

1. October 2019

„Memory of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus“

*Mt 18, 1-5*

***At this time the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' So he called a little child to him whom he set among them. Then he said, 'In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me.***

With the St. Thérèse of Lisieux we meet one of the most gracious saints of modern times. The Gospel of today, on her day of remembrance, fits in with her spiritual path. Already at an early age - at the age of thirteen at Christmas in 1886 - she experienced a great conversion and from that moment on she wanted nothing more than to love the Lord and the people. This became her vocation, which led her early to the monastery of a Carmel.

Her great model was St. Jehanne d'Arc, who gave her life for God and France. Unlike her beloved Jeanne, her life was hidden in the walls of the monastery. But her devotion to God was of similar worthy as of her great example. She wanted to love Jesus more than he was ever loved and to love people as Jesus loved them. This fire burned in her and her generous devotion to Jesus was nourished by the so-called "little way". This little path means that he was hidden as well as no one in the monastery perceived it and yet became a strong path of holiness.

A word from her on how this "little way" looked concrete has been handed down to us:

*"I have never sought extraordinary graces for myself ... I have no other means than to sprinkle flowers, that is to say, none of the little sacrifices, no look, no word to escape me, even the smallest deeds to pay attention and to accomplish them out of love. "*

So Thérèse did not miss an opportunity to grow in love, pointing out a path many people can take. It is the transformation of everyday life into a "little" but so "great way". What she lived in the silence of Carmel can be lived under other conditions in many situations of life: from the healthy, from the sick, from housewives and mothers, from fathers, from teachers.

It is the conscious acceptance of the life situation in which God has called us into it and to turn it into a constant school of love. The Carmelite surely teaches us that this was only possible through the prayer and reception of the sacraments. Thérèse, too, was aware that she could only make such a journey in the grace of God.

Theresia shows that the path to great holiness is not only possible through special visible graces and martyrdom. The daily loving accomplishment of the tasks with regard to Jesus and the neighbor becomes an ongoing inner training. Of course, in Carmel, there are special ways in which the sacrifice is lived, and much remains hidden in this particular way of following the Lord. But the essence of this path is open to all.

St. Thérèse, with her wonderful devotion to the Lord, was raised by the Church as the Patroness of the Mission. With her love she wanted to conquer the heart of God and lead the whole world to him. The hidden life of this saint and many with her becomes the inner force for those who proclaim the gospel outside. They are the ones who hold up their arms to pray like Moses for the people.

May the Holy Spirit resist all attempts to weaken this fire of love in the heart of the Church, as it was in times of persecutions . The Church of today, too, needs these hidden vocations: people who withdraw completely and dedicate themselves to prayer. Nobody should change this deep life and weaken it because to adapt this mission to more recent times.

On May 17, 1925 Thérèse of the Child Jesus was canonised by Pope Pius XI.

In 1927 Thérèse was declared patroness of all missions, along with Franz Xaver.

In 1997, Pope John Paul II appointed her a teacher of the church.