

**Homily – Memorial of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus
Basilica of the Little Flower – October 1, 2021**

The image of the heavenly Jerusalem – described by Isaiah in the first reading – foreshadows our Holy Mother Church, feeding and comforting us with the grace that comes from the Holy Spirit, the love between the Father and the Son.

Something else that we can use as an image for the Church is the island in the Canaries where a new volcano just emerged in the last few days. We pray for those who have lost their property. Our hearts are like the rocks that cover that island. The Holy Spirit is like the magma within the island. The love of God flows from within the Church and melts everything on its path. Like those rocks, our hearts melt as we exchange a gaze with Jesus, hanging on the cross, and we make way for God's love. Only the Holy Spirit can melt the rock in our hearts and allow it to flow down to the ocean of the Father's mercy. That ocean of love is the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Our beloved Little Flower, Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, said that at the heart of the Church, she would be love. "Simple souls do not need to use complicated means. I'm one of them," she said. She realized that by drawing her to himself, Jesus attracted the souls that she loved. "Just as a torrent that is powerfully thrown into the ocean carries with it everything in its path, in the same way, oh Jesus, the soul that plunges into the shoreless ocean of your love carries with it all the treasures that it possesses."

She acknowledged that it was not her merit which freed her from love for creatures, but only the boundless mercy of God. She knew that “the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” (Lk 7:47). “But those profound words,” she said, “resonate with immense sweetness in my soul, because I also know that Jesus has forgiven me more than the Magdalene, since he has forgiven me in advance, preventing me from falling.”

“The Lord has compassion on those who fear him. For he knows how we are formed, remembers that we are dust.” (Ps 103). How often do we remember that we are dust? The world persuades us to magnify ourselves, but greatness in God’s eyes is being like children, like the Little Flower. Our being childlike is what can allow the Lord to give us rest. Jesus explains that being childlike means learning from him to be meek and humble of heart. That is what it means to acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God. And like St. John tells us in the second reading, that is how God remains in us and we in him, enabling us to love one another. St. Thérèse teaches us that a simple smile, suffering in silence, and any small action done with great love is the way to God who is love. Pope Francis says that “Thérèse lived the little way of complete trust in the Lord’s love and determined to fan with her prayers the fire of love burning in the heart of the Church.”

Let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to show us the little way that leads to her Son’s heart and to the heart of the Church.