

## **THERESE AS SPIRITUAL GUIDE - A SECOND REFLECTION**

What is a guide?

A guide is someone who knows the way, someone like the pathfinders of the Old West, someone who has explored the areas we want to pass through, someone who knows the shortest routes and the dangers along the way, someone who will show us how to get where we want to go and keep us safe getting there.

Our ultimate guide in life, of course, is Jesus. He told us, "I AM the way, the truth and the life." More than a guide, really, Jesus IS the way. God is love. Love is the way.

Jesus said the Father would send us the Holy Spirit to guide us. The Holy Spirit, God, IS love. THE way. All those little promptings we hear inside ourselves to do good, to pray, to want to learn more about God – that's the Holy Spirit nudging us.

So, why do we need anyone else beside Jesus, beside the Holy Spirit? Well, we don't really. All we need to know Jesus has already told us.

But you could say we are amateurs at this holiness business. We are beginners and 10 or 20 years from now we will probably still be little more than beginners.

So, a little extra help wouldn't hurt. It's a lot like sports. Even the greatest athletes need coaches to keep them at their best, to GUIDE them.

Jesus talked about people who have eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear. Often, that's us. So we can all use a good coach to keep us moving in the right direction.

Many people look to the saints for guidance, to those souls who have done this job of life really well. After all, what we want, what we are striving for, is to become saints. Yes, we also have to make our way in the world, to earn a living. So we strive to succeed in a career, to make money, maybe to be creative and leave something beautiful behind us.

But for us, no matter what we do, no matter how we do it, the only thing that will really matter is that we become saints. Not just plaster saints with shiny halos, but real saints. Everyone wants to go to Heaven. There's only one way to get there – become a saint.

It won't matter if you earn a million dollars in your lifetime, if you write a great novel, if you become a movie star or get elected president of the United States. The only thing that will matter is how you do these things and if doing them lets you become a saint.

Will any of us be canonized some day? Probably not. But even that doesn't matter. Just doing God's will, becoming a little saint through whatever path He has laid out for us ... that matters, and nothing else.

So, back to finding a guide. We know Jesus is our ultimate guide, but understanding all that He said and doing all that He has told us to do... here maybe a little extra help would be good.

Here at St. Teresa's we are especially blessed. As members of this parish we are under the special protection of St. Therese of Lisieux, whom Pope Pius XI called "the greatest saint of modern times." In 1997 pope John Paul II declared Therese a Doctor of the Church, a true guide for understanding the gospels.

Jesus said, "Come. Follow me." Therese followed Him. Gifted with a wonderful perception of the true nature of God, she shows us the way to God, her "Little Way" that leads straight to the heart of Jesus.

Therese's focus was always on Jesus. Jesus came for sinners, for the "unclean," the ritually impure in His day... us now. And Therese, if we follow her guidance, will lead us to this God who has come for us.

Yes, Therese lived a very short life, dying at age 24 after just 9 years in a cloistered Carmelite convent. But over the last 100-plus years, millions of people have turned to her and have found a way through her.

Therese's autobiography, "Story of a Soul," was first published in 1898, a year after her death. The first printing of 2,000 copies quickly ran out and more copies were ordered. Then more and more until millions of copies had spread all over the world in dozens of languages.

Countless people in every walk of life have found something magical in Therese. So, if you're looking for a guide to the spiritual life, you have one right here at St. Teresa's Church on Staten Island. Do what millions have done before you. Turn to St. Therese of Lisieux and let her lead you to Jesus.