

Hero of the Week

**Born:**

January 2, 1873

Died:

September 30, 1897

Memorial:

October 1

Patron Saint of:

- missions
- pilots
- AIDS patients
- florists

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

“After my death, I will let fall a shower of roses. I will spend my heaven doing good upon earth. I will raise up a mighty host of little saints. My mission is to make God loved . . .”

—St. Thérèse of Lisieux

The last words of this young nun, who died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-three, were prophetic. Today, the “Little Flower” is regarded as both the patron saint of missions and as one of the four women doctors of the Church.

Even as a child, young Thérèse loved roses, plucking them and scattering their petals before the Blessed Sacrament. When she told her dad that she wanted to join the Discalced Carmelites (a community of nuns who devote their entire lives to prayer and who live physically separated from the outside world), he plucked a little flower from the ground and gave it to her. She took it to mean she was going to be replanted somewhere else to grow and thrive.

Convent life was never going to be a source of dramatic adventure for the young woman who wanted to be a saint. Nothing extraordinary was going to happen to her, but she did small things with great love. She saw God’s love and care everywhere in nature and recorded her thoughts in simple yet profound prose. In her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, she writes:

“If all flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose her springtime beauty, and the fields would no longer be decked out with little wild flowers. So it is in the world of souls, Jesus’ garden. He has created smaller ones and

those must be content to be daisies or violets destined to give joy to God’s glances when he looks down at his feet. Perfection consists in doing his will, in being what he wills us to be.”

St. Thérèse of Lisieux believed that simple acts of love and sacrifice not only paved her “little way” of holiness, they helped to save the world! Every slight was an opportunity for humble sacrifice—a smile instead of a scowl, an apology instead of an explanation. She lived every moment, every act, all for the love of God. She knew that God loved her not because she was accomplishing great deeds, but because her small deeds were accomplished with great love.

Her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, not only shares the story of her life; it explains in detail her approach to living a sacramental life. The book became a worldwide hit. The young woman who wanted to do small things with great love became a saint who accomplished great things for God along her “little” way.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, pray for us. Teach us your little way, that we may show our love daily to God who loves us.