

*The Knights of Columbus — Fourth Degree  
Father Louis Hennepin Province  
Annual Provincial Meeting  
Sterling Heights, Michigan*

*The Feast of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus  
and Annual Memorial Liturgy  
Homily ~ October 1, 2011  
Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski*

Today is the Feast of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, the Little Flower of Jesus. We all know about her, how Thérèse Martin was born on January 2, 1873, to a middle class family in Lisieux, about 80 miles from Normandy in France. At the age of 15, she entered the cloistered Carmelite convent like her four older sisters. She took the name “Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.” She contracted tuberculosis and died at age 24 on September 30, 1897, saying her last words, “My God, I love you.”

She was a sweet, young pious nun who nobody would have known about except that she wrote an autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*. Thérèse saw herself as a child of God. She liked to keep things simple and focused as a child does. Some spiritualities have stressed complicated practices and extraordinary journeys of the soul as it responds to God’s grace and love. Thérèse’s spirituality was simple and she called it her “little way.” She believed and taught that life presents enough challenges and opportunities for grace. She taught us that God is everywhere—in every situation and person—and in the ordinary, simple details of life.

“Everything is grace. Everything is gift,” is probably the theme song of her spirituality. Her “little way” teaches us to do the ordinary things of life with extraordinary love. A smile, a note of encouragement, a phone call, suffering in silence, always having a positive word, a simple unnoticed task to brighten the life of another—so many simple deeds done with love. The smallest action done with love is more important than great deeds done for personal glory or gratification.

Even in prayer, Thérèse teaches simplicity—talking to God and Jesus in direct, personal and heartfelt ways. She did not like long prayers. She fell asleep during community prayer. She disliked the Rosary. She prayed from her heart as a

child speaks honestly and trustingly to a parent they love. God calls each of us to respond to Divine Love in a childlike relationship of love and trust—to do simple things for others well and with love.

Thérèse was faithful to the Gospel of Jesus and the core of his message. She invites us to join in her “spiritual childhood” or “little way.” The simplicity and appeal of Thérèse’s message is why our Church declared her a Doctor of the Church in 1997—a teacher.

