

THERESE OF LISIEUX PRAYER SERVICE 2ND OCTOBER 2023

TEXT OF FULL SERVICE

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Leader: We welcome you to a prayer service this morning in honor of St. Therese of Lisieux. Her feast is marked in the church calendar on October 1st, but as that was a Sunday, we have taken the liberty of celebrating it today, on the 2nd. St. Therese is acknowledged throughout the church, but it seemed fitting that as the IHM's have new relationship with the St. Therese organization, we should have a service of prayer and reflection to mark her day. As we begin, I invite you to stand and sing the first two verses of the song on your program, 'By all Your saints still striving':

OPENING SONG: (piano)

By all your saints still striving,
for all your saints at rest,
your holy name, O Jesus,
for evermore be blessed.
You rose, our King victorious,
that they might wear the crown
and ever shine in splendor
reflected from your throne.

We sing of Carmel's glory,
the young saint from Lisieux,
of Thérèse who in her story
confirmed your mercy true.
In suffering and silence.
her little way she trod ,
till all life was surrendered.
into the arms of God.

OPENING PRAYER:

Leader: Let us Pray:

Loving God, in every generation you reveal your love for us.
by raising up people who inspire us to serve our neighbor
as we would hope to serve you.

Open us this morning to the gifts which St. Therese brings,
that we may each respond with extraordinary love in whatever we do.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord, Your Son, and our brother. AMEN

FIRST READING: (seated)

Commentator: St. Therese opened a way for ordinary persons who wished to draw close to God to do so in their daily lives by doing the ordinary with extraordinary love. There were two scripture texts which were especially key to her spirituality, one from the Old Testament and one from the new. In our own era, it might be surprising to know that St. Therese did not own a bible. There was only one in the convent, a poor translation at that. But one of her sisters came across four quotations from the Old Testament and copied them out 'long hand' and sent them to Therese as she knew how meaningful they would be to her. As indeed they were, for they spoke of God not as a harsh and demanding judge, but as a loving mother and a shepherd. We hear two of those reading now, from the Prophet Isaiah.

Reader 1: A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah. (40:11, 66:12-13.)

He will feed his flock like a shepherd.

 he will gather the lambs in his arms,
 and carry them in his bosom,
 and gently lead the mother sheep.

For thus says the LORD:

 I will extend prosperity to her like a river,
 and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream.
and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm,
 and dandled on her knees.
As a mother comforts her child,
 so, I will comfort you.
 you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

 The Word of the Lord.

Pause for reflection.

Sung response: 'Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas, Deus ibi est.'

SECOND READING:

Commentator: As St. Therese matured in her spiritual life, her desires knew no bounds. She wanted to be a warrior- like Joan of Arc, a doctor- like the great Fathers of the church, a priest- to preach, a missionary - to the farthest ends of the earth, even a martyr. None of this was possible, and she knew it. She sought some answer in St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Paul acknowledges that all these works are needed by the church, but one work surpasses all, the greatest work is to love. Her restlessness was resolved and Therese finally understood the primacy of love. We listen now to the words of St. Paul.

Reader 2: A reading from the first letter of Paul's to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13)

I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends...For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known... And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. The word of the Lord.

Pause for brief reflection:

Sung response: 'Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas, Deus ibi est.'

READING THREE:

Commentator: It is from her reflection on Paul's text in 1st Corinthians that we find what might be the climax of all the writings of St. Therese. It was a central insight of her teaching and directed her until the final outpouring of her young life. We listen now to her own words.

Reader 3: A reading from 'The story of a soul. The autobiography of Therese of Lisieux'

'Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and most noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the church had a heart and that this heart was burning with love.

I understood that it was love alone that made the church's members act, that if love ever became extinct, apostles would not preach the gospel and martyrs would not shed their blood. I understood that love was everything, that it embraced all times and places...in a word, that it was eternal.

Then in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: O Jesus, my love, my vocation, at last I have found it...my vocation is love...in the heart of the Church, my mother, I shall BE love.

Why speak of a delirious joy? No, this expression is not exact, for it is rather the calm and serene peace of the navigator perceiving the beacon which must lead him to the port...O luminous beacon of love, I know how to reach You. I have found the secret of possessing your Flame.'

Pause for brief reflection:

Sung response: 'Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas, Deus ibi est.'

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Leader: We have heard the word of God and the words of St. Therese. Let us stand now to bring our common prayers to the Lord. (stand)

Leader: St. Therese went before the Lord, 'with empty hands', confident that they would be filled by the mercy of God. In that same confidence, we bring before God the prayers and intercessions of our hearts this day:

Reader: Our response is: LOVING GOD, HEAR OUR PRAYER.

That St. Therese's life of prayer and silence will inspire us to spend time each day in quiet union with the God who loves us as a mother her child...we pray....

That St. Therese's love for her family and her sisters at Carmel will remind us of the power of love in family and community life...we pray...

That St. Therese's search for direction from the Scriptures will encourage us to find nourishment in reflection upon the Bible...we pray...

That St. Therese's caring response to those she found difficult will sustain us in the support of all we serve in this community...we pray...

That St. Therese's desire to be love will impel us to find our own way to respond in love without tiring...we pray...

That St. Therese's motivation to 'do ordinary things with extraordinary love' will find resonance in our everyday life...we pray...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: Gathering our prayer and praise into one, let us pray as Christ the Lord has taught us. OUR FATHER...

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Leader: Gracious God, hear the prayers which we bring before you this day. As we honor St. Therese of Lisieux, honor also our prayers and petitions in the unfailing love which she knew and proclaimed in her witness to you...We come to you with empty hands, in your great mercy, fill us with your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Spirit, now and forever...AMEN.

GREETING OF PEACE AND DISMISSAL

Leader: Let us conclude our prayer by sharing with one another the greeting of peace.... (sharing of peace)

Now let us go forth in the love and peace of Christ... Thanks be to God.

CONCLUDING SONG

Then let us praise the Father.
and worship God the Son
and sing to God the Spirit,
Eternal three in one,
till all the ransomed number
who stand before the throne,
ascribe all pow'r and glory.
and praise to God alone.