

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew (*Matt. 18:1-4*) *The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven*

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – the Little Way

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3). St. Thérèse of Lisieux, through the way she perfected the Little Way of spiritual childhood, demonstrated that holiness and sainthood can be within the reach of people living ordinary lives. Since childhood, she had very much wanted to be a saint but felt she was incapable of doing great arduous sacrifices for the Lord and decided that the way for her to get close to Him is a short cut consisting of the Lord Himself lifting her in His arms to bring her close to Him. To allow for this to happen, she had to remain little like a child.

What is to remain 'little' in the eyes of God? It is to recognize and to be acutely aware of our 'littleness' before God – our nothingness, powerlessness, weaknesses, inability and dependence on God. It is a sincere acknowledgement of our proper place before God. It is to expect all things from God in full confidence of God's mercy and Providence to His child, just as a little innocent child naturally expects all necessities from its father. To be little also means not to attribute to oneself the virtues that one practises, but to acknowledge that the good God has placed these treasures in the hands of His little child so that His child can make use of them as needed, but always as the treasures of the good God.

Small ordinary things done with great love. The Little Way is a way of life in which all tasks no matter how small and insignificant are done with great love for God and others. St. Thérèse translated 'the Little Way' in terms of a love commitment to the tasks and to the people she met in her everyday life. Her Little Way is evident in her altar duties as a sacristan, her work at the laundry room and all her other chores and her treatment of the other nuns in her convent. St. Thérèse has proven to us that through love and care one brings to one's daily tasks no matter how ordinary, one is able to reach a high level of holiness as desired by God. Through her ordinary and yet extraordinary life, St. Thérèse brought much encouragement to people who lead ordinary lives but have nonetheless no lesser desire for holiness as a way to union with God.

Great trust and abandonment to God. The hallmark of St. Thérèse is her great trust in God's love and mercy and her total abandonment in her relationship with God. She wrote in her *Story of a Soul*: "Yes, I feel it; even though I had on my conscience all the sins that can be committed, I would go, my heart broken with sorrow, and throw myself into Jesus' arms, for I know how much He loves the prodigal child who returns to Him. It is not because God, in His anticipating Mercy, has preserved my soul from mortal sin that I go to Him with confidence and love."

Remaining 'little' may seem easy and simple to do. However, in reality this is not so. It runs contrary to our self-pride. It is an attitude contrary to the values of the secular world which prizes self-independence and self-control outside of God. The knowledge of our littleness and poverty of spirit is not arrived at by our own contrivance; rather it is a grace granted to those who truly strive 'to give all' to Jesus, and who in the process come to recognise their powerlessness and dependence on God.

Conversation with Our Lord

Precious Lord, I come to You as Your little child. With childlike confidence, I place all my needs into Your Fatherly Sacred Heart. Look at Your poor child with love and tenderness knowing that I am weak and easily lured by the passing distractions of this world. Never let Your little child wander out of Your sight. Lift me up in Your Fatherly arms and hold me close to Your Sacred Heart and let me hear It pulsating with love for me so that I may never forget Your constant call to be by Your side. Through St. Thérèse, You taught me that holiness and even sainthood can be achieved by an ordinary life lived out in love for You and others. Teach me Lord to be a spiritual child always so that You may always be my tender Father. I put all my trust into Your Sacred Heart. St. Thérèse please pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10: 14).