

Visit of the Relics of St. Thérèse to St Saint Barnabas Cathedral

*She provoked much media interest even before her arrival . . .
She arrived to much devotion and pleasure . . .*



Thousands flocked to venerate her . . .



She stopped the traffic and left to applause . . .



Story of a Soul Thérèse of Lisieux : The Saint of the ordinary

Therese of Lisieux is in many ways an unpromising saint. A rather frail young girl, who lived in an unremarkable Normandy town and died there after 9 years in a convent at just 24 years of age. No brilliant academic career, no adventures in foreign fields, no leadership of religious Orders, no role in the great political events of the day. Just an ordinary nun in an enclosed convent. Yet her death was followed by a string of miracles.

Lisieux became a place of pilgrimage, a huge and beautiful basilica was built and the book of her life, published in 1899, has sold millions of copies worldwide. How could this be? What could such an ordinary life possible have to offer? Her own words explain it: -

Therese said she meditated on the words spoken by Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary Alcoque 'Here is the master I give you to teach you all you have to do. I want you to study the Book of Life, which contains the science of love' The phrase, the science of love, struck her. Therese decided 'Love alone can make us pleasing to God, so I desire no other treasure.' But it was not clear how this desire to love could be practiced because she was 'the littlest and weakest soul on earth'.

She read Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and reflected on his comment that the Church was a body made up of different members or parts. Therese realised that if the Church was a body then it must have a heart and that its heart must be on fire with love. She saw that 'it was love alone' which moved the other parts of the Church. 'Were this love to fail, apostles would no longer spread the

gospel, and martyrs would refuse to shed their blood.' This led her to state that 'all vocations are summed up in love and that love is all in all, embracing every time and place' For her own life she now said 'I have at last found my vocation. It is love'.

But how could she live out this vocation as she was so ordinary and little. She noted 'Striking deeds are forbidden me. I cannot preach the Gospel. I cannot shed my blood'. 'Love proves itself by deeds and how shall I prove mine?'

Her response was that within the confines of the convent and her own littleness 'I can prove my love only by scattering flowers . . . by never letting slip a single sacrifice, a single glance, a single word. By making profit of the smallest actions, by doing them all for love'

Realising the size of Jesus' love she wondered how she could aspire to the fullness of love despite being weak and fearful. Why was this aspiration not reserved for great souls who could fly like eagles whereas she was 'not strong enough to fly'. Her answer was 'I know that all the eagles in Your heavenly court look compassionately down on me, protecting and defending me, putting to flight the demon vultures who seek to prey on me. So I am not at all afraid of them'.

So, her course in life was set - doing small, ordinary, mundane things with great love. This was her way. She wanted to share this with others - 'If only, my Jesus, I could tell all little souls about your ineffable condescension' She prayed to God that he would reveal to us what



she had seen; ie her 'little way'. Her way of love for the timid, weak and ordinary - I implore You, cast your eyes upon a multitude of little souls: choose from this world' and 'I will spend my time in heaven doing good upon the earth' 'After death I will let fall a shower of roses'. The shower of roses did indeed fall, as 'abundant fruits of salvation, remarkable and worldwide'. On her beatification Pope Pius X said of the account of her life '.. the virtues of the Maid of Lisieux shine so brightly that it is her very soul, as it were, that one breathes therein' Before her death Therese said 'I feel that my mission is soon to begin, to make others love God as I do, to teach others 'my little way'. She has been described as the friend, little sister and Saint of those who feel themselves too small and weak for great achievements. The visit of the relics to Nottingham should perhaps remind us that our little efforts are important for both the Church and the World ,and we should keep trying.

Philip Harrison

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