

Thérèse in Australia

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Since the beginning of February 2002, we as a nation, as a Church and as a Carmelite family have been blessed and graced with the visit of the earthly remains of our little sister, Saint Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. From all reports to date this visit of the Relics of St Therese has been a tangible blessing to all who have spent time in prayer with her.

St Thérèse's visit is a reminder to us of the primacy of the Gospel message, of approaching God with confidence and trust. It is a time to rediscover and to be reminded of the reality of God's love for us, not because we deserve it because of our good works or prayers or faith. Thérèse passionately believed in God who is love and her whole life was lived with its struggles, pain, doubts and sufferings being given meaning because of the love that always over-shadowed her.

Spiritual writer William Johnson says in *Silent Music* that Christian contemplation begins with the realisation that we are loved. It does not depend on our initiative, our energy or our vigorous efforts. It depends on our awakening to the reality that God has loved us. "This love, prayerfully experienced, has been compared to the call of the Good Shepherd inviting us to enter his sheepfold".

Thérèse reminds us of those words of Jesus, "If you only knew what God is offering." Thérèse knew God offered her unconditional love and endless life in Jesus, she felt God stoop down to her to lift her up with love and mercy. She discovered her vocation through this love; it was to be love in the heart of the Church; a vocation of love that wasn't limited by her smallness or limitations. "See, then, all that Jesus lays claim to from us; He has no need of our works but only of our love."

Thérèse challenges us to reclaim our Christian vocation as a calling of love mirrored on the mission of Jesus. "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 and places. In a word, that it was eternal!"

May St. Thérèse call us to greater faithfulness in our vocations of love. May our little sister in Carmel inspire us to rediscover in prayer and contemplation the God who loves us first. As she continues to bring 'souls to Christ' may we as Carmelite family also be the instruments of God's love to all in our nation and our world. "I ask Lord, that the souls you have entrusted to me may experience your love as I have".

May this year of grace which we share with Thérèse and each other be a great blessing for our Carmelite Family, our Church and our nation.