

Basilica of the Little Flower

October 2, 2019

In a hot autumn and chaotic world, our readings today are like a cool breeze that refreshes and restores our souls. Our first reading describes God as a loving mother who comforts us in our afflictions. God is like a nursing mother who carries her child in her arms and cradles her upon her knees. What a beautiful, consoling image! God embraces us with infinite, unconditional love. It is good for us to take our rest from the chaos of our lives to abide with that message. St. Therese in the simplicity of her life knew well – and teaches us – about God’s wonderful, enduring love.

Our second reading challenges us to love one another. This is not the superficial “love” of popular culture. To love someone is to look out for that person’s total well-being, to love one another as Jesus has loved us. It requires going out of ourselves, our own needs and desires. “God is love. . . Whoever is without love does not know God.” How are we to love one another? In significant ways, at times. Most of the time, in little ways. The Little Flower has given us the example of following the Little Way – each in accord with our own vocation in life and our gifts.

St. Therese once said: “I understand that every flower created by [God] is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. . . if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would no longer be painted with lovely hues. And so it is in the world of souls, Our Lord’s living garden!” We are called to be a garden of flowers – reflecting God’s love to everyone we encounter. The roses today remind us of this wisdom – and challenge!

Love involves sacrifice. Sometimes great sacrifice – more often simple ones. St. Therese tells us “Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.”

In today’s gospel we stand with the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross. We see how much God loves us – fully, unconditionally. Jesus entrusts his disciples to the Church, and the Church to his disciples. We are to care for one another with great love. St. Therese is patron of missionaries. We are all called to be missionary disciples of the risen Lord. We are to proclaim him and his gospel every day. We are to overcome the divisions in our society and church with love, compassion, mercy!