



To **love** means making space for the other



BY MARY SHARON
MOORE

Before I was born, my mother dedicated my life to the care of St. Thérèse. She knew there was something not right with the pregnancy. I nearly died in delivery, but miraculously escaped the trauma unscathed.

Inexplicably, it's only now, well on in my life, that I find myself longing to draw closer to this patron saint. So it's not by chance that today I come across the writings of St. Thérèse and learn of her deepest vocational desire.

After wrestling with all of the impossible options ("I feel myself called to be a soldier, priest, apostle, doctor of the church, martyr ... to perform all the most heroic deeds for you, Jesus"), Thérèse comes upon St. Paul's "still more excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12:31) And with her young heart set on fire, she cries out her famous words: "At last I have found my vocation. My vocation is Love! I will be Love!" I will be Love.

She does not say: "I will do loving things, or live in loving ways." Quite simply, Thérèse understands that her calling in life is to actually be Love – to be so consumed by Love that she has no identity apart from Love.

Well, immediately I realize how far my life is from that mark. I do loving things – when it's convenient. I live in loving ways – when I want people to think well of me. But real Love is costly. Love, St. John the Evangelist describes, is God. His words are clear and unmistakable and direct: God is Love. Jesus, Son of God and risen Christ, is Love incarnate.

What does this mean for me? I have been baptized into Christ. "For you have died," St. Paul reminds me, "and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:~4) At this point, my own "vocation to Love" should be clear.

Again, St. Paul reminds me: "None of us lives

◀ Maggie Silver (left) holds future Theresian Felicity, while Kathleen McCoy (right) holds future Theresian Maeve. They are in a community in formation being mentored by Robyn Boudreaux, Mitzi Domino and Colleen Rabalais, Agape Garden Community.



Marguerite Blanchard (left), Daughters of Wisdom and Danielle Andrus, Little Theresians

for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. (Romans 14:~9) These are inspiring words, but do I get it?

What is this "vocation of Love"? What would that look like? What would I look like if I were actually living my vocation to be Love?

To love, in essence, means "to make space for the other." St. Thérèse's namesake, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, certainly understood this vocational definition of Love. Her life was spent, poured out, in making space for the other. She lived and breathed costly love, inconvenient love, love which suffers with the other and restores dignity to what society has cast aside.

Oftentimes the flies in our vocational ointment are those annoying circumstances that crop up and clearly give us all the reasons why we cannot love. "It would be wasted," we imagine, or "it would simply be seen as enabling." Maybe we convince ourselves that "they don't deserve my love," or "it's not the right time."

Or the hardest reason of all: "They'd just take my love and turn around and betray me." Jesus knew the sting of just such betrayal.

So we can ask ourselves: "How do I actually create space for the other?" Our parents created space for each of us, and so have modeled generosity and selflessness that reveal something of God. The teacher who seeks out the struggling student; the counselor who is there for a confused and angry youth; the medical professional who listens deeply to each patient; the social worker who is present to those who struggle at the margins – all of these express costly love.

How do you create space for the other, both when convenient and uplifting for you and when inconvenient and just plain thankless and hard to do? Where your loving generosity lies, there lies also your vocation. ■

"None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:~9)



Theresians of Bangkok

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