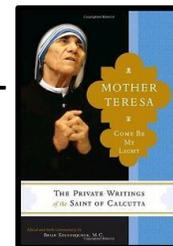


Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Team Notes For: Wrap-up discussion

Next Book:

Mother Teresa – Come Be My Light – The Private Writings of the “Saint of Calcutta” Edited and with commentary by Brian Kolodiejchuck, M.C.



Fall, Winter Book Club Schedule:

- Mother Teresa was named after St. Thérèse of Lisieux and followed St. Thérèse’s teachings!
- We will purchase books; let the Rectory know if a book should be included for you. Please reimburse at cost (est. ~\$13-14); advise of your interest by Monday, Sept. 16th
- Book Club starts Friday, Sept. 27th – Preface, Introduction and Chapter 1 (29 pages). We’ll meet every 2nd and 4th Friday at 9:30 – 11:00 am in the Meehan Conference Room (next to Gathering Room).
- Notes will be posted at www.sjparish.org under the ‘Our Ministries & Service’ tab.

“Remember that nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love.”

Thérèse’s final written words:
“I go to Him with confidence and love...”



The photo is described in the Epilogue (p 271; the photo is not available in the book):

“Hardly had the community knelt at her bedside when Thérèse pronounced very distinctly, while gazing at her crucifix: ‘Oh! I love Him!’ And a moment later: ‘My God, I love you!’

Suddenly her eyes came to life and were fixed on a spot just a little above the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Her face took on the appearance it had when Thérèse enjoyed good health. She seemed to be in ecstasy. This look lasted for the space of a “Credo.” Then she closed her eyes and expired.”

“Her head was leaning to the right. A mysterious smile was on her lips. She appeared very beautiful; and this is evident in the photograph taken by Céline after her sister’s death.”

Virgin of the Smile



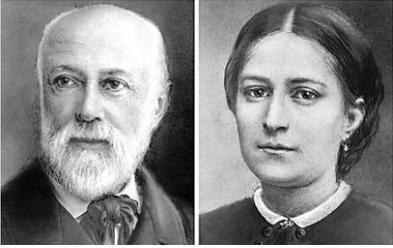
Thérèse’s final spoken words:
“Oh! I love Him!” And a moment later: *“My God, I love you!”*

The Martin family had a strong devotion to Our Lady of Victory; The story of naming the statue as the “Virgin of the Smile” is on p 64-65. The statue was taken to Carmel for Thérèse.

- **Thérèse was born: January 2, 1873. Died September 30, 1897.** When Marie-Francoise-Thérèse, when born, she was sickly and not expected to live. However, her strength and fortitude grabbed onto life and defied predictions.
- **She was declared a Saint by Pope Pius XI on May 17, 1925**
- **Her Feast Day is October 1st:** This date was chosen because Thérèse died on September 30th. Following the ancient custom of celebrating their entrance into heaven the next day, October 1st was chosen as the day to celebrate Thérèse's life and eternity.
- **She is Patron of the Missions.** Her memoir frequently spoke of her desire to be a missionary; to convert souls and lead them to Jesus. Her health did not permit this vocation. Thérèse requested of Jesus that she be able to spend eternity guiding those on earth to Him. A mission that has reached millions since her death.
- **Book Club take-aways:**
 - We loved her candor, she shared her humanity with us. **She was like us** with the same challenges and failures.
 - We appreciated her **‘keep it simple’** approach to life and service to God: **let love be the source** for all of our actions, no matter how small.
 - **We all can be saints.** It’s actually possible. And, we must remember, the bigger the repentant sinner, the more mercy Jesus will bestow to welcome him home... remember the Prodigal Son and his merciful father!
 - **She maintained her faith (trust in God)** even during times of trial and loss of faith in heaven (which persisted for about one year up to the time of her death).

- **Love is charity; charity is love.** We must remember to feel with our hearts. All acts and thoughts must be through love.
- **Approach Jesus and God with confidence and trust.**
- **Giving vs. Lending:** giving is a true gift, a one-way offering. Nothing is expected in return. Lending is not a real gift, it is an exchange because something is expected back. If we do something – hold the door for someone, help them with an errand, do a task for them with the expectation of something in return, such as recognition, accolades, a smile, etc. we have done that act for self versus for other: I give, you return. This is not truly giving of self but, rather, an exchange. When one loves, one doesn't calculate.
 - **Thérèse gave of herself up to the time of her death:** “The sisters came to the infirmary purposely to seek her advice or simply to receive a smile from her.” (p 265)
- **We must pray for the criminal's soul. We must pray for sinners. May they find hope and mercy in Jesus.**
- **We must ponder on God's goodness and how we can help.**
- **We must pray – formal prayers, reading Scripture, just talking to God.** See next page for “A Letter Sister Thérèse Carried on Her Heart on the Day of Her Profession” – we thought it made a beautiful prayer. The last paragraph alone is a great short prayer!
- **Suffering, when accepted and offered to God, is an act of reparation to aid souls in need.** It is a tremendous gift. We may not come to know the fruit of these offerings until the General Judgment. Have faith. Trust that these sacrifices bear much fruit.
 - **Thérèse recognized the sacrificial love of Jesus for all souls, she wished that none of Jesus' sufferings be wasted.** We felt we heard a cry from her, as if she was saying, ‘I'm sorry for what they're doing to you!’ – (Underline added) “Since You loved me so much as to give me Your only Son as my Savior and my Spouse, the infinite treasures of His merits are mine. I offer them to You with gladness...” “I want to console You for the ingratitude of the wicked” (p 276) “I thank You, O God! for all the graces You have granted me, especially the grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering. It is with joy I shall contemplate You on the Last Day carrying the scepter of Your Cross. Since You deigned to give me a share in this very precious Cross...” (p 277)
- **On death: “I am not dying, I am entering into life!”** (p 271)
- **Thérèse, The Little Flower, wanted to give of self, including her sufferings. She kept working on this. She imagined herself a *depetalled* flower:** petal by petal she wanted to give herself completely to others (p 196)
- **MEMO:** The Church is the mystical body of Christ, the Church Universal. It is comprised of the unity and cooperation of the members of the Church *on earth, in Purgatory and in Heaven*. She exists on earth as the *Church Militant* because her members struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil. The *Church Suffering* refers to the souls in Purgatory. The *Church triumphant* is the Church in Heaven, also called the *Communion of Saints*.
- **Thérèse had a beautiful view of the Church Universal.** *“O Jesus, of what use will my flowers be to You? Ah! I know very well that this fragrant shower, these fragile, worthless petals, these songs of love from the littlest of hearts will charm You. Yes, these nothings will please You. They will bring a smile to the Church Triumphant. She will gather up my flowers unpetalled through love and have them pass through Your own divine hands, O Jesus. And this Church in heaven, desirous of playing with her little child, will cast these flowers, which are now infinitely valuable because of Your divine touch, upon the Church Suffering in order to extinguish its flames and upon the Church Militant in order to gain the victory for it!”* (p 197 – please read before and after)
 - Here we were struck by the beauty that Thérèse saw: a Church working together, for each other, through Jesus. Those on earth will do acts of love through thought, prayer, deed and offering of our sufferings. These acts of love will be gathered up by those in Heaven and brought to Jesus' hands. These acts will now be infinitely valuable through Jesus' loving touch. He will bestow them on souls in need in Purgatory to extinguish flames and bring those souls to heaven. He will also bestow them on the souls on earth so that we may be disciples for Him, helping Him lead souls away from the devil and to Jesus in heaven.

➤ **St. Thérèse's parents, Saints Louis and Zélie Martin:**



Feast Day: July 12, Canonized: October 18th, 2015

- **Louis Martin (1823-1894) and Marie Zélie Guérin Martin (1831-1877) are the first married couple with children to be canonized in the same ceremony.** Other married couples are among the blessed of the church.
- **Louis Martin (1823 - 1894)** was a successful watchmaker by trade. He also skillfully managed his wife's lace business.
- **Zélie Guérin (1831 - 1877)** was one of Alençon's more talented lace makers. Born into a military family, Zélie described her childhood and youth as "dismal." Her mother and father showed her little affection.
- In the first fifteen years of their marriage, Louis and Zélie bore nine children: seven girls and two boys. "We lived only for them," Zélie wrote; "they were all our happiness." Within three years, four children died: two baby boys, a five year old girl, and a six-and-a-half week old infant girl. Zélie was left numb with sadness. (Underline added) "I haven't a penny's worth of courage," she lamented. But her faith sustained her through these terrible ordeals. Others said to her "It would have been better never to have had them." "I couldn't stand such language. My children were not lost forever; life is short and full of miseries, and we shall find our little ones again up above." They poured out their affection on their five surviving daughters.
- "The couple lived an "exemplary life of faith, dedication to ideal values, united to a constant realism, and persistent attention to the poor," according to Vatican Radio. The French couples serve as an "extraordinary witness of conjugal and family spirituality." (Underline added) During their 19-year marriage (until Zélie's death), the couple was known to attend Mass daily, pray and fast, respect the Sabbath, visit the elderly and the sick, and welcome the poor into their home.

A Letter Sister Thérèse Carried on Her Heart on the Day of Her Profession – September 8, 1890

O Jesus, my Divine Spouse! May I never lose the second robe of my baptism! Take me before I can commit the slightest voluntary fault. May I never seek nor find anything but Yourself alone. May creatures be nothing for me and may I be nothing for them, but may You, Jesus, be *everything*! May the things of earth never be able to trouble my soul, and may nothing disturb my peace. Jesus, I ask You for nothing but peace, and also love, infinite love without any limits other than Yourself; love which is no longer I but You, my Jesus. Jesus, may I die a martyr for You. Give me the grace to fulfill my Vows in all their perfection, and make me understand what a real spouse of Yours should be. Never let me be a burden to the community, let nobody be occupied with me, let me be looked upon as one to be trampled underfoot, forgotten like Your little grain of sand, Jesus. May Your will be done in me perfectly, and may I arrive at the place You have prepared for me.

Jesus, allow me to save very many souls; let no soul be lost today; let all the souls in purgatory be saved. Jesus, pardon me if I say anything I should not say.
I want only to give You joy and to console You.