



## 2023 – A Jubilee Year for St. Therese of Lisieux

As granted by Pope Francis, 2023 is the Jubilee Year of St. Therese of Lisieux, to honor the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her canonization. The jubilee (a special anniversary of an event), will last until Sunday, January 7, 2024 with the theme “For trust and love,” which were the last words of her autobiography, “Story of a Soul.”

Pope Francis stressed that St. Therese “lived devoted to God, forgetting about herself, loving and consoling Jesus, and interceding for the salvation of all.” He is preparing an apostolic letter on St. Therese of Lisieux to be published Oct. 15.

### *Who Was Saint Therese of Lisieux?*

Therese was born in 1873 in France and later her family moved to the town of Lisieux, France. Her parents (who also were canonized as saints), each wanted to serve their faith as a nun and priest but after meeting, chose to marry and raise a family. Their family grew to five girls, all who would go on to serve their strong Catholic faith in convents.

Therese was the baby of the family and, despite being weak and frail in her earliest years, would grow into a precocious, mischievous, and self-confident child, full of passion from the start. Her personality would change drastically when her mother died of cancer when she was four years old. From then until she was 14 years old, she struggled with being overly emotional about all things, great and small. Therese, herself, admits her happy disposition completely changed and she “became timid and retiring, sensitive to an excessive degree.”

Her father and sisters tried hard, coupled with their deep Catholic faith and practices, to help her through this difficult and dark time that she called her “most painful period.” When she was 14, Therese and her family were coming home from Christmas Eve mass when an event happened inside her soul that she would call her “conversion.”

Her father made a criticism (that she was too old to continue getting gifts in her shoes at Christmas), that would normally have left Therese in tears and hysteria. Instead, she found a new power within herself, leaving in her a new sense of calm and inner conviction. She called this the start of her “most beautiful” period in life. Her heart was suddenly filled with charity for others and a new-found humility. She recalls, “I forgot myself to please others and, in doing so, became happy myself.”



From that point forward, Therese was on a determined mission to enter the Carmelite Convent in Lisieux, which she eventually was, joining two of her sisters who were already there.

She continued to grow in her newfound *beliefs that she was in a situation where she couldn't do great big things to please God, but she could devote herself to doing many little things and, if done with great love, would please God just as much.*

Therese never went on missions, never founded a religious order, and never performed great works or public displays of faith. Instead, she lived uneventfully within a convent and battled tuberculosis for most of her adult life. She grabbed onto every opportunity to love others more than herself. She smiled through hardships, refused to complain, and she performed small, hidden favors for others.

This attitude became the basis for her legacy. St. Therese called the practice of doing all things (especially little and menial things) with great love, the "little way." She wrote, "you know well enough that Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them."

Therese passed away at age 24 from tuberculosis.

She is commonly known as the "little flower" and her image is associated with flowers and roses, because she saw the seasons in nature as reflecting the seasons of God's love for us. She saw herself as the "little flower of Jesus," who gave glory to God by just being her little self among all the other flowers in God's garden.

### ***Our Connection to St. Therese of Lisieux***

We have one of our co-founders, Jerry Choromanski, to thank for choosing St. Therese as our organization's namesake, and paving the way for her "little ways" legacy to become our mission to "do ordinary things with extraordinary love."

Jerry was a devout Catholic and St. Therese was his family's patron Saint. Their devotion to her was a part of their DNA. All of his seven daughters' took Therese as their confirmation name, they prayed the rosary to her every Sunday, and if there was a statue of her anywhere, the family would stop and pray.

Lynn Choromanski, one of Jerry's daughters, said she believes her dad felt a connection to St. Therese because she became a saint when he was growing up. Therese was a contemporary saint, and everyone knew about her interesting story, her health struggles and her belief in doing little things.

Having come from an immigrant family, Lynn said her dad remembered how hard his grandmother worked to make a living, and St. Therese's belief of doing little things struck a chord with Jerry during the pre-World War II years. He then carried that loyalty throughout his life, and of course, to us here at Saint Therese.