St. Theresa of Lisieux
Feast Day: October 1 (1873-1897)

Upper Grades

Theresa Martin never traveled far from home, was never awarded a medal, never built a hospital, never started a religious community. Yet her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, was translated into 35 languages and read by millions. Why was this young woman so popular?

Theresa proved that we can become saints by doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. She explained, “I wanted to seek a way to heaven, a new way, very short, very straight—the way of trust and self-surrender... I am a very little soul, who can offer only little things to our Lord.”

Theresa set an example everyone could follow because there was nothing unusual about her life. She was born into a loving and devout middle class family in France. Her father was a watchmaker, and her mother was a lace maker. Her mother died when Theresa was four, so Theresa was raised by her four older sisters. Theresa held a special place in her father’s heart—as he called her “my little queen”. He would take her fishing with him. Seated on a hill, looking at the beauty of the sky and the meadow, she would pray.

By the time Theresa was 14, two of her sisters had entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux. Theresa had also decided to become a nun, but did not want to wait. Both, priests and the bishop told Theresa she was too young to make such a commitment. But Theresa was so determined that during an audience with the pope she made a scene, blurring out her request. In the end, the bishop let her enter the convent when she was 15.

Theresa prayed and did the most ordinary tasks of Carmelite life. Her jobs were scrubbing floors, washing dishes, setting the tables, sewing, dusting, and cooking. She helped care for the sick when a flu epidemic spread through the convent.

Theresa set out to be a saint by what she called the “Little Way”. She decided to do every act, even picking up a pin, for love of God. Theresa’s greatest gifts were concentration, which helped her grow in prayer, and determination, which helped build her character. Her cross was shyness, sensitivity, and stubbornness.

Theresa said, “My vocation is love.” The Carmelite sisters were not perfect, but she loved them as she loved Christ. This took much faith and sacrifice. Theresa also loved the Church. She could not go to the missions as much as she desired, but she offered up her suffering for missionaries. After intense suffering from tuberculosis, Theresa died when she was 24. Her last words were “My God, I love you.” In 1997 she was declared a Doctor of the Church. In 2002 her relics were taken to countries like Iraq on a peace pilgrimage. St. Theresa is one of the patron saints of the missions.
St. Theresa of Lisieux, also known as the ‘little flower’ was born in France in 1873 and baptized Theresa Martin. She was born into a loving and devout middle class family; her father was a watchmaker, and her mother was a lace maker. When Theresa was four her mother died, so she was raised by her four older sisters. Theresa had a special place in her father’s heart. He called her “my little queen” and would take her fishing with him. Seated on a hill, looking at the beauty of the sky and the meadow, she would pray.

Growing up she was very sensitive to what people had to say about her and would often burst out crying when someone would criticize her or speak harshly to her. When Theresa was 14, two of her sisters had entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux. She also decided to become a nun and did not want to wait. Priests and the bishop told Theresa she was too young to make such a commitment. Determined, during an audience with the pope, she made a scene, blurting out her request. In the end the bishop let her enter the convent at age 15.

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