
THE GREATEST SAINT OF MODERN TIMES



A special time of grace will be granted to the Diocese of Edmundston, when we shall have the privilege of welcoming the relics of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus – « the greatest saint of modern times », according to Pope St. Pius X – December 5, 6, and 7. I wholeheartedly invite the entire population to recollect yourselves before the relics which will be in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception from Wednesday, December 5, at 4:00 P.M., until Thursday, December 6, at 6:00 P.M. Then, the reliquary will be transferred to Assumption Church in Grand Falls, where it will remain until 10:00 A.M. on Friday, December 7. Come to the three celebrations which will be held on Wednesday, at 7:30 P.M., at the Cathedral, at Assumption Church on Thursday, at 7:00 P.M. and Friday morning at 9:00 A.M. Come hear Bishop Gérard Dionne's three homilies, and to the conference he will give at the Cathedral on Thursday, December 6, at 5:00 P.M. Come to see the relics of St. Theresa and to look at the books written about her. The Cathedral will host a triduum in the saint's honour, December 2, 3, and 4, at which time Bishop Dionne will give three instructions, from 7:30 to 8:30 P.M.

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

In a previous article I wrote about «the very simple path» which St. Theresa traced, to lead one to God the Father, the path of love and mercy. I would now like to recall other writings about her love of God and of humankind. According to Pope John Paul II who proclaimed her Doctor of the Universal Church, Theresa is a «woman» who, in her approach to the Gospels, discovered their hidden riches, through her practical sense, a deep capacity for assimilating life experiences, and a wisdom proper to the feminine psyche. Theresa is a «contemplative». In the recesses of her Carmelite monastery, she lived the great adventure of the Christian experience. It was God's will that His secrets not remain hidden, and God allowed Theresa of Lisieux to proclaim the Secrets of the King. By her life, Theresa witnesses to and illustrates the beauty of the contemplative life as an avowal of the primacy of God in all things.

« I DO NOT DIE, I ENTER INTO LIFE. »

Saint Theresa was but twenty-four when she died on September 30, 1897. She had her first pulmonary haemorrhages on Good Friday, 1896. A year later, she had a fatal relapse. She suffered to such a degree that at one point she exclaimed, « *If I did not have the faith I would have killed myself without hesitation.* » And she added: « *It is not death that will come for me, but God. I do not care whether I live or die. I do not see clearly what more I shall have after my death that I do not have now. True, I shall see God, but as for being with Him, well, I am already with Him while still on earth. I have so often been told that I am courageous, yet there is so little truth to that, that I've said to myself: You must not let everybody lie, like this! And with the help of grace, I started gaining courage. I am not afraid of the final combat, nor of suffering, however great be the illness. God has always looked after me, He has helped and led me by the hand since my childhood. I count on Him, and I am certain that He will help me to the very end. I do not wish to die any more than I want to live. That is, if I had a choice I would rather die; but since it is God who chooses for me, I want what He wants. I love what He does.* » A few days before her death, she told her superior: « *Oh Mother, it is so easy to write beautiful things on suffering, but writing is nothing at all. One must be there, to know!... If you only knew what it is like to choke... Dear Mother, I assure you that the cup is full to the brim! But God will not abandon me. He has never abandoned me.* »

AN ETERNITY

« Each moment is an eternity, an eternity of joy at the thought of heaven, an eternity... To see God face to face... To be one with Him... There is only Jesus... there is only one thing to do during life's dark night, the one night that will come but once, and it is to love, to love Jesus with all our heart, and to save souls for him, so that he may be loved... Oh, to have Jesus loved! »

A HUMBLE REQUEST

« I have heard of a great criminal who had just been condemned to death for his horrible crimes, and that everything led one to believe that he would die without seeking forgiveness... Feeling that by myself I could do nothing, I offered God the merits of the whole Church... I was certain that he would forgive poor, miserable Pranzini... My prayer request was granted to the letter! »

UNSHAKABLE CONFIDENCE

« One could believe that it is because I have never sinned that I have such great trust in God. Remember, dear Mother, that if I had committed all the crimes possible, I would always have the same trust. I feel that this great sum of offenses would be no more than a drop of water thrown onto a blazing fire. »

« MY VOCATION »

« I got to understand that love alone makes the members of the Church act, and that if Love were to die out, the Apostles would cease to proclaim the Gospel, the Martyrs would refuse to shed their blood... I received understanding that Love embraced all vocations, that Love was everything, that it embraced all times and all places... in other words, that it is eternal! So, overcome with unrestrained joy, I cried out: Jesus, my love... I have finally discovered my vocation, and it is Love! » I end this meditation on St. Theresa with the words of Pope John Paul II at Lisieux: « Saints never grow old. They are forever the witnesses of the Church's youth. They never become characters from the past, yesterday's men and women. On the contrary, they are forever the men and women of tomorrow, people of the evangelical future of humankind and the Church, witnesses of the world to come. »

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