



*the*  
**LITTLE WAY**

*reflections on the joy of smallness in GOD'S infinite love*

*the "little flower"*

**ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX**



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

The wording of Scripture verses quoted by St. Thérèse from the works cited below has been retained from the original translations (from French to English), with the exception that some words that had been capitalized have been lowercased for consistency with the style used in this book. Bible references to these verses are included in footnotes.

Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are taken from *Soeur Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower of Jesus: A New and Complete Translation of L'Histoire D'Une Ame, with an Account of Some Favours Attributed to the Intercession of Soeur Thérèse*, ed. T. N. Taylor (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1922). Public domain. Quotations have been lightly edited for the modern reader for clarity, readability, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Quotations cited as CLFW are taken from Rev. Albert H. Dolan, O. Carm., *Collected Little Flower Works* (Chicago: Carmelite Press, 1929).

## THE LITTLE WAY:

reflections on the joy of smallness in GOD's infinite love

ISBN: 978-1-64123-951-6

eBook ISBN: 978-1-64123-952-3

Printed in Colombia

© 2023 by Whitaker House

Whitaker House

1030 Hunt Valley Circle

New Kensington, PA 15068

[www.whitakerhouse.com](http://www.whitakerhouse.com)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022951448

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical—including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system—without permission in writing from the publisher. Please direct your inquiries to [permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com](mailto:permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com).

“I offered myself to our Lord to be His Little Flower; I longed to console Him, to draw as near as possible to the tabernacle, to be looked on, cared for, and gathered by Him.”



“In my ‘little way,’ everything is most ordinary; all that I do, little souls must be able to do likewise.”

—St. Thérèse of Lisieux



# *Introduction to the Life and Influence of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*



St. Thérèse of Lisieux,<sup>1</sup> known as “the Little Flower,” was a Discalced Carmelite nun who lived in the late nineteenth century. Although she died in a secluded convent in France at the young age of twenty-four, her renowned spiritual writings have been read by multitudes of people around the world. The town where she lived has reportedly been visited by up to two million Christian pilgrims a year.<sup>2</sup>

Born Marie-Françoise-Thérèse Martin on January 2, 1873, in Alençon, France, Thérèse was the youngest of five surviving children in a close, devout Catholic family. Thérèse’s beloved mother died when she was four, devastating her and causing her personality to change from lively and strong-willed to “timid, shy, and extremely sensitive.”<sup>3</sup> The family soon moved to Lisieux, France, where Thérèse grew up under the loving nurture of her godly father, older sisters, and aunt and uncle. Yet her grief over her mother’s death persisted for years, and, while her dedication

---

1. St. Thérèse’s official religious name is “Teresa of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.”

2. Mary Hanson, “The Little Flower’s Lisieux,” October 1, 2020, *National Catholic Register*, <https://www.ncregister.com/features/the-little-flower-s-lisieux>.

3. *Soeur Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower of Jesus: A New and Complete Translation of L’Histoire D’Une Ame, with an Account of Some Favours Attributed to the Intercession of Soeur Thérèse*, ed. T. N. Taylor (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1922), chapter 2, “A Catholic Household.”

to and love for God grew, she also struggled with an excessively guilty conscience, which she called “scruples.” She experienced further emotional pain due to separation when her two oldest sisters, Pauline and Marie, who had been mother figures to her, eventually entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux.

Thérèse considered December 25, 1886, a week before her fourteenth birthday, to be the day of her “complete conversion” and release when God healed her within. After she had struggled with feelings of loss, inadequacy, and extreme sensitiveness for close to a decade, “in an instant, our Lord, satisfied with my good will, accomplished the work I had not been able to do during all these years.... Love and a spirit of self-forgetfulness took possession of me.”<sup>4</sup>

Desiring to devote her life completely to God, and with her father’s approval, she sought to join the Carmelite convent at the age of fifteen, but the religious authorities were unwilling to consent. During a pilgrimage to Rome, which included a general audience with the pope, she pleaded with the pontiff to grant her request. Although she did not receive the pope’s permission, the bishop of the local diocese agreed shortly thereafter.

Thérèse considered herself a “little flower” of Jesus—obscure as a blossom in God’s field, but delighted in and cared for by Him. She was fully committed to the exacting lifestyle of the Carmelite order, but, as she endeavored to live in full obedience and surrender to God, she found herself unable “to climb the steep stairway of perfection.” She sought a simpler, scriptural way to reach God, eventually recognizing that she needed to remain

---

4. *Soeur Thérèse of Lisieux*, chapter 5, “Vocation of Thérèse.”

“little” and allow Jesus to “lift” her to God and enable her to love and obey Him. The “little way” she discovered—that of humility, trust, sacrifice, and resting in God’s deep love—captured the essence of the gospel with profound simplicity. It transformed her relationship with her heavenly Father, and its ripple effects have surged to a global impact that continues to this day.

Thérèse experienced spiritual dryness and temptations against faith, and she also contracted tuberculosis, from which she suffered greatly, but she strongly held on to her lifelong love of God. The doctor who attended her said, “I have never seen anyone suffer so intensely with such a look of supernatural joy.”<sup>5</sup> Before her death on September 30, 1897, Thérèse wrote three accounts of various aspects of her life and spirituality that were posthumously published together as her autobiography under the title *The Story of a Soul*. The book, which included her deep insights into “the little way” and other spiritual matters, was immediately popular and eventually became a worldwide best-seller, with millions of copies in print. The work has been translated into more than sixty languages and dialects.

Thérèse was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church on May 17, 1925, and was declared a doctor of the Church on October 19, 1997. Pope Pius X called her “the greatest saint of modern times,” and Pope John Paul II described her insights into faith as “vast and profound.” Followers of Thérèse’s little way transcend denominational boundaries, and her words and way of life continue to inspire millions.

---

5. *Soeur Thérèse of Lisieux*, “Epilogue: A Victim of Divine Love.”

*little flowers*  
in GOD's Field



Our Lord...showed me the book of nature, and I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would lose its springtide beauty, and the fields would no longer be enameled with lovely hues. And so it is in the world of souls, our Lord's living garden. He has been pleased to create great saints who may be compared to the lily and the rose, but He has also created lesser ones who must be content to be daisies or simple violets flowering at His feet, and whose mission it is to gladden His divine eyes when He deigns to look down on them. And the more gladly they do His will, the greater is their perfection.





I understood this, also: that God's love is made manifest as well in a simple soul that does not resist His grace as in one more highly endowed. In fact, the characteristic of love being self-abasement, if all souls resembled the holy doctors who have illuminated the church, it seems that God, in coming to them, would not stoop low enough. But He has created the little child who knows nothing and can but utter feeble cries, and the [uncultivated person] who has only the natural law to guide him, and it is to their hearts that He deigns to stoop. These are the field flowers whose simplicity charms Him; and, by His condescension to them, our Savior shows His infinite greatness. As the sun shines both on the cedar and on the floweret, so the divine Sun illumines every soul, great and small, and all correspond to His care—just as in nature the seasons are so disposed that on the appointed day the humblest daisy shall unfold its petals.

## *the little way of St. Thérèse*

It has ever been my desire to become a saint, but I have always felt, in comparing myself with the saints, that I am as far removed from them as the grain of sand that the passerby tramples underfoot is remote from the mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds.

Instead of being discouraged, I concluded that God would not inspire desires that could not be realized, and that I may aspire to sanctity in spite of my littleness. For me to become great is impossible. I must bear with myself and my many imperfections; but I will seek out a means of getting to heaven by a little way—very short and very straight—a little way that is wholly new. We live in an age of inventions. Nowadays, the rich need not trouble to climb the stairs; they have lifts instead. Well, I mean to try and find a lift by which I may be raised to God, for I am too tiny to climb the steep stairway of perfection. I have sought



to find in Holy Scripture some suggestion as to what this lift might be that I so much desired, and I read these words uttered by the Eternal Wisdom Itself: "Whosoever is a little one, let him come to Me."\* Then I drew near to God, feeling sure that I had discovered what I sought; but wishing to know further what He would do to the little one, I continued my search, and this is what I found: "You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees; as one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you."\*\*

Never have I been consoled by words more tender and sweet. Your arms, then, O Jesus, are the lift that must raise me up even to heaven. To get there, I need not grow. On the contrary, I must remain little; I must become still less.

\*Proverbs 9:4.

\*\*See Isaiah 66:12–13.

When Thérèse was asked, “What is this little way that you would teach to souls?” this was her reply:

It is the way of spiritual childhood, the way of trust and absolute self-surrender.

I want to point out to them the means that I have always found so perfectly successful, to tell them that there is but one thing to do here below: we must offer Jesus the flowers of little sacrifices and win Him by a caress. That is how I have won Him, and that is why I shall be made so welcome.



*I am a very little soul who can offer only very little things to our Lord. It still happens that I frequently let slip the occasion of these slender sacrifices, which bring so much peace. But this does not discourage me; I bear the loss of a little peace, and I try to be more watchful in the future.*

“Remaining little” means to recognize one’s nothingness, to await everything from the goodness of God, to avoid being too much troubled at our faults; finally, not to worry over amassing spiritual riches, not to be solicitous about anything. Even among the poor, while a child is still small, he is given what is necessary; but, once he is grown up, his father will no longer feed him, and tells him to seek work and support himself. Well, it was to avoid hearing this that I have never wished to grow up, for I feel incapable of earning my livelihood, which is life eternal!



*O Sun, my only love, I am happy to feel myself  
so small, so frail,  
in Your sunshine, and I am in peace.*