

JANUARY 10, 2026 FATHER THOMAS LYNCH

I don't know how old you are, when I was a child, being bold was not a compliment. It was a put-down. But I have seen very bold people, I really have. And they've been bold in the eyes of the world, and they have been bold before God.

When I was studying in Rome my second year, I decided I wanted to do something priestly for Holy Week and Easter Week. It was a wonderful experience, my first year being in Rome, it really was, but you were sometimes more of a participant, shall we say, in the great liturgies, than a priest that was active in them. And so I wanted to go back and go somewhere where I could really be of help.

A friend of mine had gone to Albania, and it was just when Albania had been released from the bondage of 40-some years of communist persecution. And he said, "Well, you know, the Sisters of the Missionaries and Charity of Mother Theresa, they are always needing English-speaking priests, so I'm going to give you a phone number and you can phone them." And I said, "Okay."

So I phoned them, and I said, "Well, this is who I am and I am an English-speaking priest from Canada, and you don't have to pay for it, I'll come over on my own ticket. I would like to help out for Holy Week and Easter Week." "Certainly, Father. We knew you would call." And I said, "Pardon?" And they said, "We knew you'd call." I said, "Well, how? Was this other Father, Tracy, did he tell you I was going to call?" And she said, "Oh, no. We just finished the novena. We didn't have an English-speaking priest for Holy Week and Easter and Easter week, so we've been praying the novena and we finished it this morning, and we knew you'd call."

Now that's faith. That is faith. That is being bold before the Lord. And they knew what they needed, God knew what they needed. They asked for it, and this strange priest from Canada phoned up and said, "I'd like to come and celebrate with you."

Are you bold? Are you bold for the right things? Are you saying, "Oh no, maybe I shouldn't ask God for that because I better not, you know, bother God." That's all there is to it.

It's like that old Scottish joke, you know, where two Scotsmen are out in a boat, fishing, and a big storm comes up, and it's rocking the boat to and fro, and Alec says to Rory, "This is bad, this is bad, Rory! We're going to go down, you'd better pray." And Rory says, "I can't pray." And Alec says, "Don't be foolish, man! We're going to go down, we're going to drown. You better pray!" So Rory gets down in the boat and it's rocking to and fro, and he says, "Lord," he says, "This is Your servant, Rory, and I haven't spoken to You in 40 years. But if You get us out of this mess, I promise I won't bother You for another 40."

And that's the attitude a lot of people have. They're not bold before the Lord because they think, "Well, I'm getting along okay, don't bother God and He won't bother me." That's not it. If you love someone, I hope you don't completely absent yourself. And if you believe that somebody loves you, they don't just absent themselves.

The reason that one can be bold like Saint John said in the first reading that we heard Goody pronounce, it is because it's a relationship of love. It's a relationship of love that says, "Of course I want the best for you! I don't just love you this little bit." It's like that old novelist from the '40s, you know? "What do you want?" "I want it so big." I want everything. I want the fullness of love and of grace.

So of course you can be bold. It's not as if, "Well, maybe I'll ask God for it and if I'm really, really nice, He'll give it to me." It's not because we deserve the gifts and the love of God that He gives love to us. If you, as Jesus says in another place, will give good things to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give to those who ask of Him?

Be bold in what you ask for. Be bold in your prayer. And be bold so that we don't just ask for ourselves and all the things we think we need. Be bold for what we know we need. Be bold for things not just given in this petty, sort of, particular little way. But that gifts may be pressed down in your lap and flowing over, like it says.

When Saint Therese of Lisieux was dying, you know, they asked her what she would do in heaven, and she said, "I shall spend my time in heaven doing good on earth and I shall let fall a shower of roses."

Getting a rose is a good thing, but getting a shower of roses must be a remarkable thing. And that's the way it is with God. God doesn't give just these little bits. He gives all those things which those who love Him will ask and need.

To do that, though, you can't just ask for it. You've got to be able to receive it, so we have to be able to look at how the mystics really worked in their relationship with God. They said, in effect, that--echoing John the Baptist, "I must decrease so that he can increase."

We've got to be able to empty ourselves, and people always say that's so hard to do. A minute, probably 30 seconds after you were born, you were slapped not on your bottom but on your back. You were held up so that the liquid could flow out of your lungs so that that life-giving air could come into your lungs so you could live, live as you're really meant to live. What might have looked like an act of violence wasn't at all. It was something that was necessary to shake loose that that was there, that had

served its purpose, so that something else beyond the imagining of that child could come in and give that child the fullness and the graciousness of life.

This is what happens when we too must decrease. We can leave aside all of that which is not of God to let in that overpowering power, graciousness, and rush of the Holy Spirit. That's what we are called to do. That is what we are called to ask for. Not to ask for the little, but to ask for the great, so that we too can be the great, and embark on a life that is beyond our imagining.

If you want the Greek name for it, the Greek name is called "kenosis." It means you take something that's full of a liquid and you pour it out. And you pour it out, and it's filled, then, as Saint Paul said in his wonderful image, with the power and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

We're not just empty vessels. Instead, we are called to be vessels of the Holy Spirit. Yes, fragile and frail and too many cracks. If you had a close-up now, you'd see how many cracks are in this vessel. But that's not important. Because we are powered by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

When we increase, we are increased so that we can take that message with which we have been filled out to the rest of the world who hunger for God, who hunger for Jesus Christ. Who, all too often, are feeling empty, but instead can be filled with the certainty, the power, and the grace of Jesus Christ so that they too can be able to know love, grace, and the gifts and abundance that are given to all those who know, love, and follow Christ.