



MAGNET OF SOULS

Oblates of the Holy Face Newsletter

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Osculamini filium, nequando irascetur et peribitis a via
(Ps. 2:12, Cardinal Thomas Cajetan's translation)



**The SGG High Altar on the Oblates' titular feast
of the Holy Face of Jesus**

Dear faithful,

On Tuesday, February 21, our parish celebrated Shrove Tuesday, also known as *Mardi Gras*. This day is also the feast of the Holy Face of Jesus, the main feast of our Oblate Sisters.

One of the patronesses of the Sisters is St. Veronica. What an impact the tortured Face of the Son of God on her veil must have made on her life. Every time she looked upon it, the story of the sufferings of her God must have pressed from her a thanksgiving and a firm resolve never to cause Him pain in the future.

The greatest saint in our own times who was devoted to the Holy Face is of course St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower. Beside the “Child Jesus,” she took as her religious title that of “the Holy Face.” Her full name in religion was, then, “Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.”

The Little Flower is one of the many saints named “Teresa.” She is sometimes called “little Teresa,” and she took her name “Thérèse” from a girl directly linked to the “big Teresa,” St. Teresa of Avila.

All the brothers of St. Teresa of Avila, inspired by the spirit of adventure and chivalry of the time, left to serve the King in the Americas. Missing her older brothers, St. Teresa corresponded very closely with her little brother Lorenzo de Cepeda, who was four years younger than she. Lorenzo became the mayor of Quito, Ecuador, and in 1556 married Juana de Fuentes, with whom he had seven children. St. Teresa loved them all, and when Juana died in 1567, Lorenzo decided to return to Spain with his three surviving children, Francisco, Lorenzo Jr., and Teresa.

St. Teresa’s niece little Teresa, or “Teresita,” as she was called, entered in a convent as a boarder to live with her aunt when she was nine years old. In those times, young girls were sometimes allowed to enter a monastery as a kind of an Oblate in the hope of afterwards embracing religious life. They were given a habit resembling that of the

professed nuns. They also received educational training from the community where they resided.

Three months before her death, St. Teresa wrote about Teresita: “Pray for Teresa, who is a little saint and has a great desire to be a professed nun. May God guide her.” Teresita made her vows few weeks after her aunt’s death, and after a life as a Discalced Carmelite, died in the monastery of St. Joseph in Avila on September 10, 1610.

In the 1800s in France, when St. Thérèse of Lisieux was 9 years old, she entrusted to the Carmelites her desire to enter a monastery, the same as her sister Pauline was in. In 1888, at the age of 15, she became a Carmelite and had as her religious name *Thérèse*, in memory of Teresita, the niece of St. Teresa of Avila.

During her nine years of religious life, St. Thérèse of Lisieux was assigned to a number of different duties: laundry, refectory, sacristy, painting workshop, and pottery. These were all duties she did out of love, desiring to remain hidden from the world as Our Lord’s little Veronica. In her autobiography *Story of a Soul*, chapter 7, she wrote:

Until then I had not appreciated the beauties of the Holy Face; it was my dear Mother, Agnes of Jesus, who unveiled them to me. As she had been the first of her sisters to enter the Carmel, so she was the first to penetrate the mysteries of love hidden in the

Face of Our Divine Spouse. Then she showed them to me and I understood better than ever, in what true glory consists. He whose “Kingdom is not of this world” [John 18:36] taught me that the only royalty to be coveted lies in being “unknown and esteemed as naught,” [Imit. I:2:3] and in the joy of self-abasement. And I wished that my face, like the Face of Jesus, “should be, as it were, hidden and despised,” [Is. 53:3] so that no one on earth should esteem me. I thirsted to suffer and to be forgotten.

Most merciful has been the way by which the Divine Master has ever led me. He has never inspired me with any desire and left it unsatisfied, and that is why I have always found His bitter chalice full of sweetness.

The feast of the Holy Face was followed by Ash



Teresita de Cepeda, niece of St. Teresa of Avila, born in Quito, Ecuador

Wednesday, and the beginning of the sacred season of Lent. The Sisters and the siblings of Sr. Eulalia veiled the chapel in purple after the Mass of the Holy Face, and set the Lenten shrines. One of them is the statue of the Scourged Christ, which is now in the baptistry chapel, and will be placed in the vestibule when Passion week starts.

During the Passion week of 2003, the last one when St. Gertrude the Great Church was in Sharonville, *The Cincinnati Enquirer* paper ran a story about our Scourged Christ statue. The article told how the Novus Ordo church sees statues like that “almost grotesque,” and that they don’t call a person to “a spiritual awareness.” But Bishop Dolan was quoted saying: “It’s a real jumping board



to prayer and inspiration. When we look at it, it makes us see the price of our sins.”

The paper also interviewed some parishioners. Sister Eulalia was just a baby then, but her mother told, that the three oldest children (Father Thomas Simpson among them), who were aged 4-7, were fine with the statue: “They just say Jesus has lots of ‘ouchies’ and sometimes they pray for Him.” This was not perhaps the most theologically accurate statement, but certainly extremely sweet in its sincerity and innocence.

Lent is the time to meditate the Passion and sufferings of Christ, which we can read from His loving Face. And they should also make us see the

sufferings and sorrow of our neighbor, and the need of the acts of charity. That has often happened in the history of the modern world. One example is that of Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy (1883-1929), who was an Anglican minister and poet. When he was appointed to serve in Rugby, Warwickshire, he was put in charge of a mission to some of the worst slums in the town. He married in 1914 and accepted the position of pastor of St. Paul’s in Worcester, about 40 miles from the city of Birmingham. St. Paul’s was desperately poor, one of the poorest parishes of England, located in the slum of Blockhouse, which all but disappeared in the mid-1900s when large rows of houses were condemned and demolished. Studdert Kennedy’s ministry in Blockhouse was inspired by the suffering God having compassion on the suffering humanity. He expressed this idea very touchingly in his poem “Indifference,” which was published in *Rhymes* in 1929:

*When Jesus came to Golgotha
they hanged Him on a tree.
They drove great nails through hands and feet,
and made a Calvary.
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns,
red were His wounds and deep.
For those were crude and cruel days,
and human flesh was cheap.*

*When Jesus came to Birmingham,
they simply passed Him by.
They never hurt a hair of Him,
they only let Him die.
For men had grown more tender and
they would not give Him pain.
They only just passed down the street,
and let Him in the rain.*

*Still Jesus cried, “Forgive them, for
they know not what they do.”
And still it rained the wintry rain
that drenched Him through and through.
The crowds went home and left the streets
without a soul to see.
And Jesus crouched against a wall
and cried for Calvary.*

Have a blessed start of the holy season of Lent.

Yours in the Charity of Christ and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart,

Fr. Vili Lehtoranta



The *pietà*, usually in the baptistry chapel, is now one of our church's Lenten shrines, set in the sanctuary on its Gospel side.



Our Lent is under the patronage of Saint Francis de Sales. His shrine occupies the Epistle side of the sanctuary.



The high altar of the St. Gertrude the Great, set for the Lenten season, on Ash Wednesday