



St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus - Patroness of our Parish

Therese, the youngest of nine children, was born in Alençon France in 1873. Her father, Louis, was a successful watchmaker and jeweler. Her mother Zélie Guérin, built a cottage industry in lace making, beginning in the village of Alençon, which is known for its delicate lace.

Four of Therese's siblings died at a young age; the remaining five girls eventually all entered the convent, so deep was their call to sanctity. Four became contemplative Carmelite Nuns at the Lisieux Carmel, and one became a Visitation sister.

Therese wasn't always a nun nor was she always a saint. She was a very regular little girl, who was rather sensitive. In fact, she seemed like a spoiled little girl, who would stomp her feet and have a temper tantrum if she did not get her own way.

After the death of her mother, while Therese was only 4, her father, who referred to her as "my little queen" would give her anything she wanted to keep her happy. Louis Martin was protective of his daughters. He wouldn't allow them to read the newspapers, fearful that it would make them too worldly. But the mischievous girls would steal away with the newspaper while papa napped and carefully return it before he awoke.

At a young age, this precocious child wanted everything. She would get more than she bargained for. Sick physically and emotionally, she was healed by Our Lady of the Smile at the age of 11. She experienced a profound conversion on Christmas eve, 1886, at the age of 13.

She felt a call to enter Carmel as a contemplative Nun, so that she could give herself totally to Jesus. But she was too young. Appeals to the Mother Superior and Priest Chaplain yielded: "when you are old enough -16". Not content, Therese and her father appealed to the Bishop. Not getting the response she wanted, she appealed directly and personally to the Pope while on a parish pilgrimage to Rome. Therese had always said: "I want everything"- and she usually got it.

Persistence paid off. Therese was allowed to enter the Lisieux Carmel at the age of 15 – her father lived to see her professed a Carmelite Nun. She took the religious name of Sister Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. God's spirit worked powerfully in Therese, so open was she to Divine Love. Still dreaming of taking on the world as a priest and missionary, she wrestled with her vocation and place in the Church. Finally she came to realize that her "vocation is love" – the love of God was the energy source for the Church – and fulfillment of the human heart and longing.

Despite her desire for the dramatic and expansive, Therese developed a simple spirituality, based on childlike trust and confidence in God. The spirituality of her "little way" was not about extraordinary things – but rather about doing simple things of life well and with extraordinary love. She believed and taught that "everything is grace" – God's face and presence could be experienced in every person and situation of our lives, if we just attend with love and expectancy.

Her love became surrender, as she slowly died of tuberculosis. Her superior asked her to write down her reflections, which became her autobiography, "Story of a Soul." She died at the age of 24, believing that her life was really just beginning for God, promising to spend her heaven doing good on earth. Her promised "shower of roses" began and have become a torrent in the Church ever since.

