

## **St Thérèse of Lisieux- Key documents relating to her call to priesthood**

To be your spouse, Jesus, to be a Carmelite, to be by my union with you the Mother of souls, that isn't enough for me; these are three wonderful privileges, my vocation, Carmelite, Spouse and Mother, yet I feel in me other vocations, I feel in me the vocation of WARRIOR, PRIEST, APOSTLE, DOCTOR.

I feel in me the vocation of PRIEST; with what love I would carry you in my hands when, at my words you would descend from Heaven

I feel in me the vocation of being an APOSTLE: I would like to travel the world, preach your name!

(Page 219-20 in the original French *Histoire d'une âme*, Cerf 1972)

The Apostle (St Paul) explains how all the most PERFECT gifts are nothing without LOVE. That charity is the EXCELLENT WAY, that leads most surely to God. I finally had rest. Considering the mystical body of the Church, I had not recognised myself in any of the members... or rather I desired to recognise myself in all. Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the Church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the Church had a heart, and this heart was BURNING WITH LOVE. I understood it was love alone that made the Church's members act, that if love ever became extinct, apostles would not preach the Gospel and martyrs would not shed their blood. I understood that LOVE COMPRISED ALL VOCATIONS, THAT LOVE WAS EVERYTHING, THAT IT EMBRACED ALL TIMES, ALL PLACES...IN A WORD, THAT IT WAS ETERNAL! Then, in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out, "O Jesus, my Love, my vocation at last I have found it MY VOCATION IS LOVE!"

(Page 222 in the original French *Histoire d'une âme*, Cerf 1972)

(Translation from *Story of a Soul: The autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translation J. Clarke OCD . Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington)

In 1897, but before she was really ill, Sister Thérèse told me she expected to die that year. When she realised she had pulmonary tuberculosis, she said: "You see, God is going to take me at an age when I would not have had the time to be a priest...If I could have been a priest, I would have been ordained at these June ordinations. So, what did God do? So that I would not be disappointed, he let me be sick: in that way I couldn't have been there, and I would die before I could exercise my ministry. The sacrifice of not being able to be a priest was something she always felt deeply.

From *St Thérèse of Lisieux by those who knew her: Testimonies from the Process of Beatification*, ed. And translated by C. O'Mahoney, OCD (Dublin 1975) p155-6.

Testimony of Celine Martin, Thérèse's sister by family and in religion known as Sister Genevieve de Ste Thérèse, given under oath 14-28 September 1910.



St. Thérèse of Lisieux, one of my favorite saints, was even able to find God in imperfection, in her weaknesses and limitations—that she actually delighted in, because they kept her close to God! She called it her “Little Way,” which is her unique rediscovery of the deepest message of the Gospel. Thank God, they proclaimed this 24-year-old French girl a “Doctor of the Church.”

For those who have learned how to see, God is perfectly hidden and perfectly revealed in this ordinary world. God shines through all things. Some days you might even want to kiss trees or somehow honor everything that is, even though you know others would laugh or not understand.

*Richard Rohr*

My first impressions after going to the cathedral in Leeds to the relics of Ste Thérèse are that it was special, but what seemed to be important to me was not so much the relics themselves but the influence her presence, and her relationship with God, had on those present.

The crowds came out: old, young, disabled and people of all cultures. The conversations between people, the watching on as people filed past seemed relational and I thought that connections were happening in the building and with God. Mission, as Thérèse spoke of, was happening as she had envisaged. The Bishop and clergy were out in force but somehow they were not really “centre stage” in that role today as they usually very visibly are.

Those who came with their parishes and the religious brothers and sisters and lay people there were making connections: bringing those who needed help, bringing young people, working in the cathedral to be there for others, praying, chatting and working quietly... They didn't need to work through the crowds making small talk :they/we were connecting.

This isn't meant to be judgmental but what was clarifying for me was that those in relation with each other or willing to try to connect with others person to person were doing/being God's work. We didn't need to be wearing a purple cassock. We left fliers which were still there when we went back in later... I only talked to one or two about Thérèse's vocation but spoke to a number of others who I knew, and though I knew that topic was not one for that moment, we had some happy connecting... Thanks Thérèse.

*Pippa Bonner*

## From Womenpriests newsletter

Who is this?

*'I sense in myself the vocation of Warrior,  
Priest, Apostle, Doctor, and Martyr.  
In the heart of the Church, my Mother,  
I will be love.'*

The unlikely answer is St Thérèse of Lisieux.  
The saint is often called 'the Little Flower'  
offering a softer image of a gentle soul  
whereas Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin had  
steely determination and a vision of where  
she wanted to go and was only thwarted by her poor health.

The picture shows her dressed as Joan of Arc, another strong woman of vision.  
Here in England, relics of St Thérèse are making a tour invincing much public  
interest. Her relics are being displayed in churches around the country not only  
Catholic churches but Protestant churches and in chapels attached to universities  
and even one of London's prisons, Wormwood Scrubs - a testament to Thérèse's  
popularity as an accessible saint, one who acknowledged the trials and tribulations  
of daily life.



She is one of the great modern saints and is one of only three women to  
receive the honour of being recognised as a Doctor of the Church. In his article  
[\*\*Saint Thérèse and the Question of Ordination of Women\*\*](#), Dr. John  
Wijngaards shares some of his studies about this mighty saint. In the article, he  
investigates St Thérèse's longing for the priesthood and her enduring testimony. *In  
her simple 'little' way, Thérèse stands out as a mighty prophet, challenging the  
conscience of Church leaders to re-examine the facts.*

See <http://www.womenpriests.org/teaching/Thérèse.asp>

May St Thérèse of Lisieux continue to be an inspiration to us!

*"My mission-to make God loved-will begin after my death.  
I will spend my heaven doing good on earth.  
I will send a shower of roses."*

## **My reflections on Saint Thérèse- love in the heart of the city and in the heart of the Church**

If I have to try and put this weekend into words, I would start with the feeling of an outpouring of grace and blessing, and finish with an extraordinary feeling of unity. Saint Thérèse came into the very heart of the city, arriving amongst shoppers, football supporters, pub goers, the people of Yorkshire, and the members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy- together. Thérèse came in the middle of crowds, but that moment of interaction was personal, and profound.

For me there was something incredible in being so close to Thérèse in the heart of Leeds- to have stood by the casket and been able to touch her before she was transported between the Knights and Dames of St Gregory into the Cathedral for a ceremony that was "ticket only". Pat and I were so close to the "Thérèse-mobile" that all I had to do was to stretch out my hand and touch her, touch holiness, touch the presence of someone who knew what it was to feel her vocation thwarted at every turn and to know the pain of illness, and yet never gave up the struggle. In that moment the Thérèse who fought the Church hierarchies and struggled with tuberculosis and the Katharine who fights the Church hierarchies and struggles with multiple sclerosis were united. For me, that meeting was a real affirmation of my own calling, both my calling to priesthood, and the calling I have sought to live through the community of the Little Sisters.

As we queued with thousands of others later to go into the cathedral, I was struck by how many friends from every area of our lives we met, and as we chatted about Thérèse and her call to priesthood with them, we took the opportunities that presented themselves to talk to others. We met men and women who had been deeply hurt by the Church, yet found in Thérèse a sister, someone who understood. The presence of Thérèse in Leeds was powerful- wherever she has gone, there has been the feeling of resurrection. As Pat and I went back to the cathedral early on Sunday morning, the words that came to me were the words of St John's Gospel- Mary Magdalene and the other Mary going to the tomb- the witnesses to the resurrection. When Pippa joined us on the Sunday afternoon we had another opportunity to pray together in the Cathedral close to Thérèse, and were able to leave CWO leaflets. I think that time of prayer was for me a special opportunity to hold one another and our callings before God and Thérèse, and acknowledging the challenging journey we walk within CWO.

What we witnessed in Leeds was a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit: a blessing, a calling, and a profound sense of unity- with other Christians, and with these of all faiths and none. As I left the cathedral on the Sunday afternoon, I realised, as well as a feeling of deep unity with God and Thérèse, how many groups of dear friends from my various ministries I had prayed with over the weekend: CWO of course, the Little Sisters, all Hallows, the Focolare, and former colleagues! A real shower of roses in many ways, as well as a huge thanksgiving for so many prayers for my friends and family.

*Katharine Salmon*

## **Some reflection on my trip to Lancaster on 29 September 2009**

At 9am, the buses left George Square, Glasgow with a variety of people interested in St Thérèse who wanted to venerate her mission and her relics. We were adults and children; ecumenical although probably mostly Catholic but with Episcopalian and Church of Scotland also. We had on board a Carmelite priest and secular clergy as well as Sr Roseann Reddy from the Gospel of Life congregation and Sister Andrea who assisted her able and humorous coping with the multiple questions, confusions and demands made by the pilgrims on board.

I enjoyed the wonderful lunch provided at Ladyewell shrine where we called on the way to Lancaster and the companionship of all the people with whom I came in contact. I happened to be joined by a lovely woman (called Teresa!) who sat beside me on the journey to and from Glasgow. We shared much about our lives throughout the journey but also spoke with others from different groups at various stages throughout the course of the day. I was aware of a respect for and inclusion of opinion from fundamental - perhaps best expressed by some clerics in dress and demeanour - to total openness. We said the four sets of Mysteries of the Rosary over the course of the day, led by Fr Moran and Sr Andrea and ourselves at different times.

I was struck by the phrase attached often to the end of each decade about forgiveness of sins and prayers for the conversion of Russia, which seemed to me to discredit the salvific love of Jesus who died for all of us. We do believe in the Resurrection don't we? The Fatima Message and prayers of the children have been answered through Our Lady's own work. After all the Cold War is over since the time of Gorbachev, the Berlin Wall is down and the Soviet Union is currently highly inclusive and welcoming of Catholic and other Christian visitors - I myself attended Mass there only last year on our St Andrew's Bearsden Parish Pilgrimage to Moscow and St Petersburg. Fr Moran encouraged us all to be open.

I was able to talk positively about CWO and was listened to respectfully by others. I could speak particularly about Sr Myra Poole SND, explain her position and links with hierarchy including our own Archbishop Conti whom I am aware she spoke with in Glasgow.

We celebrated Mass in a wonderful Carmelite Church beside Lancaster Cathedral. The priest was Polish, concelebrating the Mass with Fr Moran, Fr Deeley and a young deacon over from Rome. We had a variety of women and child readers. I was delighted to greet the Polish Carmelite priest in Polish which the L'Arche Krakow community leader had taught me to do in Iona a couple of years ago.

In Lancaster Cathedral it was great to venerate St Thérèse's casket containing her mortal remains.

On the road home we were shown a very interesting and enjoyable screening of St Thérèse's relics in Ireland in 2001. WOW was evident in the viewing and I heard no criticism on this presence, although some criticism was expressed about clerical preoccupation with old fashioned habits!

*Bernadette Pugh*

I am not normally into these big cathedral celebrations as the display of male power reminds me of how far we are from the church of Christ and I find that painful. However, we did hand out at least one hundred and fifty leaflets and managed to talk to many people whilst waiting in the queue and for the mass to begin. We were listened to and received very favourably.

This was a surprise, being used to a negative reception and even abuse in the past, and made me realise how far we have progressed in getting our message out there in the Church. It has taken a long time and a longer road lies ahead, but the tide has turned and Canute in Rome will be getting his feet wet!

My other main impression was the hunger of the people for a deeper spirituality and knowledge of God and how the institutional church is failing them - they are asking for bread and are being given stones!

*Maureen Roche*

"You know well enough that Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them."

**"My mission to make God loved will begin after my death"**

St Thérèse,  
pray for us



Katharine and I arrived outside the cathedral just before the casket containing St Thérèse's relics. We were amazed that we found ourselves right in the front and the closest people to the casket!

It could have seemed a slightly bizarre scene; the casket in a busy, narrow street with people walking past, some who hadn't got a clue what was going on and others queuing and waiting. I was particularly struck by two lads walking past eating pies out of Greg's bags. And yet this wasn't incongruous at all. It seemed absolutely right that Thérèse should be with all these people, both those who came to venerate the relics and those just passing by, some questioning, some not even aware.

It seemed so much more appropriate for her casket, her presence, to be among people and it was quite a long time before she finally was taken up into the cathedral. It was quite symbolic that the doors closed behind her; she had been removed from the secular world. Her spirit isn't contained in a casket, she was floating, milling around with all those who watched in wonder and those who scarcely noticed.

I felt so strongly that Thérèse was with those whom the Institution excludes.

*Pat Brown*