

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

"Little Flower of Jesus"

Doctor of the Church and Patroness of Foreign Missions

Feast/Memorial Day

October 1st

Thérèse Martin was born at Alençon, France on January 2, 1873 to saintly parents, Louis and Zélie Martin. She was the ninth child, and she, along with four of her sisters entered the religious life. When Thérèse was only 4 years old, her mother died and the family moved to Lisieux, France. Brought up in a strong faith, the call to a religious vocation entered her life extremely early.

In 1883, Thérèse was healed from a serious illness through prayers to the Blessed Mother. Thérèse fervently wished to embrace a life of prayer through religious life and vocation. During an audience in November, 1887, with Pope Leo XIII, she had the courage and audacity to ask His Holiness for admittance to the Carmelite Order.

On April 9, 1888, when only fifteen years old, Thérèse entered the Carmelite convent at Lisieux. On September 8, 1890, on the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she made her religious profession.

Inspired by the Gospels and embracing the way of Saint Teresa of Jesus, Thérèse placed love at the center of everything, fulfilling the various community responsibilities with zeal and fidelity. She discovered the "little way" of spiritual childhood and in turn instructed the novices under her direction at the Carmelite convent at Lisieux. Enveloped by the love of Jesus, her only Spouse, Thérèse became even more spiritual. Thérèse wanted so much to save souls and to help the priests save souls. She did so by prayer and sacrifice and loving and trusting in God. On June 9, 1895, on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, she offered herself as a sacrificial victim to the merciful Love of God. It was at this time that Thérèse wrote her first autobiographical manuscript ("A"). She would write two more manuscripts ("B" and "C"). On April 3, 1895, she suffered the first indication of the illness which would result in her death in 1897. From April 1895, Thérèse would document her life and faith as her spiritual maturity grew, particularly the realization of her vocation to draw all people to Jesus.

Before her death on September 30, 1897, Thérèse said, "After my death I will let fall a shower of roses. I will spend my heaven in doing good upon the earth." Her final words were "My God..., I love you." Her manuscripts were published in 1899, two years after her death. In 1912, the first complete edition of Thérèse of Lisieux, a Servant of God, was published under the title of "Letters and Spiritual Counsels." It was an immediate and tremendous success.

Following her early death at the age of 24 in 1897, many miracles have been attributed to Thérèse. Normally fifty years would pass before proceedings would be opened for a person's canonization as a saint of the universal Church. However, in Thérèse's case, the period was waived and in 1925, she was beatified. She was canonized by Pope Pius XI on May 17, 1925. Two years later, on December 14, 1927, Pope Pius XI also proclaimed Thérèse of Lisieux the Universal Patron of Missions, with Saint Francis Xavier.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux's teaching and holiness, as seen through her autobiographical manuscripts, have been received with great popularity by Roman Catholics, as well as those outside the Church. On October 19, 1997, being World Mission Sunday, one hundred years following her death, Pope John Paul II named Thérèse a Doctor of the Universal Church.