

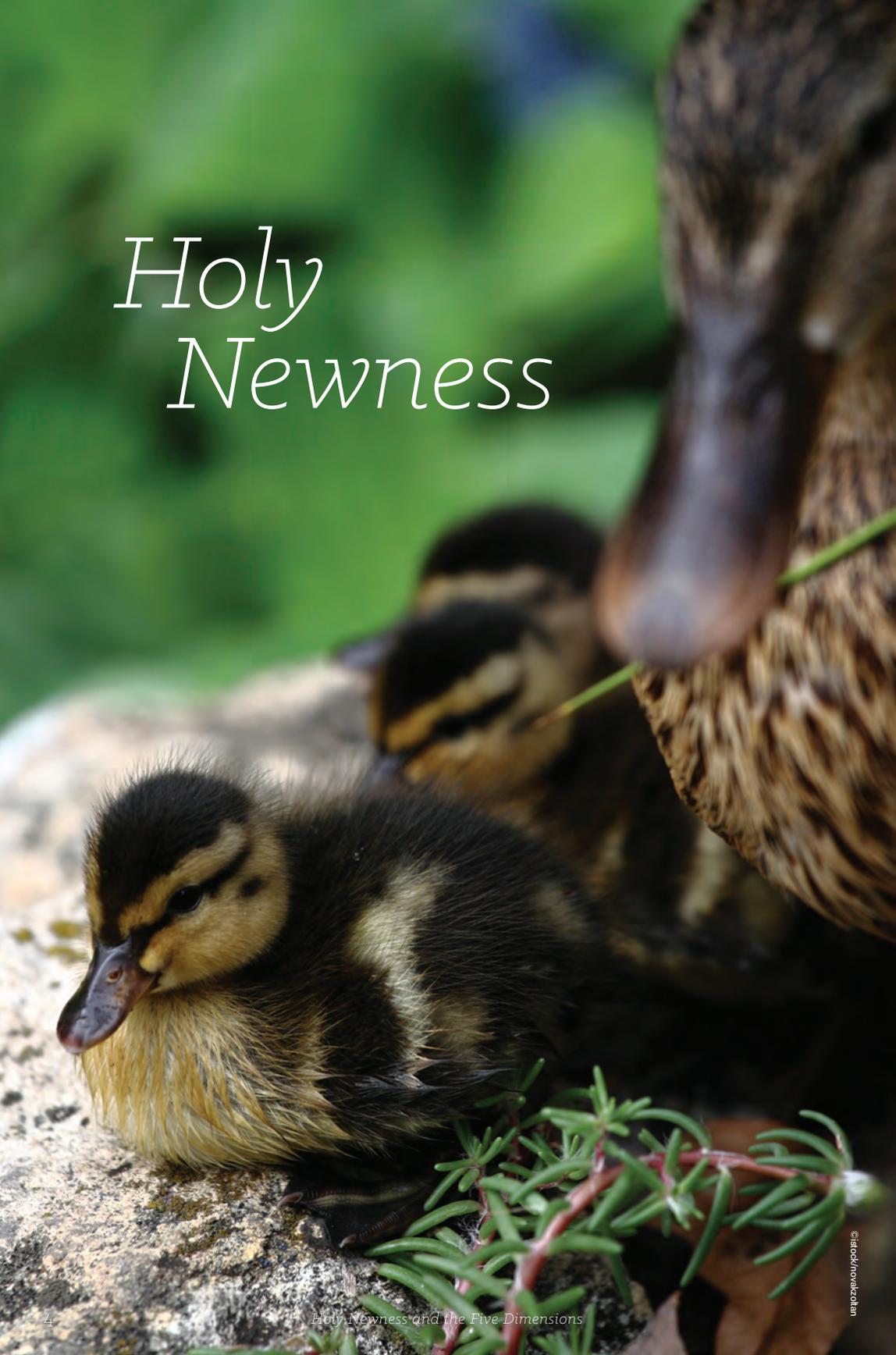
*Holy Newness
and the
Five Dimensions
A Theresian Way of Life*





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Holy Newness

The recurring message following the Discernment Day of October 2014 is a deep sense of **Holy Newness** within those present and spreading from them to all of us. Many of us were deeply touched by their exhilaration in the sense of the Holy Spirit active in them and among them. This has been on the minds and in the hearts of many of us throughout the Theresian world.

This **Holy Newness** had its beginnings in the very coming to existence of this organization. In the 1960s, the vision and dream of a Vocation Director in Pueblo, Colorado, took root in women active in their parishes. Msgr. Elwood C. Voss invited them to become active in promoting vocations to women's religious communities. This was a successful activity! With the conclusion of Vatican II, Theresians in leadership expanded the vision and the dream to offer to women new insights into their value and contribution to the Catholic communities of the United States. Thus, Theresians became a viable group of women empowered to live their faith in more visible and active ways. They grew to embrace social justice issues in their communities, to address issues in the church community and in the wider community where they lived.

Holy Newness expanded to other countries, becoming Theresian World Ministry (TWM). The Holy Spirit provided the manner and the means to share the message in Canada, in Australia, in Ghana, in Thailand, in the Philippines, and in Brazil. This **Holy Newness** also stretched into mission territories: Mexico, Argentina, and Haiti. The message has touched minds and hearts in big cities, in small villages, in storm-ravaged landscapes, in those struggling with human trafficking, and in those with limits placed on their opportunities to make a better life for themselves and their children.

Holy Newness stirred once more in the blending of the Theresians of the United States and TWM. These growing pains expanded our horizons once again. We are learning to "Think Globally and Act Locally." We have found ways to bridge the cultural differences across this planet and recognize the strength of the message: **Women in Support of Women ... Reaching Out with Gospel Values**. We are learning that the greatest gift of this blending is the discovery that love, kindness, and presence are the bridge to understanding and to standing in solidarity with women everywhere.

Threads of **Holy Newness** have been woven into the concerns, work, and suggested activities of the WEET Committee, as well. Women Emerging to Embrace Theresians was an ad hoc committee of the USA NLT who worked from 2010-2013 to identify key issues in promoting the growth of Theresians. Their final recommendations were reported to the TI Board and the USA NLT. The committee has addressed the reality of the challenge to add new members. The rec-

ommendations ask each of us to accept responsibility for investing time, talent, and energy into bringing the richness we have found to women around us in our own local areas and to find ways that we can share the broadening of our understandings through the dimension of Education woven into every meeting, the solidarity we have found in Community, the deepening of our Spirituality and an expanding concept of the Vocation of being a woman in this century amid the continuous change that surrounds us all, as well as the Ministries in which we each engage. The essential impact of their recommendations is the call to each of us to invite, welcome, and nurture new members and new communities.

Today, this **Holy Newness** has within it a Call to Community, an invitation to spread this good news among women in our midst. We are called to stand on the shoulders of the giants who came before us and build again; to gather again women whose needs in today's world are just as demanding, maybe even more so. Our world is in transition and obviously not a peaceful one. If peace is to prevail, women have a role to play. Our concerns, our hopes, and our dreams need a voice. Let us find ways to be this voice in our homes, in our local communities of Thesians, and in the communities in which we live. Not strident, but positive, and filled with the awareness that we can and do make a difference; it is in the solidarity of community that we are most effective.

Human minds and hearts, when they explore together, when they collaborate on the steps to believe in and make a dream come true, give a new definition to Dream Big! We can be driven by the desire to share what we have found, knowing that we are healed and strengthened in community, and that women today will find **Holy Newness** among us.

Ponder

1. Trace the thread of **Holy Newness** that brought your community into existence.
 2. Who do you know who has built the bridges from the past to this international Thesian format? What stories surrounding this have you asked for?
 3. It has been said, *Don't let your history limit your destiny*. What does this say to you?
 4. Brainstorm ways you, as a community, can be an active part of expanding our universe of Thesians. Then, are you, individually, willing and available to help?
 5. The *Prayer for the Growth of Thesians* and the *Thesian Litany of Solidarity* (Pages 44 and 45 in this booklet) are contributions that invite us to pray and become laborers in the vineyard.
-

Resources

Maraboli, Dr. Steve. "Your History and Your Destiny," Nov. 4, 2013. Everyday Health Media, LLC, ©2015. www.everydayhealth.com/columns/steve-maraboli-the-healthy-empowered-life/your-history-and-your-destiny/

Prayer for Wisdom in Discernment

By Pat Bergen, CSJ

*May Wisdom be present
in your discernment shedding light
upon God's dormant dreams
and unfolding paths.*

*May Trust invite you
to explore the unknown
with a Hopeful heart.*

*May supportive companions
keep vigil in your waiting.
May you be blessed with
Patience and Courage
in the expression of your true self.*

*May the yearnings of the Spirit
call forth Generosity and great Love.
And, may your heart be open always
to welcome Holy Newness.*

Amen

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Crossing New Thresholds Toward the Horizon

By Lynda Knoche, Women at the Well Community, Richmond, Texas

The USA National Conference in Fort Bend, Texas, in 2013 created the beautiful theme of Crossing New Thresholds Toward the Horizon. As seen on the cover of this booklet, the artwork to accompany the theme was painted by Jeff Howell (husband of Fort Bend Theresian Ramah Howell) and is rich in Theresian symbolism. Each of the Five Dimensions is represented by an element in the painting and we want to share this renewed understanding.

Education – The Gate. As Theresians, we stand at a threshold, seeing both the past and the future which lies before us. We see that women of the world and the world itself have changed. We face new challenges, knowing that to grow we must move through the gate of education. This gate gives us options, broadens our perspective, moves us beyond our comfort zones, and calls us to a spirit of openness. As Theresian women, this dimension leads us to an awareness of our role in bringing about change and becoming an effective voice for the voiceless women in our world.

Community – The Beach. The shoreline of our icon is a mixture of sand and pebbles in myriad sizes, shapes, and colors. The sand and pebbles have come from around the world; their beauty is enhanced, as their travels, experiences, and encounters with others shape them and smooth their rough edges, until they become part of our communal beach. We, too, come from across the globe to allow ourselves to become formed in the sacred space that is Theresians. We grow ever more beautiful as, in community, we use our wisdom to discover who we are, uncover our unique gifts, and become a dynamic and effective presence in our world.



Spirituality – The Ocean. Just as we cannot see the entire ocean at once, we experience spirituality in glimpses, while being aware of its vastness. And as is true with the waters of the ocean, within our spirituality there is constant movement. Sometimes this movement is steady and inviting; sometimes it is stormy and frightening. However, ever present is a mysterious depth and peace that somehow connect us all and invite us to immerse ourselves within them. As Thesians, we immerse ourselves in the spiritual waters through

St. Thérèse’s Little Way. When Thérèse found the spirituality of her day too vast for her soul, she dove into the ocean of the everyday, offering all of herself and her actions to the Lord. Following her example, we allow the gifts of our baptismal waters to flow into us and through us each day.



Vocation – The Driftwood. Consider the driftwood that has been washed up on the beach. It sits on the sand, waiting to tell a story to those who have ears to listen. Where has it been? What journey brought it to this shore? What is its purpose, its vocation? It begins as a tree, but it is now called to be ... what? Who knows what God has planned? As we develop spiritually, we, too, strive to discern our vocation in life. This vocation may change as our lives and circumstances change. Along our journey, our Theresian sisters often serve as lighthouses on the shore of life – beacons who light our way to who we can become, help us discern God’s will, and discover and develop our gifts and talents.

Ministry – The Pelican. Tradition tells us that, in times of famine, a female pelican will draw blood from her own heart to feed her offspring. What a model of selfless ministry! As Thesians, we minister in a similar way, sharing the gift of self with our family, our Theresian sisters, and the world. We give and sustain life, however and wherever God calls us to do so. Ministry is an invitation to live and love with a servant’s heart. It is an invitation

to which we respond with a resounding “Yes!”

Education Dimension

*Continual formation leading
to spiritual maturity*



The Education Dimension of Theresians International is a part of every meeting. Each meeting has a program portion which may include:

- A speaker
- A shared reflection
- A documentary film
- A topic which is presented to highlight a concern, an issue, or a new insight
- An evening of fun, laughter, and lighthearted activities.

The original intent of this aspect of every meeting was to respect and develop the understandings of women on issues of social concern, of service opportunities, and of adaptation to change. Since change is inevitable, exploring the impact and meaning of events and issues assists us to be open to new ways of observing and doing things.

The world around us bursts upon us every day with new ideas – an expanding universe is one. The photos sent back to us by the Hubble telescope reveal such beauty in the solar systems that surround us, drawing us to wonder and awe. The scientific effort to land a spacecraft on a moving comet and the advances in medical and brain research are other amazing accomplishments. Who could have imagined such things are possible?

Bishop Robert Morneau, Bishop Emeritus of Green Bay, Wisconsin, offers this reminder: *Change is difficult at many levels: intellectual, emotional, and moral. We become set in our ways and defy preachers and teachers, saints and prophets who try to convert us into new ways of thinking or feeling or acting. We, too, can go on our merry way, missing out on truth and goodness and beauty. Cardinal Newman captured well the importance of change in his famous maxim: 'In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.'*

St. Paul said much the same thing centuries before. *When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and see things as a child does, and think like a child; but now that I have become an adult, I have finished with all childish ways. Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now, I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.* (1 Corinthians 13:11-12)

Mature faith is based on Gospel values and living the beatitudes as they apply to our everyday life. Embracing mature faith is a daily challenge, one that leads us to review and examine how we are applying what we understand

now. It is also a challenge to continue to learn how these concepts are being presented by Pope Francis and what, if any, changes are being asked of us.

Theology is responding to scientific advances, with new vocabulary shedding new understandings on the Gospel values we cherish. We have the opportunity to grow in faith and hope, trusting that the purpose of creation continues and invites our participation in bringing about good for all of creation. New scientific findings on the expansiveness of the universe are a call for a deeper understanding of all God's creation.

*Hold fast to
instruction,
never let
her go;
keep her,
for she is
your life.*

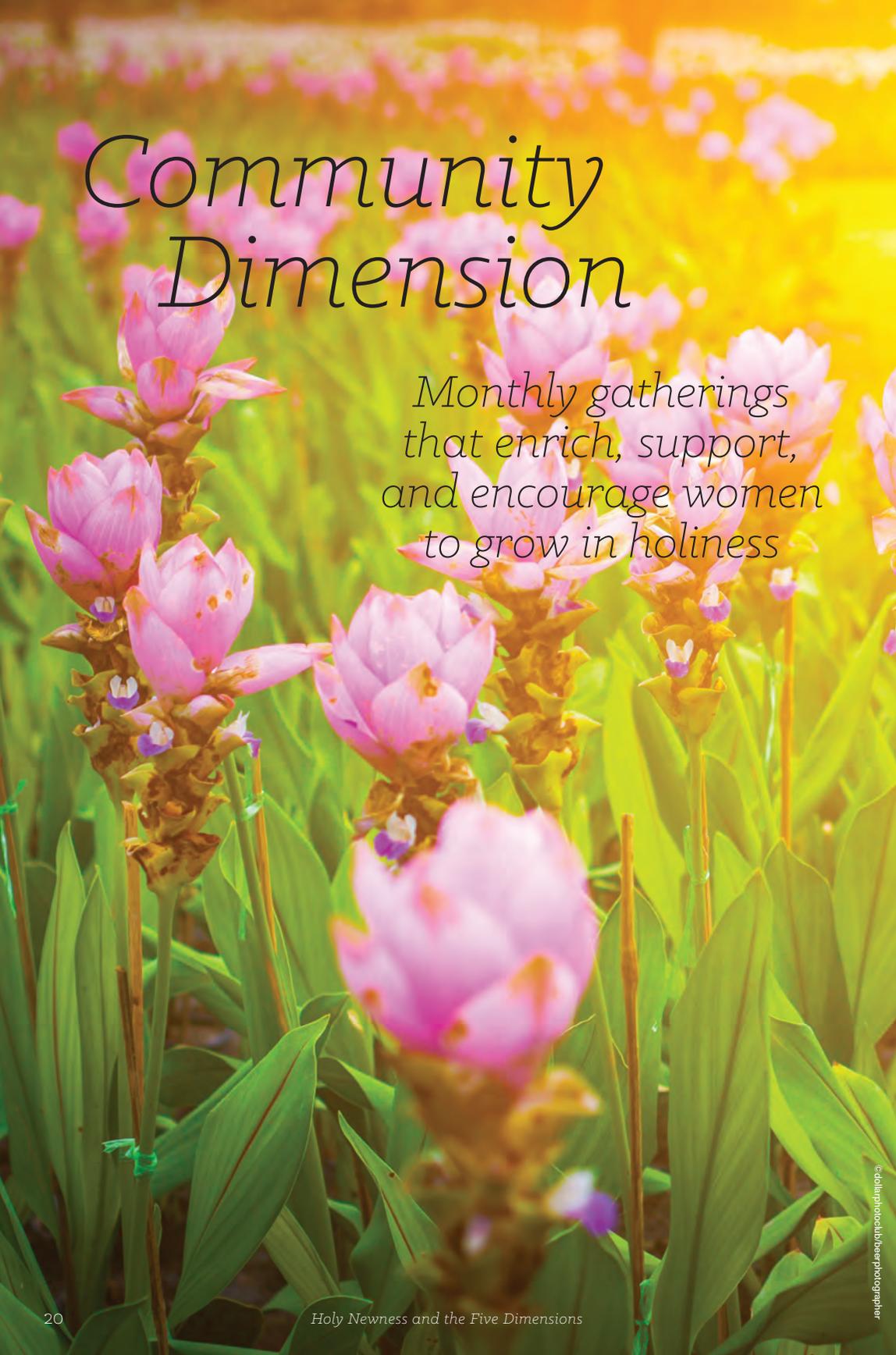
(Proverbs 4:13)

Within all of this, we find that God's timing may include the *not yet*, as well as *in due time* and even *when the order of events is optimum*. For God's work, as Archbishop Oscar Romero believed, needs our cooperation and is carried out according to Divine Order and Divine Timing, teaching us patience, faith, and trust.

Education enriches the other four Theresian Dimensions. The process of becoming human by living faithfully is always open-ended. In Community, we have a shared sisterhood; in Spirituality, we experience continued growth in knowing the Lord; in Vocation and in Ministry, we develop the rich experience of active fidelity as well as passive fidelity; and through Education, we become useful instruments for the work of God's kingdom. May we celebrate this Education Dimension together with open minds, hearts, and spirits so that we are truly **Women in Support of Women ... Reaching Out with Gospel Values**.

Ponder

1. How are you exploring new expressions of prayer, of celebration, and of the interaction of science and religion?
2. In what ways does your community explore new expressions of prayer, of celebration, and of the interaction of science and religion?
3. How does science expand your faith and hope in God's goodness that is manifested in continuing creation and revelation?
4. What is the history of *change* in your life? Do you agree with Cardinal Newman's contention that *to live is to change*?
5. Pope Francis is asking us to review our attitudes regarding compassion and non-judgment. How can we examine these virtues as they apply to our attention to the world news of the day?



Community Dimension

*Monthly gatherings
that enrich, support,
and encourage women
to grow in holiness*

Theresians International is a Community of Communities. We are located in 10 countries around the world. We have embraced the motto: **Women in Support of Women ... Reaching Out with Gospel Values**. It defines us in important ways. We are women! We support each other! We choose to do this with Gospel values of faith, hope, love, kindness, forgiveness, and presence!

In this age of instant communication by texting, Twitter, Facebook, and email, we are aware of happenings as they occur. The convenience of it all is wrapped in 21st century technology which promises even more. As a member of a community of Theresian women, these are tools that help us, and are not the essence of how we are together. From the very beginning in the 1960s, the formation of a community did depend on communication, but the way it developed was by human contact once a month.

This format is an essential rock of stability formed by time together and a desire to deepen our relationships beyond other groups of women that invite our participation. This happens when the sharing among us deepens and we dare to share the difficult times and the concerns that make us anxious, as well as the joys that delight our lives.

Today, technology allows us to network in ways we never imagined. It is a gift of the age of technology that we can make things happen quickly and somewhat easily. Networking is a service of community that we exercise with each other. These connections existed before. They can now happen almost instantaneously; however, sometimes this blinds us to the impact of such kindnesses, such responses.

New ideas that now filter into our concept of community are extensions of our understanding: compassionate kindness, altruistic befriending, and human tenderness. These are vital values that have new names and are easily recognized in the lives of Jesus and Mary. It is not a stretch of the imagination to see them in Mary's reaction at the Wedding Feast at Cana or Jesus' response to the lepers who asked to be cured. As we look for new understandings of community, we are called full circle to the Gospel values we have known all our lives.

Women have come together for ages to share recipes; remedies for sick ones; new ways to cook, sew and harvest the vegetables in the garden; and survive long winters. In doing so, they developed friendships. This will always be present where women gather.

However, among Theresians, we find a longing for community with others who have a global vision and an immense fulfillment of friendship

among those engaged in furthering the evolution of holy consciousness. This is a quality impossible to describe in our limited language.

We experience it together as our communities continue to develop. We choose to be in association with women to create a mutually uplifting and beneficial experience for all. Henri Nouwen underscores this when he says, *When we are aware that we are the beloved and when we have friends around us with whom we live in community, we can do anything.*

Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works.

(Hebrews 10:24)

We have been blessed by the invitation to be in community with dynamic, faith-filled, and prayer-conscious women. May we cherish the opportunity, responding with active participation, finding peace, joy, and energy to address and serve the needs that exist within and among us.

We are Women in Support of Women ... Reaching Out with Gospel Values.

Ponder

1. What qualities do you admire, respect, and cherish about your own community?
 2. What do you find difficult about being in community?
 3. As a community, how can we express to each other what it means to be a member? How will it help us explore ways to grow even more?
 4. How can we spread the Theresian message as an invitation to grow with women seeking a deeper awareness of women's issues?
 5. How will you invite other women to explore a Theresian community with you?
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Resources

Nouwen, Henri. *A Spirituality of Living*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2011, p. 38.

Spirituality Dimension



*Personal and communal prayer,
Scripture reflection,
and faith-sharing*

As Christians, Father Hinkley, Archdiocese of Hartford, Conn., says, we properly define spirituality as the believer's response to the Holy Spirit through the example of Jesus Christ. Thus, a Catholic's spirituality is always rooted in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus lived, died and rose for us. Our joys and trials are all joined intimately with Christ. Christian spirituality finds the varied experiences of life enriched by the grace of the Gospel. Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia, shares that Christian spirituality has its source in our communion with God, and is forged in communion with others and with all of creation. It is a spirituality of relationships.

People speak of Benedictine, Carmelite, Dominican, Franciscan, Ignatian/Jesuit, Marian, or Theresian Spirituality. Identifying oneself with a school or type of spirituality can give a focus to the way in which we choose to develop our relationship with God and the world around us.

Christian Spirituality, according to Susan Muto in her essay "Called to Holiness as Women of the Church," is the art and discipline of bringing Christ into the here-and-now reality of our daily lives. The two faces of this call are clear: one is unique, the other communal. One draws us to solitude, as when Jesus goes off to a lonely place to pray (Matthew 14:23); the other to solidarity with others in need, as when Jesus feeds the five thousand (Matthew 14:21). Both dynamics, lived in a balanced and creative way, in fidelity to our vocation, enable us to respond in a fully human and graced way to the universal call to holiness. We thereby proclaim our lives as laity, clergy, and religious, as single and married members of the Church, the Good News of Jesus Christ. Jesus operated not from the authority of righteousness vested in the ruling empire or the religious elite, but from the authority of holiness vested in the House of David. He shunned the paths of power, pleasure, and possession and chose instead the ways of obedience, chastity, and poverty. He reveals the great paradoxes that in powerlessness resides true power, that in respect for every person lies real love, and that in sharing what we have we receive more than we could possibly give.

As Theresians, we have the opportunity to look at spirituality from the viewpoint of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. At a very young age, she decided that the spiritualities she learned about were too "big" for her, and she decided she would develop her own "Little Way" to God. In this Little Way, she decided to give to God all the events of her day – big and little, happy or irritating, quiet or busy. In this Little Way, she found that she could live closer to God and, at the same time, do what was expected of her. St. Thérèse lived simply and unobtrusively in a community of women. After her death at the age of

24, attention was brought to her Little Way through her writing. She was canonized in 1925, and in 1927 she was proclaimed the Patroness of the Missions, even though she never left her convent! St. Thérèse was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1997, one of five women to receive this recognition.

The spirituality of St. Thérèse has guided Theresians International. Her Little Way has proven to challenge us to live with active faithfulness, being the best we can be, even after mistakes, and with passive faithfulness, accepting the circumstances of our lives without complaint. The example of the Little Flower, as St. Thérèse is often called, provides us with proof that such a simple

*But grow in
grace and in the
knowledge of our
Lord and savior
Jesus Christ.
To him be glory
now and to the
day of eternity.
Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)*

lifestyle can make a difference. The best part is that this lifestyle is not flashy or designed to draw attention to our actions. Rather, it is an invitation to discover the immense gifts of Baptism, to allow them to flow into and through us each day, and to use them to serve the community in which we find ourselves. This begins at home and moves outward to the various areas of our lives. In today's theological vocabulary, this is stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Section 239, as *the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being is love* – that is, to be people in relationship.

One of the most important aspects of spirituality for Theresian communities is the realization that all God asks is that we offer the events of our day to Him, allowing the “little things” of our day to be used for God's purposes. It does not demand that we be conscious of doing it ... but that we offer it. The best thing about this simple and total gift is that it is not showy; it does not seek attention; it recognizes the humdrum stuff of our days as useful to God's plan. Even the mistakes we make! No one of us can get through a day without some peccadillo that bruises the spirit of another, such as some word, tone of voice, hurried response, or unawareness of another's need. God can use even these!

Theresian spirituality expands the gift of belonging. It is a charism that continues to open our minds and hearts to be more and more inclusive. Diversity in our various locations on earth enriches our understandings and invites us to participate in a variety of expressions of prayer, music, dance, song, and art. These extensions of our experiences bring sensitivity to the different manifestations of God's presence in all women.

As Theresians continue to evolve, develop, and expand, may we embrace the journey as messengers of hope in a world that is conflicted and

fearful. St. Paul said, *All things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28) As believers, we have the opportunity to live this in such a way that we are asked: How can you be so hopeful? As a response, we can invite women seeking to belong to understand that *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:32) Yes, we can be a presence of hope in this troubled world!

May our own spirits be touched with the awareness that God is active in our lives to the extent that we invite God's activity. A simple "I give you this day, Lord" is enough. **As Women in Support of Women ... Reaching Out with Gospel Values**, may the peace of this reality reach deeply into our minds, hearts, and spirits.

Ponder

1. What one or two words would you use to describe your own spirituality? Why?
 2. In your growing understanding of the Theresian Five Dimensions, is the spirituality dimension difficult to embrace? If yes, why? If no, why not?
 3. If spirituality has two expressions – one in solitude (*unique*) and one in community (*communal*) – how does community support the solitude?
 4. How do you participate in your Theresian community to offer a space touched with hope? How do you accept the hope offered by others to you?
 5. How can we help each other to radiate this hope to draw women to join us on this journey?
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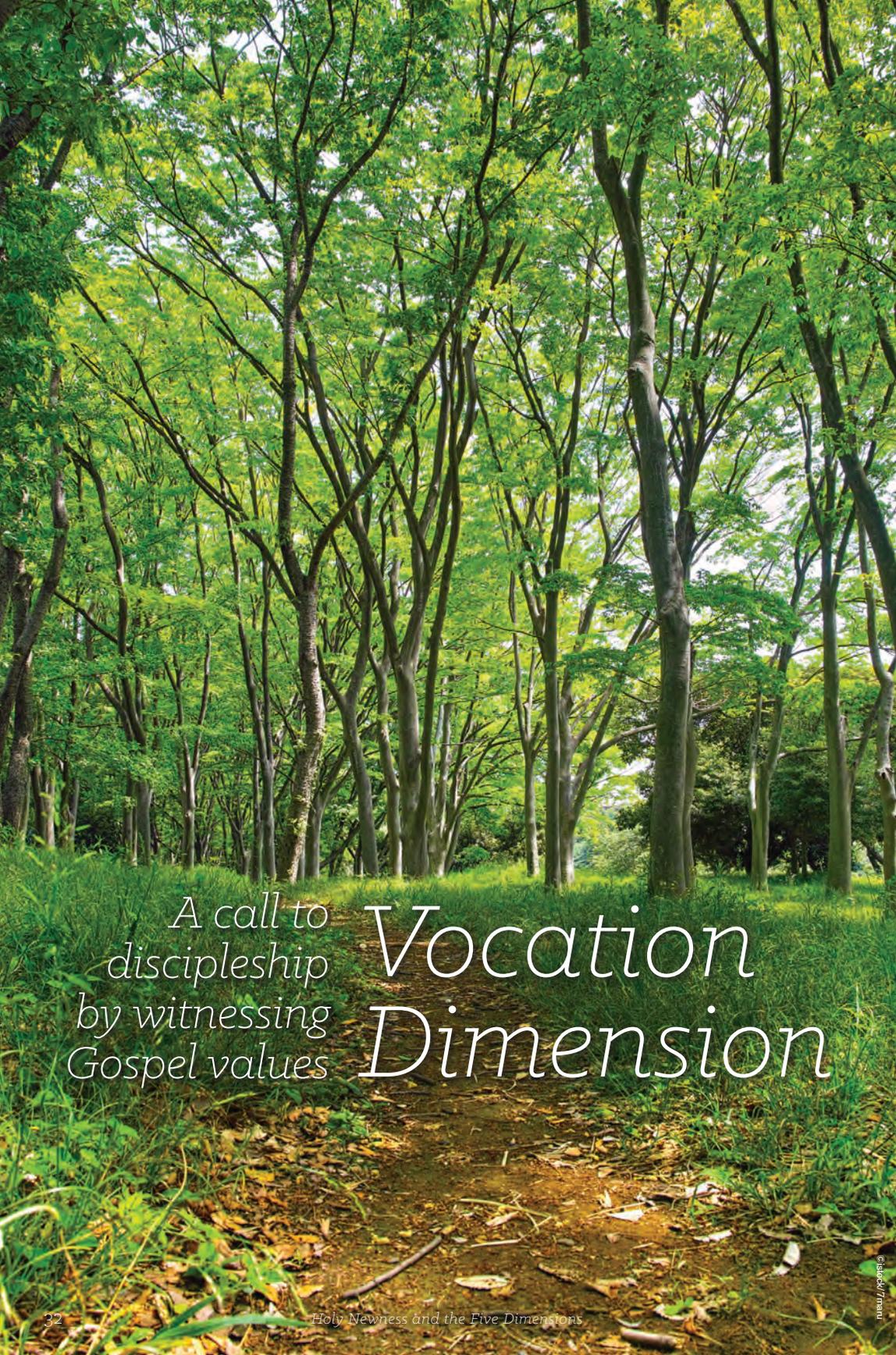
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*A call to
discipleship
by witnessing
Gospel values*

Vocation Dimension

The word **vocation** in earlier days referred to a call to religious life as a priest or a religious sister or brother. This was a very limiting definition. The word itself means a calling. This has wide applications in the lives of all of us, whether we are consecrated, single, or married. As women, we are called to be daughters, sisters, nieces, aunts and mothers in careers such as teachers, nurses, corporate leaders, investment brokers, entrepreneurs, military officers and sports heroes.

These choices expand our opportunities and invite creativity in us and around us. However, is it a call to greatness? Bishop Robert Morneau writes of this call in his Advent reflections of 2014: *We are all called to be great; we are all called to holiness.* He quotes Aelred Squire's definition of holiness as *doing what our vocation calls us to be*, with holiness having two aspects, noting an active fidelity that calls us to be the best we can be. He then mentions a *passive fidelity in so far as we accept and suffer with love whatever divine providence sends us.* The important word in both aspects is *fidelity*. Being faithful to the demands of the day, each day, is the recipe for holiness that Bishop Morneau equates with greatness.

This seems a 21st century adaptation of St. Thérèse of Lisieux's own recipe for holiness. The simplicity of her Little Way is very challenging when we try it. But, in its simplicity, it holds the roadmap for us, too. In her *Story of a Soul*, she wrote that, *Holiness consists in doing His will, in being what He calls us to be.*

Once again, Bishop Morneau introduces a new focus when he quotes Jean Sullivan as writing, *a vocation is given every morning.* Let these words enter your own stillness for a moment. Each day, we are called to be faithful to the demands of the day. Each day, we can see more clearly what these demands ask of us, if we are willing to listen to God's call to be the best we can be. Will we fail? Probably several times a day. It is humbling to find we continue to make mistakes, some of them the same ones we made yesterday. A 1936 song reminds us to *Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again.*

This path to holiness recognizes that we are capable of deep commitment, and also of honest mistakes and weaknesses that make life difficult

I . . . urge you therefore to lead a life worthy of the vocation to which you were called. With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love. (Ephesians 4-2)

now and then. The saving feature of this opportunity is fidelity, that is, finding new ways to return to being faithful without giving in to discouragement. One can hope that it will get easier; however, there are no guarantees. Rather, there are new opportunities to be creative in expressing fidelity with a smile and a song.

An image that may help us understand what we are called to do and be is the flute. The flute is an instrument that brings music to the space around us. The flute, however, is not the song. For the song to be heard, the wood must be hollowed out and notched in order to carry the song. This is the call, the invitation, the opportunity to be present, to be an instrument gladly ready to bring the song. Caryll Houselander reminds us that Our Blessed Mother Mary is a beautiful example of this. *She was a reed through which the Eternal Love was to be piped as a shepherd's song ... Our Lady said yes. She said yes for us all ... Our Lady said yes for the human race. Each one of us must echo that yes for our own lives.*

Bishop Morneau states four elements of our baptismal call:

1. Holiness
2. Service
3. Maturity
4. Generosity

Then he asks which of these is claiming our attention at this moment. This is a focus that can assist our growth in understanding and celebrating new expressions of being faithful. Each of these four elements calls us to continue to grow and to support each other as we dedicate time, energy, and effort to the call to greatness, the call to holiness, the call to discipleship as **Women in Support of Women ... Reaching Out with Gospel Values.**

Ponder

1. Which quality of your baptismal call is strongest? Which is weakest and needs more attention? What is your plan to help it happen?
 2. How can you affirm others so that they become more aware of their gifts?
 3. Make a list of all the vocations, callings that define you. Share it with a Theresian friend, listening for added ideas she may share with you.
 4. How do you handle the use of words that may make you uncomfortable, such as holiness, active fidelity, passive fidelity, greatness, and flute as instrument but not the song?
-

Ministry Dimension

*Presence and service
that exemplify love,
compassion, tolerance,
understanding, and empathy*

Ministry begins in the attitude of the heart as well as the mind. Some will call it servant-leadership. Others will call it presence among those who need help. Some will call it availability when emergencies arise. All of these are partial descriptions. The full story is the story of Jesus' life. The Gospels tell us He reached out to those who had been excluded from participation in the decision-making level of society and/or synagogue.

Gregory Boyle addresses this in *Tattoos on the Heart: Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It is a covenant between equals.* The gift Jesus brought to his ministry was the covenant of equals. Richard Rohr says, *Jesus' truth claim was his person (John 14:6), his presence (John 6:35) and his ability to participate in God's perfect love (John 17:21-22).*

The way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) that Jesus shared with all he met was natural and undefended. He was vulnerable with friends and even with strangers. Rohr continues, *Most of Jesus' teaching is walking with people on the streets, out in the desert, and often into nature. His examples come from the things he sees around him: birds, flowers, landlords and tenants, little children, women baking and sweeping, farmers farming.*

Servant-leadership is always specific and concrete, here and now – in the ordinary moment among those we encounter during the day. Ministry is best offered in the small events that happen without long planning and extended details. It is Mother Teresa who encouraged us to do *small things with great love*. This means all the moments that ask for our attention, not our distraction when interrupted nor our impatience when frustrated with the cell phone or the computer. Tilden Edwards, founder of Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, describes this as *a quality of intuitive awareness . . . a sense of inclusive, compassionate, undefended, direct in-touch-ness.*

As we discover the needs of our local community and society, we have the opportunity to develop service based on these ideas. With compassion, we recognize the basic human dignity of each one we seek to serve. We create situations so those in need can participate in the solutions to their dilemmas. When we empower individuals, neighborhoods, and local communities to learn how to provide for their needs, we restore their belief that they are capable and can be productive for the common good. *In other words, the goal of the partnership should be to reduce and ultimately eliminate the need for outside help, except in cases of emergency,* writes Kim Marie Lamberty in her article *Toward a Spirituality of Accompaniment in Solidarity Partnerships.*

Ministry is an activity of the heart as well as the mind to develop this intuitive awareness. Sometimes it involves providing the materials that invite small cottage industries to grow. At other times, it involves developing leadership skills, language, and awareness so that they can present their needs to government at the local level and beyond.

Boyle says, *Just assume the answer to every question is compassion.* Jesus pulled this off ... He had room for everybody in his compassion. The beauty of this example is that Jesus did not judge others. When one made mistakes, Jesus simply said, *Go, and sin no more.* (John 8:11) There was no exclusion from the community. There was no prolonged punishment. Forgiveness was freely given. Mistakes were forgotten. The full story is the story of Jesus' life.

As Jesus walked the perimeter of the Sea of Galilee, He was welcomed into homes for meals and healings, for dialogue and teaching moments. Our monthly meetings find us invited to share a meal in the home of a Theresian, to dialogue and to participate in the program as learners and interactive listeners. This is an opportunity to experience community. Sometimes it is right here among us that ministry is most effective. Between meetings, many of us are committed to various ministries. Some groups choose to do ministry as a community, happily diverse in the chosen expression of compassion.

Boyle says, **All Jesus asks is, "Where are you standing? ... With whom are you walking?"** The question not asked is: How successful have you been in righting the wrongs around you? *And after chilling defeat and soul-numbing failure, He asks again, "Are you still standing there?"* This is the challenge: Can we be faithful to the effort to empower the excluded no matter what the outcome? Can we continue to **stand with and walk with** those seeking a better human experience?

The Theresian Litany of Solidarity (located in the back of this booklet) was written to help each of us individually and all of us in community to focus on the realities of so many women in the world. Do we embrace their situations? Do we pray for societal changes to address these issues? Do we pay attention to the reports of such real things as domestic abuse, human trafficking, and women denied the opportunity for an education? We may not be the instruments to bring about an end to such abuses. However, we can **stand with and walk with** them by increasing our awareness and our prayerful inclusion of them. As **Women in Support of Women ... Reaching Out with Gospel Values**, are we not called to embrace the process?

*It is by my
deeds that I
will show you
my faith.*

(James 2:18)

Ponder

1. What examples of Jesus' ministry inspire you? Stories, parables, surprises in His chosen action?
2. What is the ministry that attracts your energy?
3. In what ways do we minister to each other in community? How can we improve how we reach out to one another?
4. How does your community use the *Theresian Litany of Solidarity*? In what new ways can you include these intentions in your monthly shared prayer?
5. What local issues can you review with a new understanding? Immigration? Human trafficking? Refugees? The handicapped? Children in foster care? Teens who are pregnant?
6. What global issues can you explore for deeper awareness and understanding? Girls who long to be educated? Girls forced to marry at very young ages? Women who have no physical care when pregnant? Women who live to old age and need assistance?

Resources

Boyle, S.J., Gregory. *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010, pp. 63, 77, 173.

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Rohr, O.F.M., Richard. "Richard Rohr – Beyond Words: Wisdom's Way of Knowing." Jan. 15, 2015.

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Prayer for the Growth of Theresians

*Loving and gracious God,
You gathered women in the
early days of Theresian formation
to be supportive to one another,
to grow in spiritual depth, and
to fulfill your work in the lives of women
who lacked a community of sisters.*

*We have danced in your love,
formed a tight web of spirituality,
heard the voices of global sisters,
served the church and community,
and created a setting for
nurturing women everywhere.*

*We now ask in humility to guide
our efforts in inviting women
who are searching for community.
Show them that Theresians is a
place of rest, of support, of prayer,
and of true sisterhood.*

*Create in them the desire
to take this step in their journey,
and to recognize the rewards of life
within a Theresian community.*

*Holy Spirit, give this gift to women
around the world who see their lives
without value, without love, and
without an anchor for their spirituality.*

St. Thérèse, pray for us.

Prayer for All Theresians

*O God, Source of All that Is,
Giver of Gifts, Lover of All,
Thank You for our Theresian community,
a source of refuge, a welcome sisterhood,
and a path to You.*

*Thank You for District Leadership Teams
and regional community gatherings
where ideas are shared and
concerns deliberated.*

*Thank You for Retreats, Days of Prayer,
and Mornings of Inspiration
that increase our faith,
challenge us to action, and
draw us closer to You.*

*Thank You for National Leadership Teams,
who strive to develop leadership
and promote Theresian programs
that draw us closer to You.*

*Thank You for our International Board
as they set policy and
guide the mission of Theresians
throughout the world,
that draw us closer to You.*

*We ask Your blessing upon all Theresians,
from our newest members
to our Women of Wisdom.
Guide and grace us to be
women wholly committed to You.*

St. Thérèse, pray for us.

Theresian Litany of Solidarity

*In the dawn of a new day, we praise your glory
In new sisters we greet
In your powerful presence
In the gift of friendship
In living Thérèse's simple way.*

*Guide us, O God, to trust in your presence with us each day.
May we follow your way in the company of your saints,
especially St. Thérèse of Lisieux.*

– Prayer by Margaret Wheeler

Today and every day, Theresian women stand in solidarity through prayer and action with women throughout the world.

1. With women living in poverty and with women whose long suffering is tested every day in every land, we stand in solidarity.
2. With women caught in the web of domestic violence and with mothers nurturing children in strained situations, we stand in solidarity.
3. With women around the world whose family members are deployed in military service, with active duty women and women in the reserves, and with women veterans who are rebuilding their lives, we stand in solidarity.
4. With women caught in the web of human trafficking, such as prostitution, forced labor, forced marriage, and torture, we stand in solidarity.
5. With women suffering female genital mutilation, we stand in solidarity.
6. With girls who are forced into marriage as children, we stand in solidarity. (This practice leads to serious issues in childbearing, resulting in ruptures, child mortality and fistulas leading to being ostracized from their communities.)

7. With women whose children are sold into slavery as servants and sexual slaves, we stand in solidarity.
8. With women in mourning, we stand in solidarity.
9. With women who watch their children waste away from malnutrition, we stand in solidarity.
10. With women in war-torn places who become tools of war, victims of gender violence, and instruments of brutal sexual torture, we stand in solidarity.
11. With women and girls denied education and opportunities to discover their gifts and with women denied professional recognition because of the misogynistic and patriarchal attitudes in churches, businesses, and governments, we stand in solidarity. (*A Girl Rising* DVD is an excellent resource on this topic.)
12. With women of indomitable spirit who sustain the roots of human development and who risk death to protect their children in homes, in hospitals, schools, and the villages and cities of this world, we stand in solidarity.
13. With women who seek to restore right relationships in their families, with spouses, children, and extended family, we stand in solidarity.
14. With women who speak, write, sing, and create art that addresses the dignity inherent in all women, we stand in solidarity.
15. With women emerging in leadership in church and society, we stand in solidarity.
16. With our Theresian sisters everywhere and with Theresians who say “Yes!” to serve on the local, district, regional, national, and international levels of leadership, we stand in solidarity.

We, as members of Theresians International, stand in solidarity with women who suffer in all parts of the world for all reasons. May the gentle hand of our loving God embrace the world and help all people to see the full value of half the human race.

The research and preparation of this document was a collaborative effort of Anne Murphy, Women of the Spirit Community, Phoenix, Arizona, and the 2014-2015 USA National Leadership Team, Spirituality Committee.



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