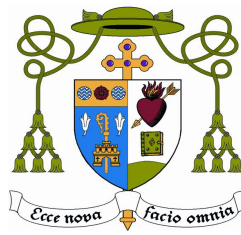


Farewell to Relics of St. Therese

30th September 2009



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, first and foremost we give thanks to almighty God for the very privileged days of grace and blessing during which the relics of St. Therese of Lisieux have rested here in our Cathedral of St. Peter. St. James tells us that 'every good and perfect gift comes from above', and the presence of Therese's relics among us has indeed been a gift from above. May the Lord be praised and blessed for his goodness to us here in Lancaster! The very large number of pilgrim who have come to Lancaster and Preston to venerate and reverence the Little Flower's relics speaks eloquently of the abiding appeal of the saint of Lisieux. In her own words, she is indeed spending her heaven doing good on earth. We have been witnesses to the truth of that in this cathedral.

Very many people have brought roses to place before the saint's relics and our children have scattered petals over the casket, in honour of St. Therese who is often depicted holding a rose. Perhaps the beauty and aroma associated with the rose holds a lesson and a challenge for us from Therese. As Christians and Catholics, St. Paul tells us, we are to be a good odour, spreading the fragrance of Christ around us. Through her simple life of prayer, acceptance of suffering, and a deep love of God, Therese spread the life-giving fragrance of Christ.. The world stands ever in need of the good odour of Christ. Therese would tell us that the one simple way to be that fragrance of Christ is the way of love: love of God and love of one's neighbour – her 'Little Way'.

From the very beginning Christians have always honoured and venerated the relics of the saints. In Rome St. Peter's Basilica is built over the tomb of St. Peter, and down the centuries the Church has always given special reverence to the bodies of her martyrs and saints. In these last few weeks, following that long tradition, we have been part of a great number who have gathered to honour and pray before the relics of St. Therese of Lisieux. It has been a privileged time. In the words of St. Augustine of Hippo, 'it has been good to have been together, it has been good to have prayed together. As we part from one another, let us not part from God'. St. Therese of Lisieux, pray for us. Amen.

+Michael Campbell OSA
Bishop of Lancaster