

St. Therese
10/26/2021

A CHILDLIKE GENIUS—SEE THE POSSIBILITIES

Today we celebrate our patroness, St. Therese of Lisieux, one of the most beloved saints in the history of the Church. The gospel today speaks of being childlike and she possessed what you could call a childlike genius—something both simple and profound. Simple was the ability to offer to everything, a sacrifice or even a joy, for the glory of God, whether it was simply picking something up off the floor or dying a long, terrible death by tuberculosis. Profound was the realization that everything we do can be for the glory of God; everything can become a prayer.

Each day we receive many invitations to grow in holiness as we live our daily lives. The genius of St. Therese was to harness these ordinary events with great love to grow closer to God. In her childlike genius with some very intentional faith, St. Therese could see the possibilities for spiritual growth in our daily lives in big ways and in every *little way*.

As we celebrate our patroness, I am pleased to share some exciting news with our parish and I invite you to *See the Possibilities*. At the turn of this century, our parish made a bold move—to build our parish education center that has allowed our school to flourish and has served our parish in so many other different ways. It was a bold move. It was the right move but also a move we are still paying for with a debt that continues to weigh us down.

Last month, when I first found out about my cancer, I had a sense of peace with whatever would happen. I like to think I'm ready to leave this life if I need to, but at the same time, I think God still has work here for me to do and I think that what I am about to share is part of that work. Bishop Johnston has asked us to start a capital campaign to retire our debt and we want to use this as a time to bring our parish to the next level. And so we are launching the first parish capital campaign in many years called, *See the Possibilities*.

There are three parts to this project. One, to *Secure Our Past*, that is to retire our debt. Our parish education center opened in 2004, and now close to two generations of students have passed through there and we still are paying it off.

Every year, the debt costs us over \$335,000. Think what a difference that would make if we didn't have that millstone around our neck. There's so much more we would be able to do. When I was in poorer parishes I received financial help from two other parishes. A parish of our size and stature should be helping other parishes in our diocese, and even in the third world. We need to move more beyond ourselves. With our debt gone, we can do that better.

Two, to *Enhance Our Present* and there are three components to this. Two-A. Our church is now over 23 years old and millions of people have passed through it. Considering all that, it looks pretty good but if you look closer, you will see that it's showing its age and it needs to be freshened up. Our goal is to fix some structural needs including a number of leaks. Look beneath the bell tower as you leave church you can see this. Our goal is to enhance our worship space, not just for ourselves but for future generations.

We want to install new pews. After helping disinfect our pews for nearly a year, I have seen for myself, up close and personal, the need for this. We have been working with a design committee and we want to highlight our crucifix and give some depth making the tabernacle stand out by highlighting the back wall. We will use some of the stained glass from the second church to fill the square windows in this church adding some color and making a connection to our heritage.

We also plan to expand the Adoration Chapel and add statues of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph on these two walls. I have been talking to the artist who designed our crucifix who is working on some proposals for these that would give us original artwork and artistic continuity.

Two-B. We want our children and young people to have somewhere else to play besides the parking lot and also plan to put in a turf playing field opposite the entrance to the parish office.

Two-C. Bishop Johnston realizes that St. Therese is an active vibrant parish. St. Therese would make an excellent teaching parish for a seminarian as a summer experience or even for a pastoral year. Our present living situation, a smaller side by side duplex across the way in Chapel Woods, isn't suited for this. So Bishop Johnston has also asked us build a rectory. We already have the property for this by the parking lot entrance. Additionally, an on site rectory would allow priests to have

a community life. I value the experiences I had in different parishes when I was a seminarian and our parish has something to offer future priests.

Three. In addition to securing our past and enhancing our present, we want to *Embrace our Future*. There is a saying that you make hay while the sun shines. Southern Platte County continues to be in expansion mode and that's the time to make hay. We have a school endowment and would like to add to that, not just thinking about today or tomorrow, but for the years and decades ahead. Before returning to St. Therese, I was at St. Anthony and Holy Cross Parishes in the urban core. Holy Cross has a school and it's very important to maintain quality Catholic education in that part of the city. Without outside assistance that school would have closed a long time ago. I can't help but wonder if 70 years ago they had started an endowment, how that school might be in a different place today.

We also want to establish a cash reserve fund so that the next time an air conditioner or furnace goes out, we can manage that easily. It's obvious that we need a new parking lot but it's not wise to do that before starting construction.

I invite you to *see the possibilities as we secure our past, enhance our present and embrace our future*. Our goal for this campaign is six million dollars. 3.2 to retire our debt, one million for the church, 200,000 for the playing field and 600,000 for the rectory. And then 500,000 for the endowment and cash reserve fund.

We have been moving through the silent phase of this campaign and I am pleased to say that we already have over \$2.1 million committed. I am grateful for the generosity of those who have already stepped up. With some of those funds already coming in, our actual debt is now down to 2.5 million. I'm asking for your help to *See the Possibilities* of taking St. Therese Parish to the next level. This week you should receive a mailing sharing more information about this work and there will be more in the coming weeks. Our commitment Sunday will be in November. In your mailing there will be a commitment card for the campaign which will run over a three year period.

And I want to be transparent with you, the card will also provide space for your annual commitment, because while we take our parish to the next level, we also have to keep the lights on and maintain all the good work that goes on here literally every day of the year. I realize that I am asking you to make a sacrifice, one that I am

making with you. I ask you to consider making a 3% pledge of your annual income and spread that over a three year period for this campaign. Now I realize that some people aren't in a position to do that, while others are in a position to do more. I ask you to do what you can. My goal isn't to pressure anyone but to invite everyone to be part of this work.

I love this parish. Over half my life as a priest and over a quarter of my entire life has been spent here, and I want to see us go to the next level. St. Therese had the childlike genius to *See the Possibilities*. May we share that in our own daily lives and in the life of our parish. *See the possibilities as we secure our past, enhance our present and embrace our future.*