

# CENTENNIAL GAZETTE

St. James Cathedral, Seattle

Issue #20

October 14, 2007

## ST. THÉRÈSE COMES TO THE CATHEDRAL

Ever since the Carmelite Sisters visited St. James Cathedral at Bishop O'Dea's invitation in 1908 (see *Centennial Gazette* #7), there has been a strong connection between the Cathedral and the Seattle Carmel. The Sisters created vestments for the Cathedral, maintained the Cathedral's altar linens for decades, and continue to sustain the community through their prayer. And the Cathedral has supported Carmel through the years as well. Msgr. Stafford, our third pastor, loaned the Cathedral's finest vestments for the funeral of Mother Raphael in 1923, and sent the Cathedral Choir to the monastery chapel to sing the funeral Mass of Mother Cyril ten years later. Archbishop Thomas Murphy loved the Carmelites, whom he described as a "powerhouse of prayer." The Sisters have a special vocation to pray for priests, and so important did Archbishop Murphy consider this apostolate that he always invited these cloistered sisters to the Cathedral for the Rite of Ordination.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux has also had a special connection with St. James. When the "Little Flower" was beatified in 1923, a triduum of prayer and thanksgiving was held at the Cathedral, attended not only by Msgr. Stafford but by Bishop O'Dea and Bishop Crimont of Alaska. And when Thérèse was canonized just two years later, the Carmelite Sisters wrote in their annals: "it soon became apparent that the monastery chapel would be too small to accommodate the numbers who would wish to join in commemorating this event which filled the whole Catholic world with joy. Once this decision was made, Rev. J.G. Stafford, Pastor of St. James Cathedral, generously offered and whole-heartedly took charge of the Triduum. The Cathedral was conveniently located and was the largest church in the city.

"The Cathedral was crowded to capacity each morning and evening. The Catholics of Seattle entered with fervent zeal into the spirit of the occasion, welcoming the opportunity to display their devotion to the 'The Little Flower'. Each evening at the close of the services the relic of St. Thérèse was presented for veneration. Who could say what countless graces for soul and body were showered upon those fervent throngs who besought the powerful aid of the innocent child raised up in our times by God?"

Msgr. Stafford's devotion to the "Little Flower" is still in evidence at St. James Cathedral, in the statue of St.



Statue of St. Thérèse in the Cathedral's south aisle.

Thérèse in the Cathedral's south aisle, which dates from 1925, the year of her canonization and the great triduum of prayer.

Little did those assembled for that triduum imagine that 75 years later the relics of St. Thérèse would actually come to Seattle, and to St. James! In her autobiography *The Story of a Soul*, St. Thérèse had dreamed, "I want to preach the Gospel on all the five continents simultaneously and even to the most remote isles." That dream became a reality as the Sisters of the Lisieux Carmel allowed the reliquary containing the earthly remains of this beloved saint to travel around the world. Seattle made the list of cities that would host the relics during the Great Jubilee Year 2000. The relics of St. Thérèse would rest in St. James Cathedral for three hours, with a solemn Mass of Thanksgiving on Saturday, January 22, 2000, presided over

by Archbishop Brunett, followed by a period of veneration.

On the morning of January 22, people began to line up outside the Cathedral at 6:00am. By the time the Mass began at 11:00am, the Cathedral was packed both inside and out. Those who were not able to get inside lined up all the way around the Cathedral block, three and four abreast. Not all of those who waited so patiently were Catholic. There were Christians from many denominations, there were Jewish people, there were nonbelievers, all of them drawn to the Cathedral by the simple holiness of St. Thérèse.

After the Mass, the reliquary was placed in the west aisle, and people came forward for veneration. Thousands filed past the reliquary and touched or kissed it. But when 2:00pm arrived, time for the relics to be taken to their next destination, hundreds were still waiting in line. The sacristan brought from the sacristy vault the Cathedral's own relic of St. Thérèse—the same relic that had been venerated by the crowds who attended the triduum of prayer in celebration of her canonization 75 years before. Hundreds more venerated this relic of St. Thérèse before the day was over.

Estimates of those in attendance at the Cathedral on that historic day ranged from 7,000 to 10,000—it was the largest attendance at a Mass in the Cathedral's history. Even the Cathedral's dedication in 1907 did not attract so many! It was surely one more miracle of the saint who, ever since her death at the young age of 24 in 1897, has let fall "a shower of roses" upon the world, upon the Church—and upon St. James Cathedral.

—Corinna Laughlin