what they are doing!”

Thérèse had to trust God’s mercy, love and presence amidst experiencing abandonment. God could fill her and embrace her with passionate love.

Thérèse trusted the Radiant Divine Smile Who healed her depths and transformed her soul. She developed her “little way of confidence and trust” – and learned to love everyone, even those who irritated her. She presumed it was Jesus all the time. She became the smile she experienced to brighten the world – as she had brightened our lives.

So, as followers of Jesus and friends of the Little Flower, let us honestly become more aware of the wounds of our lives and how they affect us; look honestly at the areas of emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, relational, and social pain, where we need healing to be whole, healthy and holy. These are what God wants to heal, and we need to forgive and let go.

God is a healing and forgiving God. St. Thérèse experienced great healing and forgiving conversion in her life. Let us allow both Jesus and Thérèse to define and energize us to be the smile our world desperately needs. “The Kingdom of Heaven is within us.” Radiant smiles work miracles! 🌹

# Giving hope

look what's happening

Dear Readers,

In response to Father Bob's inspiring article "Blessed Are the Merciful-Graced Moments" from our Spring 2024 edition, Father Bob received a moving letter from T.J.D., a lifelong Catholic and medical scientist. Father Bob would like to share with you some of her words about how his message of mercy and compassion has touched her heart and possibly some others who have felt misunderstood and alienated.

Warm regards,  
Mary T. Lambert

Hello Father Bob,

*I've just finished reading your article, "Blessed Are the Merciful-Graced Moments," in the Spring 2024 edition of Between Friends, and I must say, wow and double wow! I've waited many years to hear someone from the Church express exactly what you wrote.*

*I'm a lifelong Catholic, and there's much I love about the Church. However, the rigid "black and white" has often left me feeling misunderstood and alienated.*

*As a medical scientist who believes in God and our Blessed Mother, I've always felt a connection to St. Teresa of Avila, my patron saint. However, until reading your article, I never really related to St. Thérèse. She often seemed too good to be true, almost mythical in her serenity and patience.*

*Your insight into St. Thérèse's belief in God's overwhelming mercy, even to the point of making her human to me for the first time.*

*As someone who has spent many years studying the human brain and its impact on behavior, I know that people's actions are influenced by numerous complex factors. Your message echoes what Jesus Himself stated: only God knows what's in our hearts. Who are we to judge others? We all need God's mercy.*

*I'm profoundly grateful for giving hope to many burdened by guilt and inspired us to believe in our own self-worth. You are a shining example of God's love.*

*Thank God for the Society of the Little Flower, for the Carmelites, and for people like you!*

*Sincerely, T.J.D. 🌹*

# Praying with the *saints of Autumn*

During October, we celebrate some significant feast days: St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus (1), Guardian Angels (2), St. Francis of Assisi (4), Our Lady of the Rosary (7), St. Teresa of Avila (15), St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (16), St. Luke (18), Sts. Simon and Jude (28).

Each saint reflects some particular aspect of God for us; their lives are intended to encourage us, guide us and inspire us to live for God. In the following we pay close attention to two our very own St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus.

## St. Thérèse's of the Child Jesus

Thérèse loved the saints and wanted to be one. She wanted to be a missionary, yet knew God was calling her to the cloister. Instead of just dreaming about being a missionary saint, she allowed God to form her as he wanted. So, first, she submitted to God's plan for her life.

Then, as she entered into a more mature spiritual life, she realized how little and helpless she was to imitate the great saints, as she saw them: Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. So she asked Jesus' arms to be her elevator, to lift her up to God, the Father.

In a very simple, child-like, humble spirit, she kept asking God for help, as a child would ask a loving parent. And God did not fail her! Her trust became so unbounding that, on her death bed at 24, when she was corrected for an irritable response, instead of falling into understandable self-pity, she just rejoiced: "O, another opportunity to ask forgiveness and rely on the mercy of God!" Her path to sanctity became known as the "little way." She showed how accessible true holiness can be for each one of us.

**Pause and reflect:** How can you grow in child-like obedience to God? During October, ask St. Thérèse to help that you, too, might follow her example.

## Spiritual exercises:

*Ponder these Scripture passages:*

### Matthew 18:1-4

*"At that time, the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, 'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' "*

### John 14:15-21

*"If you love me you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." 🌸*

... let that grace



# carry us.

**As I reflect on St. Thérèse for this edition of *Between Friends*, I can't help but feel sad and overwhelmed by everything that's happening in the world. So much pain and suffering. So much darkness. So much war and civil unrest. So much poverty. So many people fleeing their countries to survive ... to have a chance at life. Many dying in their plight for freedom. It's so easy to get discouraged. We must never lose hope. We pray for healing.**

I look around our own beautiful city of Niagara Falls, Canada, and witness so much sadness every day. Yes, there is a homeless problem that has escalated since the onset of COVID-19. There are many drug problems. There are so many persons with mental illness left to fend for themselves on the streets. An increase in crime. Thank heavens we see a ray of hope when the community pulls together to help those in need. Our own little parish church does so much to assist the local programs that feed the poor, and help the homeless – even meeting them on the street. With the increase in the cost of everything, so many families are struggling to make ends meet. It's so easy to get discouraged. We must never lose hope. We pray for healing.

Many evenings I walk about our parish gardens, watching for new blooms. I'm always uplifted when new life bursts forth on the plants. This week, between rain showers, during a brutal heat wave, I found myself standing before Mary's statue in the garden. I noticed, for the first time, a peaceful smile on Mary's face. Surrounding her were lavender Rose of Sharons, lilies, a multitude of pink hydrangea, and black-eyed Susans. It was such a joy. It was healing and hopeful! A little oasis of peace. And that's what we all need, healing, hope and peace.

When I looked at Mary's statue, I immediately thought of St. Thérèse, and her powerful healing experience at the age of 10. Thérèse had been through so much loss and pain. Now she was going through an unknown illness that affected her both physically and emotionally. Her sister Pauline had left for the convent. She was one of Thérèse's mothers. It was devastating for her. The family thought Thérèse would die from this mysterious illness. Her sisters brought a statue of Mary (Our Lady of Victory) into her room, and desperately prayed for healing. Thérèse looked upon the statue and saw Mary smiling down upon her. In Thérèse's words, "Suddenly the statue seemed to come to life and grow beautiful, with a divine beauty ... the expression of Our Lady's face was sweet, tender, and compassionate; but what touched me to the very depths of my soul was her gracious smile. Then, all my pain vanished, two big tears started to my eyes and fell silently." She was healed. Praise God.



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

Life wasn't easy for Thérèse. She had many struggles in her childhood, her teen years and in the convent. She had many dark moments, but she never gave up. She persevered. How? She threw herself into the merciful arms of Jesus. She found God's grace in everything. She knew that the goodness, love, and mercy of God was always with her, drawing her into intimacy. She was totally dependent on God. She teaches us to never stop praying, and to surrender everything to God. She did, right to the end. And she continues her promise of spending her Heaven doing good upon earth.

We all struggle in our lives. We all need healing from something. Many of us hold back forgiveness, or fail to accept forgiveness from others. This stunts our spiritual growth, chokes us like weeds in a garden, and prevents us from loving as Jesus loved. It prevents us from living life fully and freely. We need to open ourselves to God's grace, like Thérèse, and let that grace carry us. I offer this little prayer for all of us:

*May Mary's smile  
filled with grace,  
send light and healing into our lives.  
May St. Thérèse,  
filled with simplicity and beauty,  
send showers of healing roses  
to lighten the burdens and darkness  
of the world.  
May our God of grace,  
carry us through the storms of life.  
And may we let go of our own wills,  
and allow God's will to be the guiding  
force in our lives. Amen. 🌹*

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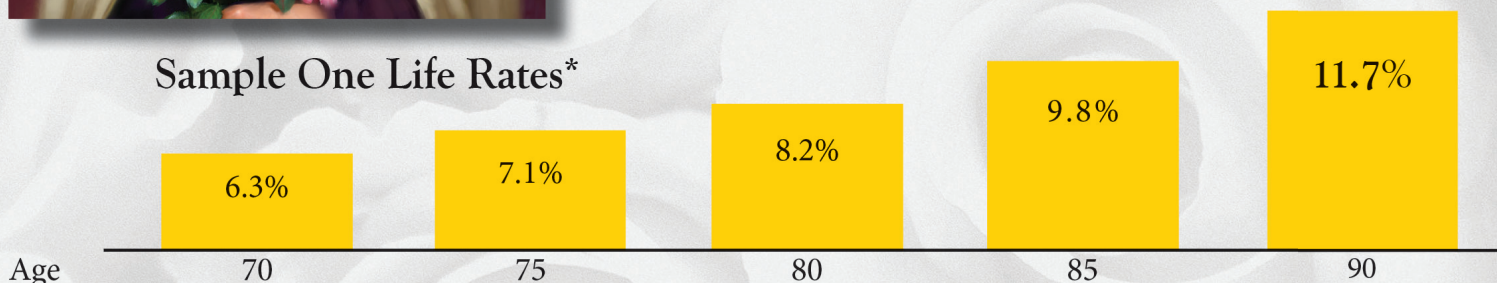
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