



The way to Spiritual Maturity in Story of a Soul of St Therese of Lisieux.

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St Therese Parish.

On the occasion of our Patroness Feast Day, I feel grateful and blessed to be reaching out to you, hopefully even touching your hearts, through this little message. This message in a couple of moments is a bit technical and toward the end it turns perhaps too practical. I am trying in a way to respond to some feedbacks that came out after the two previous messages. In fact, in the next four paragraphs I am referring to and building on the Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday Messages.

I know that many of you have realised how we all, created to the image and likeness of God, are indeed creators. Well, let me clarify that our tools of creation are basically three: our thoughts, our words and our actions. It is pretty normal that although we are creators, most of people are not aware of it. In effect, we often do not even realise, or do not want to believe or at least consider, that most of our difficulties and all kind of diseases are our unaware creations.

Thought as our first tool for creation triggers emotions. The brain produces substances called neuropeptides (strings of amino-acids) that travel throughout the body. Neuropeptides will get stored on neuropeptide receptors found on the surface of all cells of the body. Once peptides find a receptor, the chemical message is transmitted deep into the cell triggering a chain of biochemical reactions, which can create positive or negative changes within the cell.





Neuropeptides and their receptors can be called, in a somehow old fashion way, the molecules of emotion. Then we can understand how emotional memory is stored in many places in the body. Stored emotions bubble up from the body to the brain, where we can process and verbalise them according to our personal experiences, expectations and beliefs, among other filters.

We cannot conceive body and mind as separated entities but as a bodymind unity. With our thoughts, beliefs, words, actions and the consequent emotions we are capable of creating wellness or diseases in our bodies, and wellbeing or distress in our families and social circles.

Now, we cannot understand human life just in terms of chemicals. However, in my ministry to people and in my personal life experience, I have realised that we cannot either advance in the realm of spirituality if we do not understand (or at least have some awareness of) how our bodymind unity works.

We approach the realm of the spirit and soul through spirituality. It is not a coincidence that St Therese titles her autobiography: Story of a Soul. There, Therese of Lisieux shares her understanding of the Gospel of Jesus and the feelings she experiences throughout her life. Indeed, she shares her soul.

Therese tells us of her feelings of sorrow and vulnerability at the death of her mother. She narrates about her profound feeling of joy when she was healed from a serious nervous disorder and when she was admitted to the convent, according to her ardent desire, at an early age. In the convent, even when living still far from her ideal, just the desire to do so makes her to feel inner peace.





Therese grasps the core of the Gospel when she feels the fire of love in her heart, and that is what she yearns to teach. She calls her spirituality the little way to spiritual childhood, so it necessarily includes the feelings of trust and absolute surrender to God.

The way to spiritual childhood is the way of unconditional love. It is not a sentimental love, but a love that is so en-fleshed that it can be touched. We must be able to touch love, Therese says, in concrete actions and in service.

Indeed, spiritual childhood leaves behind childish ways (i.e., immaturity) and enters into the path of charity. Her spirituality leaves selfish ways and walks the path of love, without getting discouraged when we fail because children fall frequently. And just like children, in the ways of love, we cannot put limits to our desires and hopes, otherwise we are rejecting the infinite love of God.



Therese of Lisieux was an emotional little girl. Yet, her spiritual childhood leads her to maturity. And a vital sign of maturity is the ability to differentiate between emotions and feelings.

In our times, we live some sort of paradoxes. While we almost worship the body and so much dramatize emotions, most of the time we little know about the concrete functions of our bodymind unity. Even less we might know the difference between emotions and feelings.

Emotions are inherent and practically common to all individuals. Feelings are our conscious reactions to emotions. Feelings differ more than emotions from person to person. We cannot either separate emotions from feelings as we experience them simultaneously. But let us notice that feelings are based on the power to decide the meaning we give, and how do we react, to emotions.





We can even suggest that while emotions come from our bodymind, feelings come from our soul. For example, the emotion of sadness at the death of a friend's relative awakens the feeling of empathy and the desire to help or to accompany our distressed friend.

We tend to call our undesired situations (which are our creations) a mistake, wrong, bad or evil, especially when life seems to turn unbearable. Even our tough times or undesirable outcomes are manifestations of our God-given power to create.

As soon as we comprehend that our personal situation in life is our creation, we can marvel at our God given power and bless it, no matter how painful or hard the situation has become. In any case, we have another great ability, the power to decide. If it is our creation, we can decide to undo it and create something different. We have the tools, our thoughts, words and actions.

We have been given the tools and freedom to create blissfulness or suffering in our lives. This perspective through which we are here approaching spirituality aims to integrity, to spiritual maturity. Often, what stands in the way to our wholeness or integrity are relationship hurts or bodymind disease.

Let us not forget that unexpressed emotions are lodged in the body and that we are not powerless beings at what might seem their merciless manifestations. Just acknowledging emotions is a powerful way of expression. Bringing emotions into consciousness is in fact a way to integrating them.

Stored emotions can be triggered in so many ways, through body work, exercise, meditations, just simple breathing exercises can be extremely powerful. Our minds, present in our whole body, can be moved and developed if we provide them with new information via readings, new learnings, watching or listening to programs.

We can even nourish our soul through the wonders of art; listening to soothing music, going to an art gallery, to a museum, to the opera, for a walk to a park or by star watching. You name it. As we walk the way of love to wholeness, we aim to experience the integrity of our bodymind and soul, or better, being able to feel blissfulness as an undivided bodymindsoul.

