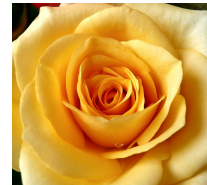




***“I will let fall from Heaven a shower of roses”-St. Therese of Lisieux***



***And that she did!***



***As an 8<sup>th</sup> grader getting Confirmed in the Catholic faith, we are asked to choose a saint that stands out to us and find one to which we can model after as an advocate and friend for life. I had always wanted to pick Maria Goretti, but I had a strong feeling I should pick St. Therese instead. After really becoming familiar with her story, I chose her and became her friend for life....***

***As I grew older, I knew she had special novenas that were said for intentions that glorified God... Her 5 day, 24 Glory Be Novena had been successful many times for others, and so I tried for some small miracles, or signs, that she heard my intercession and was acting on my behalf. Surely, I would receive my little flower, just as she promised.***

***When I was an adult, I felt this closeness to hear that I still cannot explain, other than that of her being like a sister to me. I re-read her autobiography Story of a Soul and learned that she picks***

*souls to cultivate, let's say. I think that is why I felt compelled to choose her out of the blue. I only read through half of it for some reason....She and I had some similar tendencies, but mainly, her faith was of the utmost profound experience one can understand. Her story was always of her Love for HIM.*

*In January of 2005, my 59 year old father was diagnosed with stage 4 kidney cancer-at the time a supposedly new and unfamiliar cancer with no treatment, yet alone no cure. It was very aggressive, but slow moving our doctors said. Mid way through the year, my father had his one kidney removed and honestly speaking, was in great health otherwise. Emotionally, not so much!! Let's say his childhood was not out of a movie, but a typical Italian family which had come in from Italy trying hard to adjust and support a family of 6. My father was immensely intelligent, loved cars and computers, and was super handy at fixing anything. He suffered from great depression and anxiety most of his life and often wondered why things "in his mind" never worked out in his favor. When he found out about his illness, it really changed his attitude to one of complete dread and fear. He became angry with God, and as time drew nearer to November of that year, his physical pain increased. Within a week, we had found out he had two weeks to two months to live. We were in shock naturally; his cancer was more on the aggressive side than slow I suppose. We had to come to terms with his terminal illness as his suffering increased tremendously day to day. He spoke, we laughed, we cried, we reminisced; we reconciled, and spoke of Jesus. He was so concerned that he would never be allowed into Heaven for being so mad at Jesus. So we prayed some more. Once my dad started to drift, I realized my dad had suffered enough and I wanted him to go straight to heaven so his suffering was done forever and could only be in paradise or in his view "work in his favor"-I guess this would be the one thing we would all want to work in his favor. I prayed ever so faithfully the Way of the Cross, to which so many*

*graces are attached, one of which being that Jesus states anyone praying this with tremendous faith will have their soul delivered from Purgatory on the first Tuesday after their death, if indeed, they needed to go to Purgatory at all, and of course, I prayed the novena to my Little Flower, St. Therese. I very specifically asked that my father go right to heaven and suffer no more and to send me a rose from the Angel Gabriel.*

*On Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, right before midnight, on my 5<sup>th</sup> year wedding anniversary, my father took his very last breath. It was amazing how my sister, mother, and I all saw the face of the crucified Jesus in my father's face of his death. I remember a host of angels surrounding him as family friends grieved, prayed, and comforted one another. The next day was one of plans, getting things ready, the usual I guess, if there is a usual routine when someone dies.*

*As a typical Italian family would expect, we attach food to everything, so of course there was a luncheon after the wake and funeral-both compelling, supportive, and provided closure-to some extent, or at least for the time being. At our luncheon, after we ate and socialized, we were all standing about talking, when my cousin's daughter came up to me with her grandfather's wife. She was very shy and quiet, and didn't have much to say at that time, but I will never forget what her step-grandmother said to me, "She wanted to give this to you..." it must have been the only white rose left from the funeral procession...she handed it to me, smiled, and hugged me tight; her name was Gabriella and it was a Tuesday.*

*I later decided to finish reading "Story of a Soul" and was comically delighted to read that St. Therese had done something similar -asking for a sign that her father was in heaven-able to bypass purgatory. I still cry and smile simultaneously at the thought that my dad is in Heaven, running on streets made of gold (Mark Harris's "Wish You Were Here").*



*My good friend, St. Therese, wasn't done with me yet...In 2002 my husband and I were blessed to have a beautiful, precious rose, our first baby. We were so in love with her, the heavenly qualities she possessed (notice I said possessed, she is now a teenager-ha ha) –we really took for granted the process to which most people find getting pregnant to be quite simple, and it was -with our daughter...*

*We decided we wanted to start trying for another rather quickly in October of 2003 to be exact. Month by month, waiting, waiting, waiting, hum...you start to wonder what is going on. Anxiety, fear, disappointment, inadequacy all build up and stress becomes a problem. After a year we saw a doctor, we were told we had to wait a year to “really see what was going on”, and we discussed some options. I read many books to help us, bought kits to let us know when the timing was right, we were poked and prodded, and tested, and re-tested....*

*All this while I prayed, I prayed novenas to St. Joseph, other saints, the Way of the Cross, friends prayed for us and gave us special prayers to say, and of course I prayed to St. Therese. We longed desperately for another child-people told us to appreciate the one we had-we did so, so very much-but a parent whose soul knows her baby is in heaven waiting for them, is a soul in mourning. Despite the great love, times, and memories we made with our daughter, I became quite despondent. We were told a myriad of things from “keep trying” to “there is no way you will ever have another child” to “it's second child infertility” like I knew that existed especially when*

people say things like, “don’t you like being a parent?”, “don’t you want to give your daughter a sibling?” and the best was, “Is being a parent that bad, or is it your daughter?” Telling them we had trouble never seemed to quench the questions or comments. Why would it, if you can have one, what’s the issue with having another. Right? At this point we had five friends who, oddly enough, were all struggling with the exact thing and wouldn’t you know it they all got pregnant in that same year. Naturally, I kept thinking “It’s us next, ooh just wait, it is our turn now...” Sadly, no baby.

In the fall of 2007 I went back to work as a full time teacher-to which I contribute the fact that I loved it and was finally able to start accepting that maybe we were just going to have one child. Shortly after that, I read a prayer which stated that God doesn’t say no, He says yes, not now, or I have something else in mind. Of course I figured that working with all my middle-schoolers (predominantly 8<sup>th</sup> graders) was the something else He had in mind. I could tell I was starting to heal-I knew I was carrying a very splintery cross, not meant to be light, for every baby I saw, news of a pregnancy, or sound of a giggle caused me much pain. None the less, I figured I try one more novena to St. Therese; I was very specific this time- I wanted a boy, a son for my heart- and a yellow rose so I knew it was going to be a boy, and of course, I wanted the Angel Gabriel to hand deliver the rose again.

In mid to late June of 2010, having finished yet another year-having survived the classroom-I was excited to start summer with my daughter and was moving on with my/our lives. We were going to have a softball party for our daughter’s team and it occurred to me that I still hadn’t gotten my “cycle” yet...not totally unusual, but still, I decided to take the dreaded pregnancy test and as I looked at results I preformed the usual self talk of “Oh I know I’m not pregnant and that’s fine now-whatever-I don’t even want another one anymore, but then a voice seeped in and said, “Yes, but if you if you were to be pregnant, wouldn’t you rejoice”—this all happened in the matter of

***nano-seconds-and obviously I said, “Of course!!” Wouldn’t you know, I was pregnant. Now WAIT, where was the rose you ask?***



***Well, I was in the happy daze of the summer beginning and the school year ending that I failed to recognize the miracle I received. The last day of school one of my students, as a good-bye gift, hugged me... and gave me a yellow rose, and guess what, her name was.....Gabriella....***

***In March of 2011, my baby boy was born-funny my dad’s birthday was in March too...I wonder if he had anything to do with St. Therese’s intercession on my behalf.***

***Miracles are all around us... I guess my answer for my son wasn’t “I have something else in mind, but ...not yet!!  
Be patient, believe, have tremendous faith, and know that miracles are not of our time, but of His....***



***Please don't ever give up, or lose faith, trust, and hope in our very loving God, our Father, and Friend, and all the friends he gives us (saints and angels alike).***

***She's still going strong...***

**The Little Flower**

**Visit her shrine in Darien, IL at**

**St-Therese.org**

