

# *The Love That Keeps Us Sane: Living the Little Way of St. Therese of Lisieux*

By Marc Foley

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Review by Thomas E. Little

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE a book makes its way into my life that opens up something new and vital, and seemingly just at the right moment. *The Love That Keeps Us Sane* did that for me this summer. Fr. Marc Foley's pocketbook, drawing on the wisdom of the Little Way of St. Thérèse's of Lisieux, was a wonderful gift at a time I was searching for comfort, consolation and reconnoitering following my brother's death. The intent of the 104-page pocketbook is to make available the wisdom of Thérèse, who struggled to discover and connect her life's ordinary and extraordinary pains with and to God even in their most seeming insignificance. Thérèse's spirituality is often dismissed as too sweet and sentimental. However, when you meet her with Marc Foley, you encounter a focused, practical and insightful woman who knows what it means to struggle with personal authenticity and to deal with the multiple "vexings" that come with living the challenges of everyday life with others.

Thérèse's journey was learning to see God in all things and all things from God's perspective, even as she churned through her myriad chores and challenges. From the book, "Thérèse wanted to become like a little grain of sand, hidden from all eyes for a reason: 'so that Jesus alone may be able to see it.' She sought her true reflection in the face of Jesus alone. Thérèse chose to direct her gaze inward so that the opinion of God alone would matter to her. In doing so, even though she suffered the misunderstandings and rash judgments of others, she freed herself from the exhausting task of trying to win their approval." From

her churning through life emerged a path and perspective that discovered God in the mundane and the seemingly empty places in life. Through a "nothing special" life in the convent of Lisieux, Thérèse's found her God and her joy in the ordinary chores and challenges where she could be happy and could love and serve without the burden of living out of self-centered motivations.

I read the book the first time in an evening; it was that easy to breeze through. I am re-reading it now, more thoughtfully and with a growing appreciation of the author and the subject's light touch on life. Marc Foley and Thérèse find opportunities to keep the "hectic" in focus and at arm's length, welcoming instead the serenity and sense to focus living in a simple and quietly engaging way. This book is not about "retreating from" life but engaging it fully, with the spiritual imagination of Thérèse, who learns to see her world through eyes always alert to the presence and the fullness of God. If you are searching for a perspective on renewing your life, I recommend that one.

Do not dismiss this gem. A few minutes with it can provide a unique, thoughtful perspective for your own search through a jumbled world. And look for Fr. Marc Foley to be with us at Bon Secours soon, for a retreat on the spirituality of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. It will be a wonderful complement to the great gift of *The Love That Keeps Us Sane*.

*Dr. Thomas E. Little is Executive Director of Bon Secours Spiritual Center.*