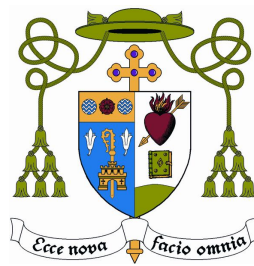


Homily at Mass for St. Therese

29th September 2009



Almighty God speaks to us through his saints. Through the life of each particular saint there is a lesson writ large for the Church. In the gospel passage just read for us we find the disciples wondering about rank and status in the new order that Christ came to establish. They asked him, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' As we heard, Jesus replied that the essential mark of greatness in God's scheme of things was to become childlike, to have an attitude of simplicity and trust where God is concerned. The life of Therese, the Little Flower, was marked precisely by a spirituality of simplicity which was manifested in a deep love of God as Father. Therese came to realise that our faith need not be complicated, or involving great learning and study. Her way was the 'Little Way', the way of a child with its parent.

During these special days, with the relics of Therese among us, the abiding lesson God would have us learn is that of simplicity, trust and love. We can complicate our religion unnecessarily, misunderstand it, and forget the sheer love of God for us which lies at the heart of our faith. What we are asked to do in return is to love. Therese grasped this point most profoundly with the result that her difficulties, worries and fears disappeared. Through her intense suffering and union with Jesus on the cross, like him she learned to let go and entrust herself fully into the arms of a Father who was love itself. The Church holds her up as an example for us as we too keep the Lord Jesus at the centre of our lives, often carrying our cross behind him. St. Therese would tell us that in the end love will conquer.

With our wonderful advances in every field, it is so easy for us to be lulled into a false sense of security, to think that we can live without God and make our own way independently in the world. Therese would have us learn that such an outlook on life is misguided. Like her, we only become great and walk the right path when, in the manner of a small child, we place our hand into the hand of God with all the trust and confidence which that implies. Through Saint Therese almighty God calls each one of us to be love at the heart of the Church. Our lives may be ordinary and routine, and so was Therese's, but when they are filled with the love of God we have an influence far beyond what we can imagine. May Saint Therese intercede for us, so that each one of us in our own way, will be love at the heart of the Church. Amen.

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