

Thoughts on the Daily Word

26th Week of the Year. *Tuesday 1st October. St. Therese of the Child Jesus.*
Readings: Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm: 130; Gospel: Matthew 18:1-5.

I did not really know of the Little Flower until I was about 17 years of age, wanting to be a priest. I had adopted St. John Vianney, patron saint of priests, but then suddenly from nowhere Therese appeared and for some reason it just seemed right to adopt her too. From then on, she seemed to haunt me! I couldn't work out why, she seemed the opposite of everything that I wanted to become. Too other worldly, too simple, even too childlike. Then, when I was training to be a teacher an amazing book about her just jumped out at me and has remained a staple on my bookshelf ever since. 'The Hidden Face', by Hilda Graef, was written in the 1950's by a German spiritual writer and is still in print. It placed her struggle within the context of France and Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It also helped me to see something of my own struggle to grow in faith in her journey. The readings today show something of the intimacy that God has for us and just how the community of faith, or Jerusalem in Isaiah, has that motherly care for us as children. Therese taught me something of that motherly love of God. Her last gift to me was when I was diagnosed with cancer of the eye in October 2014. I had a few days in Paris with some priest friends staying at the Polish Seminary in mid-November, the week before my radiotherapy. A Polish priest offered to take us to visit Lisieux basilica for Mass. When we arrived the Mass was cancelled, after a three-hour journey. Suddenly someone in the Basilica told us to go to the Carmelite Convent for Mass. I found myself celebrating Mass over the tomb of St. Therese in the Chapel that she worshipped and loved. I knew that she was telling me of her continuing love and her presence.