

SUNDAY 25 (B) (2021)

A) GREATNESS

- Titles: Alfred, Catherine, Peter; Alexander; Leo, Gregory, JPII
- Great Britons: Churchill
- St Therese: "greatest Saint of modern times"
- way of littleness, humility, faithfulness, unbounded confidence in love and mercy of God
- she learned the lesson Jesus teaches in today's Gospel
- a lesson the disciples were not able to understand

B) DISCIPLES DISCUSS WHICH OF THEM IS THE GREATEST

Jesus overhears; they feel uncomfortable

He had just foretold his passion

In the Gospels, this happens three times, and we heard the first of those prophecies last Sunday.

On that occasion, Jesus was misunderstood by the disciples, and Peter tried to dissuade him.

It was a very hard lesson for the disciples to learn, and Jesus had to keep repeating it.

And again today, he explains that the kingdom he wanted to establish was not of this world, and therefore its values would not be of this world either.

C) THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

But Jesus tells them quite clearly: If anyone wants to be first he must make himself last of all and servant of all.

It was something he himself lived out fully in his own life.

The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

He takes a little child: whoever welcomes this little one welcomes me

The greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, the most Christ-like, is the one who relates to God like a little child

D) THERESE: WAY OF LITTLENESS

She was the youngest of nine children, four of whom died in infancy

She experienced unconditional love in her own family, from her parents and her four older sisters

She learned to regard God Himself in exactly the same way

Lived out a way of littleness and spiritual childhood

She recognised her own weakness and helplessness before God

She knew that she could not do great things for him

But she could do little things with great love

This way of littleness was not cosy and comfortable

Great suffering both physical (TB) and spiritual (a Dark Night of faith) marked her journey to God

#### E) THERESE: TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON GOD

A more important lesson still was her total dependence on God  
A recognition that all that we have and are comes from him  
That he loves us unconditionally  
That his love and mercy are not there to be earned or merited  
or deserved: that would be impossible

But they come to us as a free gift, if only we would accept them

We have to learn to do that, because we are conditioned by ordinary life to earn rewards, respect, affection

How do we learn to do that?

Perhaps the best place to begin is where Therese herself began: with a consciousness of how highly God values us and how tenderly he loves us.

It is good sometimes to reflect that he creates each one of us, singly, individually, and uniquely.

Each one of us is quite unlike anyone else.

He loves each one of us just as we are, warts and all.

In fact, our weaknesses and shortcomings can be our greatest assets, because they give God the opportunity to fill us with his grace, his power, and his mercy.

What is more, he wants each of us to make his love present in the world, just as his Son did;

and each one of us does that in our own unique and inimitable way.

But what we all have in common is that we are called to make that love present, just as Christ did, through the gentle and unassuming service of others.

This was something Therese lived out for nine short years in the Carmelite Convent in Lisieux.

#### F) CONCLUSION

Therese is "the greatest Saint in modern times".

She is also a Doctor (Teacher) of the Church

Let us learn from her

"Give your weakness to Christ and let HIM be your strength.

Give your poverty to Jesus and let HIM be your only treasure.

Give your lack of holiness to Christ and let HIM be your sanctity, your holiness."

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