

APOSTOLATE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

FALL 2023

VOL. 91 NO. 2



SEASONS OF CARMEL

ST. THÉRÈSE & ST. JOHN

*Understanding St. John of the Cross &
implementing his teaching in our lives*

RESTORATION NEWS

*Evolving the Historic
Preservation Master Plan*

A WAY OF BEING

*Simplicity, Humility,
and the Little Way*

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IN THIS ISSUE . . .

3 LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

4 ST. THÉRÈSE AND ST. JOHN:
THE LITTLE WAY AND THE *TODO Y NADA*
Br. John-Mary of Jesus Crucified, OCD

6 ABRADING GRACE
Tim Bete, OCDS

7 A JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE
Elisabeth Heredia

10 SIMPLICITY, HUMILITY, AND THE LITTLE WAY
Fr. Emmanuel Nnadozie, OCD

14 THE SEASON OF THÉRÈSE

16 RESTORATION NEWS
Paul Garro

18 ON THE COVER: THÉRÈSE TO RECEIVE
THE CARMELITE HABIT
Theresa Doyle-Nelson



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Established as part of our first apostolate in 1920, The Little Flower Magazine reached over 100,000 subscribers by 1923. The friars soon realized that our little delegation in the U.S. now had a mission: to spread devotion to Thérèse, to prepare for her canonization in 1925, and to build a national shrine in her honor.

Today, the Apostolate of the Little Flower magazine carries on the mission by serving as the official publication of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio, Texas. This magazine is wholly dependent on you, the readers and devotees of St. Thérèse.

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DEAR FRIENDS,

Autumn has always been my favorite time of the year . . . The arrival of cooler temperatures after the long hot summer, playing outside on brisk, sunny days as a child, football games, planting fall flowers and vegetables, and, of course, the occurrence of so many beautiful Carmelite feast days.

Although fall officially begins on September 21, the feast of St. Thérèse on October 1 feels to me like the “real” beginning of the season. This year’s novena and feast of our patroness, St. Thérèse, has now come and gone. Our Mass of the Roses on October 1 was a grace-filled experience for all who participated. 820 of the faithful attended this Mass, over which presided Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller. Auxiliary Bishop Gary Janak also assisted, with numerous priest concelebrants, along with seminarians from Assumption Seminary who served alongside the basilica’s regular altar servers. Seeing this Mass attended by such a cross section of young and old, regular parishioners and first-time visitors, all devotees of St. Thérèse, witnessed to the wide appeal of our patroness’ message of God’s merciful love. Archbishop Gustavo referred to the Little Flower’s relatability during his homily, and the diversity of the congregation for this celebration certainly gave witness to this aspect of our saint’s popularity.

Just two weeks after the celebration of our patroness, St. Thérèse, we celebrate the feast day of her patroness, St. Teresa of Jesus, foundress of the Discalced Carmelites and, like the Little Flower, a doctor of the Church. We are blessed at the basilica with a series of very unique and beautiful stained-glass windows depicting the life and spirit of St. Teresa.

And finally, before winter officially begins on December 21, we get to celebrate the feast day of St. John of the Cross, the first Discalced Carmelite friar and, like St. Teresa and St. Thérèse, a doctor of the Church. His life and spirit are also displayed in a series of stained-glass windows on the north side of the basilica. This mystical doctor of the Church has inspired many saints, including Pope St. John Paul II – another fall feast day! (October 22)

I pray that this issue of our Apostolate Magazine will help you discover more about Carmelite Spirituality as we celebrate the Carmelites of autumn! In our Carmelite saints, we see fulfilled Jesus’ promise that in those who believe in him, a fountain of living water will spring up and overflow, the grace of the Holy Spirit. May we all drink of this refreshing spring that comes to us through St. Thérèse, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and all Carmelite saints.

Fraternally in Christ,



Rev. Gregory Ross, OCD
Superior



CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

ST. THÉRÈSE AND ST. JOHN: THE LITTLE WAY AND THE *TODO Y NADA* THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS PT. 1 BR. JOHN-MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED, OCD

Community of the Carmel of Lisieux, June 1896. Thérèse stands embracing the cross.

The vast distance between our lives and the life of St. John of the Cross means it is difficult to know him well. Scholars admit that we have lost considerable portions of his writing, including most of his letters. And even if we did have all of his writing, John of the Cross lived nearly half a millennium ago, and 16th-century Spain was significantly different than 21st-century America. It can be easy for us to misinterpret John, being so far removed from his teaching and context. How then can we truly understand the spiritual teaching of St. John of the Cross?

I believe the answer comes in the form of a little girl from France. A young girl who would enter the cloister of Carmel at age fifteen only to die nine years later, completely unknown to the wider world. Yes, I'm talking about St. Thérèse. I believe that St. Thérèse is the greatest modern witness to and teacher of the spirituality of St. John of the Cross. She lives his spiritual patrimony in a concrete way in a context a little closer to our own. Her life, then, becomes a lens through which we can better understand the teaching of John and how to implement it in our own lives.

Looking closely at St. Thérèse's writing, it is apparent that she had a deep understanding of the spiritual teaching of St. John of the Cross. She quotes him over one hundred times explicitly and references his writing many other times. Nearly half of her quotations come

from *The Spiritual Canticle*, often coming from the poem itself. Thérèse also shows great familiarity with *The Living Flame of Love*. It is uncertain whether Thérèse would have read the commentaries *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* or *The Dark Night*, but we can nonetheless see the teaching contained in these works lived clearly in her life. It seems that Thérèse had committed much of

*St. Thérèse is the
greatest modern
witness to and teacher
of the spirituality of
St. John of the Cross*

John's poetry to memory and that she was greatly impacted by it in her own writing, often using similar images and terminology without explicitly quoting him.

Perhaps even more important than examining the extent to which Thérèse was knowledgeable of the writing and teaching of John of the Cross is to note her personal relationship with him. At a time when many viewed him as a cold, rigoristic Spaniard, she often called him her father and referred to herself as his daughter. There

was a real spiritual, paternal relationship between St. John of the Cross and St. Thérèse. Interestingly, these years when Thérèse really began to dive into the teaching of her spiritual father, her biological father was becoming gravely ill. In 1889 Louis Martin suffered two paralyzing strokes rendering him unable to attend Thérèse’s profession of vows. Just as in the passing of Thérèse’s mother she had found solace in the maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so now Thérèse was finding comfort in the spiritual paternity of St. John of the Cross at the moment when her biological father was distanced from her. For Thérèse, John of the Cross was more than a spiritual teacher, he was her spiritual father and role model.

We can see the comfort and familiarity that Thérèse had with John of the Cross in the fact that she was not afraid to quote John’s writing and change some of the words to fit her own situation. For example, one of the first times that Thérèse references John of the Cross is in a letter she writes to her sister Marie, “*Console Jesus, make Him loved by souls. Jesus is sick, and we must state that the sickness of love is healed only through love!*” (Letter 109). The line from John of the Cross reads, “*For the sickness of love is not cured except by your very presence and image*” (*Spiritual Canticle*, 11.12). That Thérèse’s letter is not a word-for-word quote means that she is likely recalling this phrase from memory, showing the extent to which she had already become familiar with John’s writing. But even more significant is the fact that Thérèse felt the freedom to reverse the roles that John had assigned in the quotation. In *The Spiritual Canticle* it is the soul that is sick with love, but Thérèse explains



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Window (detail)

For Thérèse, John of the Cross was more than a spiritual teacher, he was her spiritual father and role model.

that it is Jesus who is sick for the love of her sister Marie. Jesus yearns for our love just as we yearn for His. This is by no means a bastardization of the meaning of John of the Cross, but a creative and rather ingenious reversal of his meaning.

St. Thérèse’s spirituality is, at its root, the same as St. John’s, but expressed in a completely original way. This was so needed in Thérèse’s time, and in our own, which is so far removed from 16th-century Spain. Thérèse clothes the spirituality of John in a way that makes it more relevant and palatable to our modern times. One way she does this is by using different imagery: an elevator rather than a steep mountain, flowers rather than darkness. She also makes John’s spirituality more attractive by using different terminology: abandonment rather than detachment, littleness rather than nothing. But at its core, these spiritualities are essentially the same. St. Thérèse teaches a spiritual path of complete renunciation and interior asceticism. St. John of the Cross teaches a spiritual path of mercy and love.

The Little Way is simply another way of stating the teaching of John of the Cross on the *todo* and the *nada*, the all and the nothing. He writes, “*To reach satisfaction in all, desire satisfaction in nothing. To come to possess all, desire the possession of nothing. To arrive at being all, desire to be nothing. To come to the knowledge of all, desire the knowledge of nothing*” (*The Ascent*, 1.13.11). What John is saying here is not that we should reject the things that God has given to us, but rather that we should be free from our attachments to all things that are not God Himself. Our satisfaction, our possessions, our knowledge, are not God, and when we make gods of them, they keep us from being in union with God Himself. We cannot love both God and mammon. What

John is teaching is a way of interior freedom that opens us to a loving relationship with God.

*The Little Way of
Saint Thérèse is the
way of complete
detachment and
humility in order to
be lifted up by God.*

Blessed Marie-Eugene explains of St. Thérèse that “*at first her little way of confidence and perfect abandonment seems in complete opposition to the harsh and austere way of St. John of the Cross. Her little way presents itself as sweet and easy. But Sr. Thérèse of the Child Jesus supports her doctrine of perfect confidence and total abandonment upon the nothing of John of the Cross. It is there that she found the law of complete detachment and from this perfect detachment ensues perfect hope and perfect confidence*” (See *John and Thérèse: Flames of Love*, 29). The Little Way of Saint Thérèse is the way of complete detachment and humility in order to be lifted up by God. This is the same message given to us by John of the Cross. Thérèse herself explains the connection in a letter to her cousin: “*Marie, if you are nothing, you must not forget that Jesus is All so you must lose your little nothingness in His infinite All and think only of this uniquely lovable All. . .*” (Letter 109).



Br. John-Mary of Jesus Crucified is a Discalced Carmelite Friar of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Province. He entered the order in 2015 and made his solemn vows in 2021. He studied theology at Boston College, specializing in the spirituality of St. John of the Cross. Br. John-Mary is involved in a variety of ministries promoting Carmelite Spirituality including giving retreats and spiritual conferences, offering spiritual direction, and writing on Carmelite topics. Br. John-Mary is also the producer of the podcast CarmelCast.

ABRADING GRACE

Tim Bete

My persistence in prayer
did not wear down God,
as did the widow with the judge,
but rather wore down me,
slowly weathering away my will,
like water coursing over rock--

at first an imperceptible groove,
then eroding into a great ravine,
until I could no longer remember
for what I'd been praying.

I suppose it had been important
at one time, but now my fatigue

causes me to rest in prayer,
too exhausted to bother God
with today's trivialities;

He does the heavy lifting
and I do the accepting,
which is what He'd planned all along.



Tim Bete, OCDS, has two collections of poetry, *The Raw Stillness of Heaven* and *Wanderings of an Ordinary Pilgrim*, both of which are available on Amazon.com. He is a member of the Our Mother of Good Counsel Secular Discalced Carmelite Community in Dayton, OH.



The train station to Lisieux.

Mrs. Herlinda Guerra, a lifetime parishioner of Little Flower, at the age of 95, this year completed a pilgrimage to Lisieux, fulfilling a dream to visit the home of St. Thérèse, who has played a major role throughout her life and that of her family. We at the Apostolate were excited to sit down and talk with her about her trip and her history with the Basilica.

Herlinda: I've been at Little Flower Parish since I was two years old. My mother died when I was born, so I was raised by my aunt, Maria Garcia, although I called her my mother. She raised me in Little Flower Parish for my whole life. I only left for a couple of years when I got married, but I came back as soon as I could.

Since Little Flower has been your parish for your whole life, could you tell me how Carmelite spirituality has influenced your life?

All I can remember is Little Flower, ever since I was a little girl; it's all I ever knew. St. Thérèse has always been in my life. I remember as a little girl, when I was kneeling down in church, I was supposed to be imitating her.

When I was 4 or 5 years old, my appendix ruptured. My mother called an ambulance to take me to the hospital, but they wouldn't accept me because my mother didn't have any money. She begged and begged them, but they kept saying, "We're sorry, but you don't have any insurance or anything, so we can't take you." And me

dying in the ambulance! But in those days, that's how it was; either you had the money, or...hit the road! Right away, Mother thought of the Carmelite Fathers. She called them and Father Edward Soler answered. She asked him, couldn't you do something? Because I needed immediate attention. He went up and talked to the nuns, asking them to pray, and sure enough, before long, they accepted me into the hospital. If it hadn't been for that, and for the prayers, I would have died. I'm so very grateful to them, grateful to Father Edward, and my mother was grateful. She was very very thankful, that's why she stayed for so long. My mother was a talented little lady, but she stayed with the Carmelite Fathers. She was offered a job in Spain, but she turned it down to stay with the Fathers. She was very devoted to them because of what had happened to me.

Fr. Edward . . . he was just a little bitty Father! [laughs] When he would say the sermon, he would close his eyes, and as kids, we would think, "Oh-oh, he fell asleep!" He must have been thinking, but you know how kids think: "His eyes are closed, and he's quiet, so he must have fallen asleep!" He was one of the first priests to arrive, he and Fr. Louis Scagnelli. And then there was Fr. Salvador, he was the organist.

I went to Little Flower School. In those days, they had a high school, so I graduated from there in 1946, a long time ago! Then my daughters went to Little Flower School, and my daughter was in the last graduating class from there.

Tell me about your years with the Apostolate?

My best friend Margie and I would go after school and put in about 2 hours at the Apostolate every day. After we graduated, I worked there for a couple of years and then moved on to some other work for a while. However, my mother worked for the Fathers since she was a young woman and never left. She was there for about 55 years. And I myself stayed a long time, because I went back and stayed almost 40 years. So that's my "playground," everything was there!

So many years, both you and your mother working at Little Flower!

At one point we were both working for the Basilica at the same time! I was in the Apostolate and she was in the office. We didn't have the store at that time. What is now the store used to be the Apostolate office. Actually, my mother never worked in the building where the office is now. The whole time she was there, the office was up those steps where the Fathers were. All the old paperwork is in her handwriting. She had beautiful handwriting. It's proof that she was there; all the papers from way back are in her writing.

Now this little lady, Ms. [Adeline] O'Brien, she deserves everything, because she's the one that started the Apostolate. All the priests knew her as "Tillie," because there used to be a cartoon in the Sunday paper of a nicely dressed lady who worked in an office, "Tillie the Toiler." So, since Ms. O'Brien always had her hair done



Herlinda Guerra (far right) with her mother (third from left) and Tillie O'Brien (second from left) at the Apostolate Office

and her best dress on, they called her Tillie, after that cartoon.

Ms. O'Brien worked hard to get the Apostolate out to everyone. We had people from all over the United States and even outside of the United States receiving our Apostolate magazine. It was very well known. And all because of her, all her hard work. She was really the driving force behind it.

When you worked in the Apostolate office, what would you do? What were your duties?

Typing! Typing all the articles that were going to come out, everything that was going to be in the next issue of the Apostolate. And I also remember that sometimes Fr. Louis Scagnelli would come over and bring a big box of papers. I wasn't really supposed to be typing for him, but he would say, "Do you think you could type this for me?" And how could I say no?

You went to Lisieux recently, can you tell me about your trip? When did you go?

It was this year! We went for a week this past April. We stayed in Paris, in a neighborhood called Trocadéro.

When you traveled to France, was there anything that surprised or excited you?

Just to think that the Little Flower lived in France, that I was going to the country where she lived, was enough to excite me! And we were surprised at how much we loved being in Paris. It was wonderful to see the Eiffel Tower lit up at night. It sparkles! It gave me goosebumps. We also were able to visit different places in Paris, like the Louvre and Sainte-Chapelle, where Our Lord's crown of thorns had been at one time.

But of course, St. Thérèse was the main reason for our trip. When we went to Lisieux, we took the train. As you ride over there, you see all these beautiful green fields, the flowers, and everything beautiful in nature. Just think, that was what she saw all the time!

Our goal was to see her home [Les Buissonnets], the convent where she lived, and the Basilica, and we were able to see everything. It was a shame, though, that we didn't get to see inside of her home; they were remodeling or renovating it. It's closed for two years! So

I took a picture with my hand on the doorknob, just to be able to say, “I almost did it!” We went up the walk leading to the house, and there was a little door where she would always go in. I thought, she must have gone in and out this door so many times as a little girl; when I put my hand on the doorknob, I could almost feel her there.

Then we went to the convent where she stayed. They had some tables set out with her original writings, her pen, everything! They had a little museum there with wax figures from significant moments in her life. We also got to see the room where she lived in the convent. They had a beautiful reliquary under glass, and I got to touch it.



Herlinda Guerra at the door of *Les Buissonets*, the childhood home of St. Thérèse

What about the Basilica? How was that?

I was so surprised at how large it was!

What was it like to finally be in the Basilica?

It was a feeling you can't explain. You really feel the holiness in that space. As you're walking down the long hallway, you feel like you're walking into part of Heaven. It was beautiful. When we walked in, there was a Mass



Herlinda Guerra makes her way down the central aisle at the Basilica of St. Thérèse in Lisieux

ending.

Her mother and father are buried in the crypt of the Basilica. I thought to myself, “That couple, did they know they had a Saint for a daughter?” And they themselves were Saints too!

If you had to pick one moment as the best moment of the trip, what would it be?

I sat in the little chapel with the statue of her, the Tomb Chapel. By the way, the one at Little Flower Basilica looks exactly like it! There was nobody there, everyone else had gone to look at other things. So, I was in this chapel by myself, just myself and the Little Flower. And as I sat there, I thought over and over, “I’m sitting next to the Little Flower!” I was in awe. I told her, “There were so many years between your life and mine, but here we are, right next to each other. You’re right there!” I felt so deeply connected to her at that moment.

*All photos in this article courtesy of the Guerra family.



Elisabeth Heredia resides in San Antonio, Texas. Her deep connection to Carmelite spirituality originated from her time as a parishioner at Little Flower Basilica, where she now works as a member of the Administration Office.

SIMPLICITY, HUMILITY, AND THE LITTLE WAY

ST. THÉRÈSE FOR CONTEMPORARY TIMES PT. 2:

FR. EMMANUEL JAVERT NNADOZIE, OCD

There are many aspects to the understanding of the meaning of the Little Way in the life and writings of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus. St. Thérèse's spiritual attitude to the Christian life could be characterized as a "spirituality of imperfection." Whereas she does not develop a science of progress and development in the world, nevertheless her life and teaching inspire us about another kind of science (the science and the culture of love) that is fundamental to any authentic development of the human person which cannot be constructed merely by powerful external mechanisms operated only according to human political and economic designs. St. Thérèse's message is a communicated experience that has its inspiration from the Heart of God Himself, addressed to the heart of individuals and communities, practiced "in the heart of the Church" and in the midst of the society. This is where Thérèse found her vocation as she stated in the Story of a Soul:

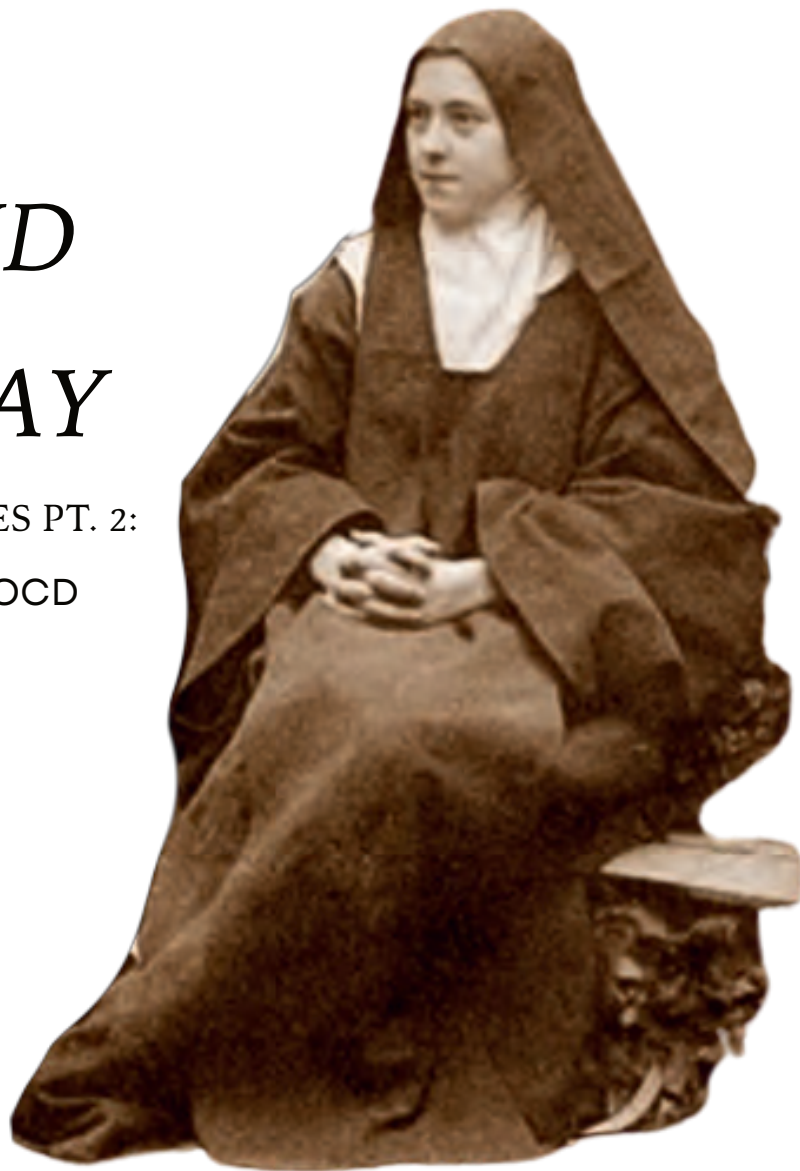
*Yes, I have found my place in the Church,
and it is You, O my God, who have given
me this place; in the heart of the Church,
my Mother, I shall be Love.*

1

Elsewhere in her autobiography she added:

*If love were ever to be extinct, apostles
would not preach the Gospel, and martyrs
would not shed their blood.*

2



Thérèse in the courtyard of Lourdes (detail), November 1894

Without presuming any precision on the matter, we may subsume the major ideas under the following headings under the Science of Divine Love:

- *It is an attitude.*
- *It is an experience.*
- *It is a way of being.*
- *It is a way of understanding.*
- *It is a way of describing and conveying her spiritual trajectory.*

It is all these together taken as a whole. It must be understood that the reality of it is like a seamless garment – to avoid the danger of a certain reductionism: i.e., reducing it only to an idea (or doctrine) and not putting it in the context of her total experience of the spiritual life. Only for the sake of clarity do we analyze its separate contents here as follows:

It is an Attitude of Recognizing Her “Littleness” And Imperfection

Thérèse was a young woman who owned up, in a very deep way, her experience of powerlessness and the reality of human brokenness. She suffered not only great physical pain during her short life, but also terrible mental anguish coming from her sensitive personality. Persistent experiences of weakness and imperfection put her in the position either to despair of wholeness and holiness or to surrender herself entirely to the Lord.

Realizing this situation and the truth that God is not concerned about the limitations of being human, but about love, Thérèse began in 1893 to abandon herself more and more to the secret, sanctifying action of the Lord as her letter to her sister Celine on July 6, 1893, indicated.³ Accepting her limitation with humility, Thérèse felt called by the Lord to become little (Prov. 9:4) and endeavored from that moment onward to confide in the Lord and to place herself unconditionally in His arms. The arms of the Incarnate Word would carry her and fill her with grace, love and sanctity, “just like a mother caresses her child”. Thérèse perceived that from that moment she must make herself littler and trust more in the maternal love of God. In fact, from the Winter of 1893, Thérèse embarked on her Little Way. She walks along this way as if in obscurity, without knowing how Jesus was converting her efforts into spiritual progress.³

It is an Experience of God’s Love for Little Ones

That God shows love by mercy and forgiveness is a truth that St. Thérèse knew from experience. She shows us by her own life how the dynamism of a sincere acknowledgement of one’s imperfection results in confidence in the Divine Mercy, and in trust in the saving and sanctifying love of God.

From the age of 9 years, Thérèse had always wished to be a great Saint. But this great ideal was to be realized through a “hidden path” where mighty works would not be needed. This spiritual perspective of her vocation led her to the hidden life of Carmel. There, Thérèse made generous effort to climb the mountain of love, resolving to conquer the palm of martyrdom since “*nothing is too much to suffer to gain the palm...*”⁴ even conquering sanctity at the point of the sword; “*loving Jesus more than he had ever been loved*”.⁵ In this project, however,

St. Thérèse’s message is a communicated experience that has its inspiration from the Heart of God Himself

Thérèse found out that she could not match the profiles of the “spiritual heavy weights” (the great saints) on her own resources alone. Compared to them she felt like ‘a grain of sand.’ In view of the immensity of their world and the complexities of their spiritual life she saw herself as ‘a little child’.

In her search for support for her limitations, she discovered “an elevator” – meaning the Lord’s arm of love which would lift her from the doldrums of human limitations to the heights of sanctity. God enlightened her to understand his love for little ones. Two scriptural texts are key to this illumination:

“Whoever is a little one let him come to me”

Proverbs 9:4

And:

“For thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.”

Isaiah 66: 12-13

This discovery was preceded and conditioned by a long search for the path to sanctity:

I searched then in the Scriptures for some sign of this elevator, the object of my desires, and I read these words which came from the mouth of Eternal Wisdom: whoever is a Little One let him come to me. And so, I succeeded. I felt that I had found what I was looking for; and wanting to know, Oh my God, what you

would do to the very little one, who answered your call, I continued my search, and this is what I found: "As one whom a mother caresses, so I will comfort you; you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees, they shall dandle you!" Ah! Never did words more tender and more melodious come to give joy to my soul. The elevator which must raise me to heaven is your arms, O Jesus! And for this I had no need to grow up, but rather I had to remain little and become this more and more. Oh my God, you have surpassed all my expectations, and I want to sing only of your mercies.

6

Thus, God showed her great love: by letting her experience his mercy and by granting her the grace of a more profound conversion of life. In his merciful love, God energized her spiritual path which directed her journey in faith.

It Is a Way of Being: Nurturing Her Relationship to The Child Jesus

St. Thérèse's experience of the paternal and maternal love of God disposed her to see God as a loving Father; and to see herself as a loved child of God. Thus, her way of being Christian was to approach God as a child approaches her parents with open arms and a profound trust. She loved the maternal images for God in the Old Testament and the love of God for us in Jesus Christ. In fact, St. Thérèse once wrote that she could not understand how anyone could be afraid of a God who became a child. Her relationship to the child Jesus emphasizes the humanity of Christ and suggests imbibing a sense of dependence, poverty, trust, and wonder.

St. Thérèse's personal experience and her way of relating with God led her to recognize that God was at the center of her existence as Love. It is her conviction that God initiates our relationship with him; He enables it and nourishes it; we discover it, recognize, and respond to it within the ambience of God's merciful love. Her manner of being manifests an understanding that spiritual growth takes place in this process since a child develops best in an environment of trust, love, forgiveness, and generosity. St. Thérèse believed that the

people of her time lived in too great a fear of God's judgment. The fear was stifling and did not allow people to experience the freedom of being the children of God. Her manner of being radiates a trustful confidence even amid her sufferings.

Her writings, her focus on simplicity, humility, and childlike qualities, is not intended to promote childishness, passivity, immaturity, or a chase after romantic illusions.

A Way of Understanding and Conveying Her Spiritual Journey

For St. Thérèse, therefore, the Little Way is an image that tries to capture her understanding of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, of seeking holiness of life in the ordinary and the everyday things and events of life; accepting the push and pull of the ordinary and the everyday in forging a meaning for authentic sanctity, with the love, trust, confidence, and simplicity that characterizes a child's disposition.

Thus, the Little Way of St. Thérèse represents her image of her spiritual journey, at once humbling and uplifting at the same time. When she comes to write her autobiography in 1895, St. Thérèse, from the very first pages of that work, re-read her whole life from the perspective of Divine Merciful Love to which she offered herself as a victim on June 9, 1895. This Act of Offering is the prayerful consequence drawn from the discovery she made in her spiritual journey. The first paragraphs of this prayer neatly express the precise points contained in her conception of the Little Way:

- *The Desire for Sanctity*
- *The Experience of her own helplessness*
- *Abandonment to the Divine Action, who would be Himself her sanctity*
- *Faith, conviction, and confidence in the Father who has given the Son to be our Savior.*

Basing herself on this foundation of faith in the Merciful Love of God on one hand, and her own experience of helplessness, on the other, Thérèse constructs the bridge of confidence by which God comes to seek and bring her to the heights of sanctity. The second section of her autobiography, dedicated to Sr. Marie of the Sacred Heart, situates the Little Way in its ecclesial context: it is the path to realize the vocation of love in the heart of the Church. It defines the universality of this doctrine and invites all little souls to taste this experience. It enunciates the program of “little things”, the “nothings”, whose value comes from the hand and touch of God. Thérèse cries out, in the Story of a Soul exclaiming:

O Jesus! . . . I feel that if You found a soul weaker and littler than mine, which is impossible, You would be pleased to grant it still greater favors . . . I beg You to cast Your Divine Glance upon a great number of little souls. I beg You to choose a legion of little Victims worthy of Your LOVE!

7

As Fr. John F. Russell, O. Carm. (1995) has pointed out, it might appear childish to suggest “The Little Way” or “Spiritual Childhood” as an appropriate image for the spiritual journey.⁸ In an epoch, like our own, that talks “big” and thinks “big”; in traditions that esteem

sophistication and big projects, the talk about a “Little Way may” not be appreciated. Thus, the ‘Little Way’ associated with St. Thérèse of Lisieux can readily be misunderstood. However, in her writings, her focus on simplicity, humility, and childlike qualities, is not intended to promote childishness, passivity, immaturity, or a chase after romantic illusions. Rather, it points toward a theocentric view of grace: God and God alone, is the author of all grace. God’s grace is more powerful than human strength; His love and mercy is greater than human weakness and imperfection. God’s grace is no less present in small things as in mighty works. However, the recipient of God’s grace cannot be merely a passive observer, but an active participant in the trajectory of the divine dispensation of grace. St. Thérèse’s Little Way gives us some insights into these profound truths.

1. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, (3rd Edition), p. 194. Translated by John Clarke, OCD, Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996.
2. *Ibid.* p. 194
3. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, General Correspondence*, Vol. II, #142. Translated by John Clarke, OCD, Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988.
4. *Ibid.* #55
5. *Ibid.* #74
6. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, (3rd Edition), p. 208. Translated by John Clarke, OCD, Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996.
7. *Ibid.* p. 200
8. John F. Russell, O. Carm. (1995). *St Thérèse of Lisieux and Spiritual Childhood Sicut Parvuli*, Vol. LVII No.1, January 1995.



Fr. Emmanuel Nnadozie, O.C.D., is a Nigerian Carmelite of the Anglo-Irish Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars. In 2022 he completed a doctoral program in counselor education and supervision at St. Mary’s University, San Antonio. He is currently in residence at Little Flower Basilica.

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ILLUMINATING THE BASILICA

THE SEASON OF THÉRÈSE



Seminarian at the 2023 Mass of Roses

The patronage of St. Thérèse over the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower and over the Semi-Province of St. Thérèse, means that within the Semi-Province and at Little Flower Basilica the Feast of St. Thérèse is celebrated as a Solemnity. Thérèse's role as patroness is also reflected by the fact that the Solemn Mass of Roses at Little Flower Basilica on October 1 is only the culmination of a sort of *Season of Thérèse*.

THE LITTLE FLOWER NOVENA

The 2023 celebrations of St. Thérèse kicked off this year with the Novena of sung Masses which are celebrated in preparation for the Solemnity. From September 22 to 30 the Discalced Carmelite Friars lift up their prayers for the intentions of all who ask, this year placing the intentions of near 200 individuals in the Shrine Chapel of Thérèse for the nine days.

The Novena Prayer was originally composed by the Discalced Carmelite Friars of our Province around the time of Thérèse's canonization. In previous years this origin could be noted by the use of phrases in the prayer such as Thérèse having been "raised up in our days." With the 150th anniversary of Thérèse's birth, the opportunity arose to make some small adjustments to the prayer in order to reflect the passage of time since it was first penned.

THE TRANSITUS OF ST. THÉRÈSE

On September 30, the anniversary of the Thérèse's death is commemorated with a special ceremony, the Transit of St. Thérèse. The word "transitus" comes from the Latin, meaning passage or crossing. It is often used in special observances of the death of a saint.

Instituted in 2008, the ceremony commemorates the Thérèse's death of tuberculosis at age 24, narrating her final conversations before her death on Sept. 30, 1897. Just after entering the infirmary on June 9, 1897, Thérèse wrote: "*I am not dying; I am entering a new life.*"

The saint's final months were spent in agony. It was during this time that she spoke of her future: "*I feel that my mission is about to begin, my mission of making others love God as I love Him, my mission of teaching my little way to souls. If God answers my requests, my heaven will be spent on earth up until the end of the world. Yes, I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth.*"

The Transit's vocal reenactment of Thérèse's last conversations and death invites the audience to contemplate her encounter with the Lord through her final words.

THE MASS OF ROSES

The Solemn Mass of Roses hosted annually by the Discalced Carmelite Friars of San Antonio is the largest opportunity to share a glimpse of the Carmelite charism with the faithful. Those who attend the Mass come from across the country, many turning the journey into a into its own pilgrimage.

This year Gustavo García-Siller, Archbishop of San Antonio, along with Bishop Gary Janak and many of the seminarians studying for the priesthood at nearby Assumption Seminary, joined the Discalced Carmelite Friars in celebrating the Mass. Little Flower Basilica also welcomed 820 of the faithful.

As the Solemnity fell of on a Sunday in 2023, the readings of the Mass followed those of the Sunday liturgy. This juxtaposition of the Little Flower with the readings of the Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time could not, however, have been more appropriate. The second reading stating, *"Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves,"* (Phil 2:3), is particularly emblematic of the life Thérèse strove to live.

The close of the Mass includes three elements which have grown into tradition over time:

- The Procession of Thérèse, in which the seminarians and altar servers participated with vigil candles.
- The Shower of Rose Petals, in remembrance of St. Thérèse's promise: *"I will let fall from heaven . . . a shower of roses."*
- The Blessing of the Roses, which are then shared with those who have come to the Mass.

This year the conclusion of the Mass included something new: Before the final blessing, Archbishop Gustavo requested one of the first class relics of St. Thérèse which is housed in the Shrine Chapel. Upon receiving it, he used it to accompany the final blessing, asking for the intercession of St. Thérèse for all those present.



Visit littleflowerbasilica.org/prayer to learn all the ways you can share your intentions with the Discalced Carmelite Friars, such as in the Little Flower Novena, and more.



Discalced Carmelite Friars processing into the celebration of the Transitus



Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD, blessing the roses to be distributed at the Mass of Roses



Seminarians and altar servers in the Procession of St. Thérèse



Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller blesses the assembly with the Relic of St. Thérèse



Attendees receiving blessed roses after the Mass.

RESTORATION NEWS

EVOLVING THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN

Paul Garro

In the introduction to this issue of the Apostolate Magazine, Fr. Gregory reminds us that autumn is a season to discover more about Carmelite Spirituality as we celebrate the feast days of St. Thérèse, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross and all the Carmelite Saints. At Little Flower Basilica, however, one has the opportunity to discover the depths of this contemplative charism throughout every season.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower has come to serve as a major center of Catholic apostolic activity. The work of the local and regional artisans who graced the Shrine with Carmelite stories told in glass, metal, wood, marble, and oils continues to impact thousands of visitors every year. The Basilica's historic and cultural significance as the National Shrine of St. Thérèse of Lisieux can be seen in the Shrine's exquisite spiritual beauty, where the altars, statuary, and artistic representations of roses and crests of the Discalced Carmelite Order combine to serve as a unique St. Thérèse Pilgrimage Destination and locus for the instruction of the Carmelite charism. Proper planning for the future will make certain that these gifts can continue to be shared and taught nationally and, ideally, internationally.

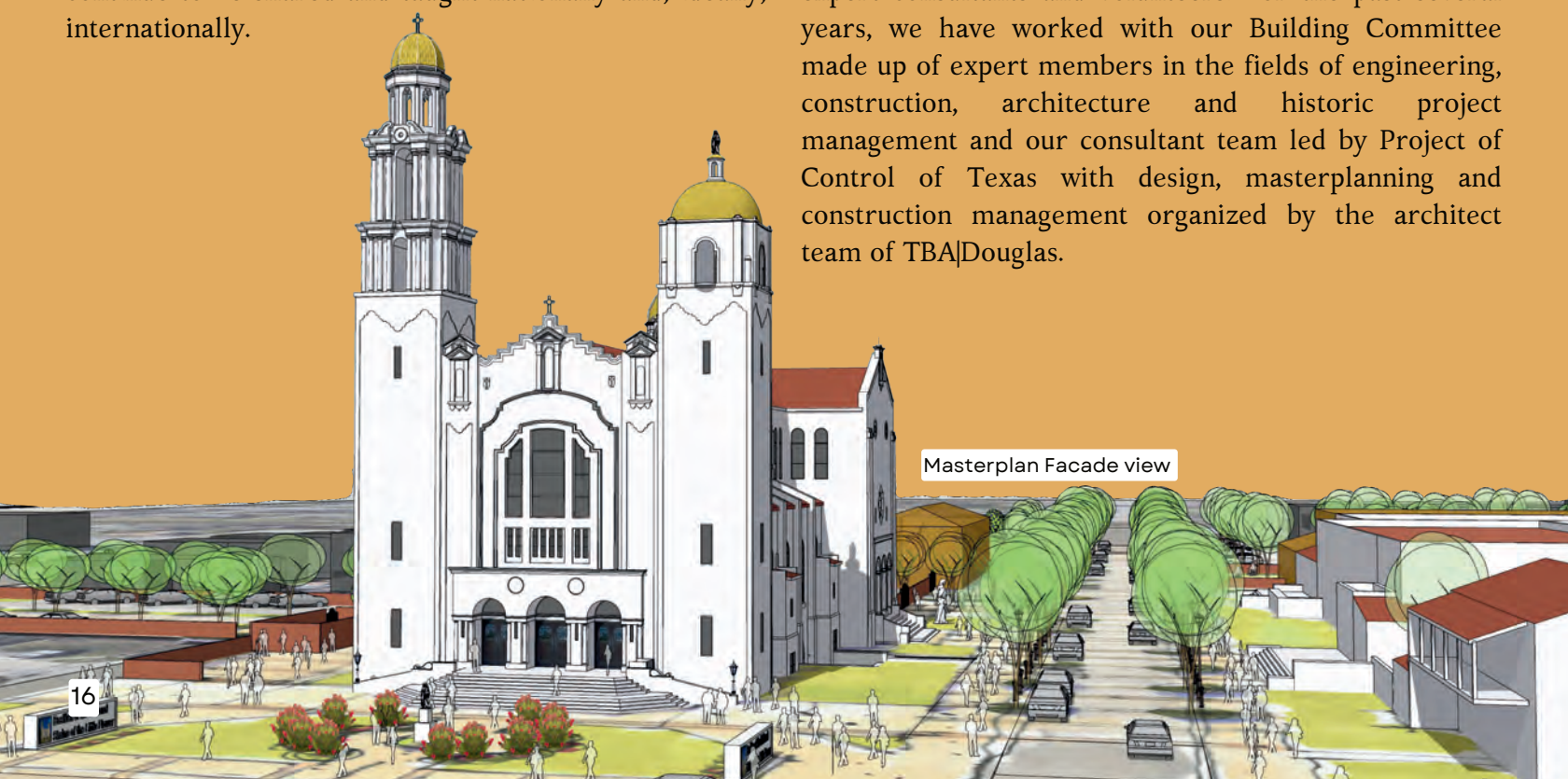
Historic Preservation Master Plan

In 2022, we announced the completion of a Historic Preservation Masterplan for the Basilica Campus along with a 30% Schematic Design Package. The Masterplanning & Programming Process included representation from the Carmelite Friars, staff, parishioners and consultants. The Historical Preservation Masterplan covers the Basilica's greater two block Campus, focusing on these key aspects:

- Stabilization of the Basilica Shrine and Monastery buildings
- Facility programming for the current and future needs of buildings and grounds for Basilica Programs and Administration and Province offices
- Community needs of the friars, with attention to aging friars and future vocations
- Maintenance and sustainability
- How the basilica buildings and grounds serve the mission of the Carmelites and the San Antonio community overall

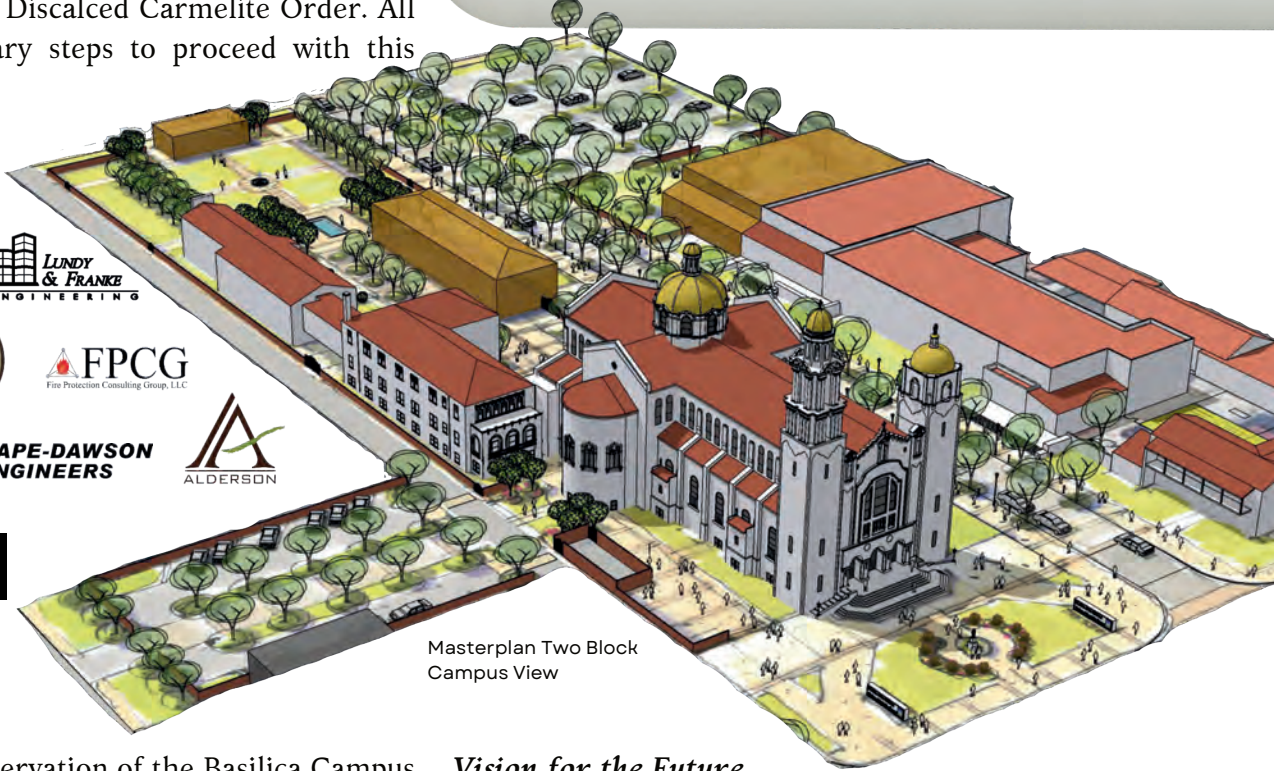
Master Plan Development with Expert Support

With the complexities of a project of this magnitude, it was imperative to partner with historical preservation expert consultants and volunteers. For the past several years, we have worked with our Building Committee made up of expert members in the fields of engineering, construction, architecture and historic project management and our consultant team led by Project of Control of Texas with design, masterplanning and construction management organized by the architect team of TBA|Douglas.



As part of our masterplanning and programming process, we completed many necessary studies including various engineering studies, a capital campaign feasibility study and an economic impact study laying a strong foundation for our impending and much awaited capital campaign and for the successful restoration of our historic Little Flower Basilica. This comprehensive approach has led to a successful review of our Masterplan from the Texas Historic Commission. More recently and after much review, we received approval from the General Curia of the Teresian Carmel, the international head of the Discalced Carmelite Order. All these have been necessary steps to proceed with this significant project.

Partner consultants in the Historic Preservation Master Plan:



Masterplan Two Block Campus View

Milestones Achieved:

- Master Planning
- 30% Schematic Design
- Engineering Studies
- Feasibility Study
- Economic Impact Study

\$850k Raised

These milestones have been made possible by your prayers and the generous contributions of our benefactors throughout the province, country, parish, Carmelite community, various foundation grants, and public funding.

Scope of Work

The Restoration and Preservation of the Basilica Campus necessitates water drainage at grade & subgrade levels. The addition of this drainage will provide much needed stabilization of the Basilica Shrine and the buildings of the Little Flower Monastery. The Preliminary Scope of Work Outline includes Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing Design, while also keeping in mind the future needs for Maintenance and Sustainability. An integral part of developing the plan was to ensure adequate facility programming for current and future needs for Basilica Programs and administration.

But the Basilica buildings and grounds must serve the mission of the Discalced Carmelite Friars as well as the San Antonio community in which it resides. Planned improvements to the Little Flower Monastery will assist the Friars in living all aspects of their vocation. With these improvements the Friars will be able to continue in their Community Life, with accommodations for aging friars.

Vision for the Future

Today, we share with you a glimpse of this completed work. In the coming months the Discalced Carmelite Friars will begin sharing with you their vision for the future of Little Flower Basilica. Stay informed on the details of the master plan for restoration, building improvements, and programming (including a Phased Timeline and Budget) through our annual appeal mailings, e-newsletters, social media, Sunday bulletins, and at our forthcoming special information sessions.

Paul Garro was educated in the Catholic tradition from kinder through college. After playing a role in large scale projects such as the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhood Initiative, he joined Little Flower Administration where he serves as Chief Development & External Relations Officer.



ON THE COVER

THÉRÈSE TO RECEIVE THE CARMELITE HABIT

Theresa Doyle-Nelson

This beautiful Shrine Chapel window represents a profound moment in the life of St. Thérèse—the ceremony honoring her switch from Postulant to Novice—the “Reception of the Carmelite Habit.” While all represented in this window look at peace, the fact is that for some months before and after this day, the Little Flower experienced some excruciating trials.

Nine months before this portrayed moment, Thérèse had just become a 15-year-old postulant in the Lisieux Carmel. While she adjusted to life in the monastery, back home, her poor Papa’s mental health was declining. Bouts of sadness and fear plagued him. He even disappeared for a few days! Sr. Thérèse and her sisters were terrified and deeply distressed.

Thérèse was approved to “Receive the Habit” of the Carmelite Order in October, 1888; however, it was decided to wait to see if Papa’s health would improve. Of course, Thérèse was eager to leave behind her blue postulant dress and start wearing the brown Carmelite Habit; yet she was deeply concerned for her Papa’s well-being. By December, Louis’s health seemed to stabilize, so plans for Thérèse’s “Reception of the Habit” were set in motion for January, 1889.

Papa—still feeling better— was delighted with the upcoming ceremony and frequently brought gifts of food to the monastery in honor of his daughter’s approaching novicehood. There was worry of a relapse, so all of the Carmelite sisters in Lisieux prayed in earnest for Louis Martin.

Veil and Wreath of Lilies

A bridal outfit was to be prepared for Thérèse’s “Reception of the Habit” ceremony, so Papa had ordered some Alençon lace for a veil for Thérèse, in honor of his deceased wife, Azélie Martin—a former Alençon lace-maker. On Thérèse’s 16th birthday, she received a “RAVISHING” wreath of white lilies from her Aunt Céline Guérin to accompany the veil.



Thérèse at the
convent door
Life of St Thérèse
Windows, Panel 2

Finally, the Reception of the Habit Ceremony

Finally, on January 10, 1889—just eight days after her 16th birthday— Thérèse’s “Reception of the Habit” ceremony had arrived! Dressed in a white velvet dress, the Alençon-lace veil, and the white lily wreath, while holding a candle, she greeted her beloved “King” (Louis

Martin) at the enclosure door.

The Little Flower Basilica window depicting this event shows Thérèse kneeling before her Papa—with him apparently giving her a blessing. Although there is no written account of Louis Martin blessing his daughter at this time, it is recorded that Céline directed this particular scene to be painted—so we can feel confident that the moment truly occurred. In Lisieux, the original painting of this window replica still exists. Then, with tears in his eyes, Louis Martin took Thérèse's arm and walked her down the aisle.

The most beautiful, the most attractive flower of all was my dear King; never had he looked so handsome, so dignified.

—St. Thérèse

You can also see in the window a bishop. Normally, a priest would perform a Reception of the Habit ceremony, however, the Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux: Bishop Flavien Hugonin, had taken a special interest in Sr. Thérèse, and traveled to Lisieux to perform the ceremony himself—a very exceptional situation.

The Miracle of Snow

Snow is quite rare in Normandy. Lisieux might get snow once or twice each winter. Thérèse loved snow, and hoped it might snow on her Reception of the Habit day. And it did!

The monastery Garden was white like me!

—St. Thérèse

The Last Hug for Papa

At the end of the ceremony, Thérèse embraced her Papa for the last time, and then entered the cloister. There, she put on the brown Carmelite Habit. Now a novice, she was given a novice's white veil—blessed by Bishop Hugonin. (The better-recognized Carmelite black veil would be given to Thérèse after her final vows several months later.) After receiving the Carmelite Habit, Thérèse went to the parlor to see her Papa. At the conclusion of their visit, the beautiful day had come to an end. Unfortunately, a deep sorrow was soon to follow.

The Martyrdom of Louis Martin

One month after Thérèse's Reception of the Habit,



Therese at the convent door on the day of her garment Sr. Mary of the Holy Spirit after Pascal Blanchard (detail)

Papa's mental health took a sharp decline. After a worrisome episode of terrifying hallucinations, Louis was committed to the Bon Sauveur (The Good Savior) mental hospital in Caen—about a one hour train ride away.

A month after my reception of the Habit, our dear Father would drink the most bitter and most humiliating of all chalices.

—St. Thérèse

Louis Martin would stay at Bon Sauveur for three years. Despite Thérèse's day of receiving the Carmelite Habit being followed so closely by such an excruciating hardship, the teenage Carmelite felt a spiritual enrichment during this time.

The three years of my Father's martyrdom seem to me the sweetest and most fruitful of our lives. Precious and sweet was this bitter cross.

—St. Thérèse



Theresa Doyle-Nelson has a great devotion to her patron saint, St. Thérèse, and enjoys mini-pilgrimages to the Little Flower Basilica whenever she is in San Antonio. You can find more posts on St. Thérèse and the Little Flower Basilica on Theresa's blog: TheresaDoyle-Nelson.blogspot.com



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TREASURES OF LITTLE FLOWER BASILICA: RELICS OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE SAINTS

November, the month of All Saints and All Souls, also brings with it the feasts of All Carmelite Saints and All Carmelite Souls on November 14 and 15. On November 14, we honor all Carmelite Saints, both canonized and un-canonized. On the 15th, we recall all our Carmelite brothers and sisters who are experiencing the purifying power of God's merciful love in the next life, as they await to behold God face to face. In honor of these celebrations our relics of the saints of Carmel are available for veneration in the Shrine Chapel of St. Thérèse. These relics remind us that the saints are humans like us, made of flesh and bone, and sanctified body, soul and spirit by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Visit littleflowerbasilica.org/visit to learn more about this and other programs offered by the Discalced Carmelite Friars at Little Flower Basilica.