

Archbishop Smith: Lift Me Up

A couple of years ago I attended an event for families. I was standing at the back of the room, listening to a speaker. (What is it with us Catholics and the back row, pew or whatever? We seem to gravitate there!) All of a sudden, I felt a little tugging at my pant leg, and looked down to see that it was a little girl – a toddler, probably no more than two – who was trying to get my attention. When she caught my eye, she raised both of her arms in the air. She wanted me to pick her up! I looked around and saw a woman who was identified to me as the child's mother. She could see what was going on and gave me a nod of permission. What was I to do? I couldn't say no to the little girl, so... I reached down and picked her up. She wanted to be carried, so I held her for a few minutes and then gave her to her mother. It is a precious memory.

It is also a lesson. I'm recalling this event as I write on the feast of St. Therese of Lisieux. She famously used this image – the lifting up of the arms as a request to be carried – to describe her relation with Jesus Christ. She knew that, by her own efforts alone, she could not achieve her life's goal, namely, sanctity through communion with the Father. She knew, too, however, that, if she asked Jesus, he would "lift her up" in his arms and carry her to the Father. Here we have an image, given to us by one recognized as a Doctor of the Church, to describe what it means to follow the command of Jesus to become like children if we are to enter the kingdom of God.



To have faith in Christ is willingly to allow oneself to be carried by him. Daily we encounter difficult situations. Rather than let them be for us a source of anxiety, may we instead recognize in them a gift from God whereby he allows us to know our littleness and dependence. Aware of our weakness and need, let us not hesitate to raise our arms to the Lord and ask him to lift us to the Father, who knows our every need, will never abandon us, and will surely offer us, through Christ, all that we truly need.

St Therese of Lisieux, Little Flower, Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

