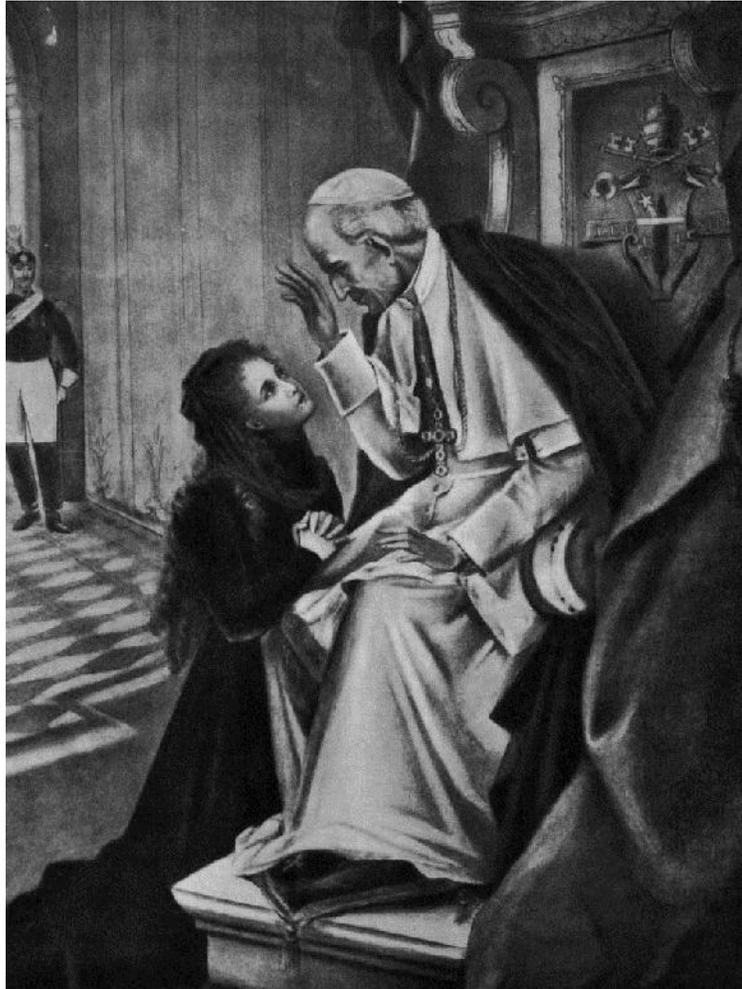


# THE LIFE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

BY

REV. ALBERT  
M. HUTTING



**The Little Flower at the feet of Pope Leo XIII.**

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V.

## Dedication

*To My Beloved Parents*

*These Chapters are*

*Affectionately Dedicated*

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"I HAVE A LONGING for those heart-wounds, those pin-pricks which inflict much pain. I know of no ecstasy to which I do not prefer sacrifice. There I find happiness, and there alone. The slender reed has no fear of being broken, for it is planted beside the waters of Love. When, therefore, it bends before the gale, it gathers strength in the refreshing stream, and longs for yet another storm to pass and sway its head. My very weakness makes me strong. No harm can come to me, since in whatever happens I see only the tender hand of Jesus... Besides, no suffering is too big a price to pay for glorious palm."

—Letter to Mother Agnes of Jesus-1889

## XI.

### INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK makes no pretence to be anything but a sketch of the life of a little saint. Its aim will be achieved if it leads its readers to a more thorough study of her salutary words and edifying deeds as they are recorded in her uniquely interesting Autobiography.

The Little Flower has a message for every individual of every class. First voiced by the Lips of the Divine Master, it echoed through the hills of Judea more than nineteen hundred years ago. It is ancient, yet forever new: "Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." That this divine ideal of childlike simplicity, can be reached with facility, presupposing that we are filled with good will, is amply demonstrated by the life story which is presented within these pages.

It is the author's hope that this little volume will find its way into many hospitals and there be the source of abundant encouragement to God's chosen ones, the shut-ins. Little Saint Therese is, in a very special way, their heroic model.

## I.

### 1

#### **MILITARY ANCESTORS**

FEW INDIVIDUALS can boast of having had two soldier forefathers. Little Therese, the heroine of this book, could point with pride to that distinction.

When Pierre-Francois Martin took painful leave of his family in Athis-del-Orne and set out for Alencon for his first military training, he had not even the faintest idea that he would one day be envied as the grandfather of a saint. Could he have drawn aside the curtain of the future and beheld his fifteen year old granddaughter bidding tearful farewell to father and sisters and setting out for the strictest cloister of the world, it would have made his sacrifice lighter and his outlook brighter.

The military expeditions of France gave Pierre-Francois ample opportunity to prove his sterling qualities. By 1823, he had risen to the captaincy in the nineteenth Light Infantry which was garrisoned at Bordeaux. The officer's residence was an old house located in the Rue Servandoni. It was here that his wife gave birth to a son whose name shall ever shine gloriously in the annals of earth and in the records of Heaven. The babe, born when his father was away from home, was destined to become the father of St. Therese. He was given the name Louis-Joseph-Aloys-Stanislaus and his arrival is recorded as having taken place on the twenty-second day of August, 1823.

### 2

Captain Martin was as true to his family as he was to his flag. Previous to the birth of his son, Louis, Pierre-Francois had fought bravely in no less than six important campaigns. Subsequent to that signal event, he took an important part in the expedition to Spain (1823 to 1824). As far as his public duties permitted, he watched over the education of Louis and grounded him in those solid virtues which were later to be reflected so brilliantly in the life of the Little Flower.

The active military career of Captain Martin terminated with his retirement from the French army at the end of the year 1830. Into the more pacific life which was to follow, he carried the most vivid memories of the skirmishes in which he had participated. His children would frequently hear of the Rhine, the Belle-lie en Mer, Sous Brest, the army of Nord, Prussia and Poland, Morbihan and Spain. And as their father would recount to them the battles in which he had fought, he would make sure to encourage these youngsters to fight on bravely through all the difficulties of life.

True father that he was, Captain Martin cast about for a home which would be so situated as to provide the best educational facilities for his children. His choice fell upon Alencon. Here young Louis could receive the best of religious training and at the same time profit by trips to the country homes of his relatives in Athis.



"Les Buissonnets," the family residence of the Little Flower.

"I seem already to touch the heavenly shore and to feel our Lord's loving embrace. In my fancy, I can see our Blessed Lady coming towards me, Papa

and Mama by her side, and in their company those four little angels, our baby brothers and sisters. Then, at last, I taste, as in a dream, the true and unending joys of Home." ----*St. Therese*

### 3

Needless to say, the wide-awake boy delighted in these excursions to the sunlit and blossom covered rural districts of Normandy. Every flower was to him a mirror in which he saw the beauty of God. Every gentle breeze was an angelic whispering to his deeply religious heart.

It has frequently been said that what a man is, he owes in large measure to his darling mother. Captain Martin's wife must have been a saint. otherwise, she could never have penned the following words to her son, Louis, when he visited his relatives in Rennes:

"What a joy it would be to me, dear Louis, to offer you in person my heartiest and best wishes. Yet we bear the crosses which God sends us, and thank Him every day for the blessings He has bestowed. I felt that He conferred a great blessing on me when I saw you for the first time in your Breton costume, your young heart filled with enthusiasm.... With what joy I pressed you to my heart, for you, dear son, are the dream of my nights and the constant subject of my thoughts.

"How many times do I not think of you when my soul, in prayer, follows the leading of my heart and darts up even to the foot of the divine throne. There, I pray with all the fervor of my soul that God may bestow on my children the interior happiness and calm so necessary in this turbulent world."

Heaven only knows how deeply these and other salutary words of maternal affection sank into the heart of the saintly youth and colored all the deeds of his fruitful life.

### 4

We should do injustice to the illustrious family of Therese if we were to omit mention of M. Isidore Guerin, maternal grandparent of the Saint. Like PierreFrancois Martin, he was a soldier in the army of the French Empire. He received his early military training at Wagram and was later transferred to the Oudinot Division. After the fall of the Empire, Isidore returned home to join the foot gendarmerie. In that

capacity he served until 1844, when he retired to Alencon where he died in 1863, just one decade previous to the date on which his daughter Zélie gave birth to St. Therese.

Why all these remarks concerning the ancestry of the Little Flower? Why stress the fact that her grandfathers were both soldiers? The writer feels justified in emphasizing this coincidence, because that word "soldier" seems to sum up most concisely and most fittingly the character of St. Therese. She had all the tenderness of a woman and, yet, all the heroism of a fighter on the front line.

Sometimes devotion to the Saint of Lisieux is blighted by the incorrect idea that hers was a life of walking at ease in a garden of roses. Such a notion was exploded by the eminent orator, R. P. Perroy, in the Cathedral of Lyons, at a time when devotion to the young Carmelite was growing by leaps and bounds. He said:

"Little Therese de l'Enfant Jesus, let me defend you against those who represent you as walking at your ease in a fragrant rose garden. I want to tell the world that your soul was above all virile; I wish to tell them that you could take your place between Joan of Arc and Margaret Mary.

## 5

I desire to make known that your combats against self were the combats of God. I would declare you heroic amongst heroines because you have chosen the way most contrary to nature, the way of little ones. I desire to say that if every knee on earth bends before you, if your name has become the most renowned in the world, it is not alone because you bring roses but because, with the Crucified for Whom your flowers have exhaled their fragrance, you have been obedient even unto the Cross."

Chaplains in the world war tell us that "from the day when the war was declared, Therese de l'Enfant Jesus left her place in Heaven and entered the field side by side with the 'Poilus' (a name given to the French soldiers) of France. In the mud of the trenches, on the plains of death, near the bed of agony, she was to remain with them faithful to the end.

"Moreover, they realized in their simple and upright hearts the necessity, in order to 'win the war', of a virtue which Therese had practiced even to a heroism, namely constancy in doing and suffering all in the spirit of duty. Thus was she their model as well as their protectress."

## 6

## II.

### THE BRIDGE OF TIES

IF THE MILITARY EXPLOITS of Therese's grandparents were in some way a foreshadowing of her victories over self and over sin, the foundation and the training for this life of conquest was laid by her devoted parents.

The hand of Providence is clearly seen in the union of these two saintly souls.

Very early in his life Louis Martin, Therese's father, discovered that he had a taste for (the) watch-making (profession.) He had cousins at Rennes who were watchmakers by trade. From them he took his first lessons in what was later to be the occupation of his life. He continued his apprenticeship at Strasbourg with one of his father's old comrades. His innate love for all that was beautiful drew him frequently to the famous cathedral of that quaint town, where he could examine closely the celebrated clock which is one of the finest pieces of mechanism of its kind in existence. How his heart must have expanded when he saw the little wooden figures of the twelve apostles appear to receive the blessing of a little wooden Christ! What a train of salutary thoughts must have passed through his noble mind, as he watched the custodians of the quarter-hours enter upon the stage, command the scene for fifteen minutes and then disappear.

## 7

(At the beginning of the hour an infant, scarcely able to walk, appears; the second quarter of an hour is ushered in by a youth, probably in his teens; the next fifteen minutes are commanded by a man in his prime; the concluding quarter of an hour brings with it the figure of an aged man with furrowed features and halting step. These marvels of mechanism may still be seen in the Cathedral of Strasbourg where the father of St. Therese was inspired by them nearly a century ago.)

If it were a choice between one of several earthly careers, certainly Louis Martin would choose the watchmaking profession. However, he was a calm and collected youth and made no move without due deliberation. At the age of twenty, he had arrived at the conclusion that all earthly splendor and all material success must one day pass away; that true joy can come only from the possession of those things which are spiritual and eternal; that the surest method of possessing these is "the voluntary renunciation of the fleeting though alluring shadows which claim our attention here below."

There was a spot high up in the great St. Bernard Mountain which captivated the heart of this saintly youth. It was an Augustinian Monastery, erected in that frigid clime for the sole purpose of rescuing unfortunate travelers buried beneath the snow in the mountain gorges, or frozen by the winds that swept over the immense glaciers. Louis envied the men who passed their lives within those quiet walls.

## 8

He would be one of them. Accordingly, we find him, one morning in September of the year 1843, carefully climbing the difficult slopes of the great mountain in quest of that peace which the world can not give. One might easily conjecture what sentiments filled his heart and what prayer was on his lips, as he beheld a hundred majestic peaks about and above him. "O ye ice and snow, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever. . . . O ye mountains and hills, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever." (Daniel 3,70-75.)

At the end of his toilsome climb, Louis Martin found a gratifying welcome at the threshold of the Monastery. It is characteristic of monastic life that "every guest is received as Christ." The youthful aspirant felt sure that here he would find that calm, which had been hinted at in his mother's letters when he was away on vacation at Rennes. High up in the world amid snow-clad summits, he would pursue the career of a good Samaritan, ministering to the needs of unfortunates who had lost their way in the Alpine passes.

God's plans did not entirely coincide with Louis' wishes. For admission to the Augustinian Brotherhood, it was demanded that the postulant finish his Latin studies. This requirement was lacking in Louis Martin.

"I am sorry," said the Prior. "But be not discouraged. Return to Normandy, work diligently, and when you have completed your studies, we will gladly admit you to our Novitiate."

## 9

This decision was a stunning blow to the pilgrim from Alencon. Heavy of heart, he retraced his steps to his home where, under the tutorship of the Cure of St. Leonard, he set himself diligently to the study of Latin. Ill health soon forced him to put aside his books. For his own benefit and for the interests of all concerned, he finally decided to return to the business of watch-making. At this juncture, as he bent over his work-bench and set the various jewels in their places and fixed a hundred springs and cogs

and levers into the form of a contrivance for telling the time of day, it would have been a source of untold consolation to him, to realize that one day he would be the father of a child who would be set into the firmament of Heaven as one of its brightest stars. But God would reserve that realization to a more auspicious moment.

A similar event of equal importance was happening at about this time at the Hotel-Dieu of Alencon. Zelig Guerin, an exemplary young lady, born at Denis-sur Sarthon, Normandy, was seeking admission to the community of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, whose business it was to care for the sick and the poor of that district. The postulant was perfectly equipped with all the requisites for the life to which she aspired. Nothing was lacking either in intellectual attainments or in piety. Yet, strange to say, when she confided her wishes to the Superioress of the Hotel-Dieu, she was told definitely that God had other plans for her and that she was not meant for the religious life of a nun.

## 10

Zelig's feelings on this occasion must have been somewhat akin to those which were experienced by Louis Martin, when he heard those fateful words on the summit of Mount St. Bernard: "I am sorry son, we cannot admit you until you have finished your studies in Latin."

It was clear to Zelig Guerin that she was destined for the married state. Nothing remained for her but to busy herself in preparing for that life, although her future partner was as yet an unknown to her. From her father, a retired soldier, she could expect but little financial help to meet the demands of her future life. His expenses were many and his pension just nicely provided for the ordinary needs of the family. It was expected of Zelig that she look about for a position which would enable her, unaided, to increase her dowry, a very important item in the Normandy of her day. She needed not to worry for any length of time. In her girlhood days she had learned to have unbounded confidence in the Blessed Mother of God. Now that she had come to a pivotal point in her life, she again had recourse to that Mother of Perpetual Help. Her prayers were answered on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1851, when she heard an interior voice which seemed to give her this command: "Have Alencon point lace made."

Quick to respond to any inspiration from on high, Zelig Guerin began at once to study the various processes by which lace was made. She devoted long days and late hours to the assemblage of pieces already prepared. In fact, she left nothing undone to make herself a specialist in the trade.

## 11

Unprecedented success attended her efforts. Within a short time, she became the head and supervisor of a large group of energetic women who plied the needle in their homes while she "took charge of the orders, supplied the designs and watched over the execution." The lace which she produced found a ready welcome in the homes of the wealthier families of France and wherever the family purse could afford such a luxury. Five hundred francs a metre was not considered an exorbitant price for the unusual quality of Alencon lace which came from the hands of Zeligue Guerin. It never entered her fondest dreams that a child of hers would one day feature so prominently in the patterns of Providence.

It is a mathematical truth that parallel lines never meet. But parallel lives do, by the gracious providence of Almighty God. Thus far, we have seen a striking similarity between the lives of Louis Martin and Zeligue Guerin. They had never met, had probably never heard of each other. Both in childhood days had listened eagerly to the accounts of the heroic exploits of a soldier father. Both had been given the advantage of a thoroughly Christian education. Both had keenest desires of embracing the life of a religious. Both had tasted bitter disappointment at the threshold of the cloister. Now both had settled down to a work, which, in a unique way, reflected the beauty of God and the grandeur of the universe. He had become a jeweller and she, a maker of lace.

## 12

The fateful meeting of these two profoundly religious souls occurred one day as Zeligue Guerin was crossing the bridge of Saint Leonard. A young man of dignified appearance and distinguished demeanor came into sight, almost miraculously at the very moment when Zeligue was setting foot upon the bridge. He was a complete stranger to her, but an interior voice told her: "This is he whom I have prepared for thee." Blessed words! They were the introduction to an acquaintanceship which was eventually made permanent by marriage in the Church of Notre-Dame at Alencon on July 12, 1858.



The Little Flower as a novice at the age of 16.

13

III.

### **MODEL PARENTS**

OVER THE THRESHOLD of the modest home in the Rue du Pont Neuf, where the newly wedded couple began their married life, might well have been written the words: "Thy Will Be Done." One sole object dominated and directed their entire life: that the designs of God in their regard be fully accomplished. They understood the purpose of marriage and did not seek to evade the responsibilities attached thereto. The prayer so frequently upon the lips of Zélie Guérin, previous to her almost

miraculous finding of her partner, continued to be her most ardent supplication now that she had entered the sacred state of matrimony: "O my God, since I am unworthy to be Thy spouse like my dear sister, I will enter the married state to fulfill Thy holy will. I beseech Thee to make me the mother of many children, and to grant that all of them may be consecrated to Thee."

Three observances, altogether too much neglected in our day of "modern ideas," prepared Louis and Zélie for the sublime dignity of fatherhood and motherhood. They abstained from servile work on Sunday; they made it a practice every day to read the Lives of the Saints.

## 14

In the Eucharistic Sacrifice they found the "key to progress" here on earth. They were conscious of its infinite value; they drew copiously of its limitless graces. They were not content with attending Sunday Mass. If, as they were convinced, in the Mass the fruits of the Redemption are most abundantly received, why not hasten as often as possible to that fountain of mercy. Accordingly, M. and Mme. Martin curtailed their sleep every morning so that they might attend the daily Mass at 5:30 in their parish church. What moved them to choose such an early hour? They were motivated by a desire to be united with God's poor. These were present in large numbers at the first Mass each day of the week. Their tattered garments and their furrowed features, together with their simple prayers, had a special power in drawing down upon a needy world torrents of mercy and of grace. To the Martins, it seemed that Heaven kissed earth every morning at 5:30 and that kiss lasted all through the day, warming each act with the touch of charity and enlivening each deed with the spirit of sacrifice.

The devout soul realizes that "God hates robbery in the holocaust." What is given to the Lord, must be given without reserve. This also applies to the giving of time. One of the precepts of the decalogue reads thus: "Thou shalt keep holy the Lord's Day." These words were deeply engraved upon the fleshy tablets of Louis Martin's heart. The thought of serving the Lord by halves or quarters was repulsive to him. Keeping holy the Lord's Day meant to Louis Martin total abstinence from business transactions of whatever kind.

## 15

Young and successful jeweller that he was, there were numerous temptations to transgress this divine command. The Martin Jewelry establishment had acquired an enviable reputation in the vicinity of Alençon. On Sundays, the more prominent

members of the gentler sex were accustomed to gather before the jewelry shop and examine the unique display of ornaments always to be found in the windows. In vain did they plead with Louis Martin: "Leave the side door at least open; in this way your shop will to all appearances remain closed, while purchasers can come in quietly and you will not lose sales." All the sales in the world could never prevail upon this jeweller to incur the odium of Almighty God by violating the observance of the Lord's Day.

Holy life is inspired by holy example. The pious traits which we have observed in Louis and Zelig Martin, were partly the result of daily reading of some portion of the Lives of the Saints. Athletes in the race for salvation, champions in the fight for truth, martyrs in the cause of Christ—these were the objects of their study, these became the models of their lives. As is to be expected in a family which has ambitions to become like unto the Holy Family of Nazareth, special attention was given to the Blessed Mother of God and St. Joseph. The pages of this book shall reveal how abundantly God blessed this practice of studying the Lives of the Saints in the case of Louis and Zelig Martin.

## 16

When the angels sang their good tidings over Bethlehem's Crib, the tenor of their song was this: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will!" Briefly, yet thoroughly, these words sum up the life's program of the parents of St. Therese. Their single aim was to procure the greater honor and glory of God. Nor was good will lacking to them. Unlike a multitude of so-called "moderns" who shirk the responsibility of parenthood and, therefore, bar children out of their lives, Louis and Zelig Martin looked forward with eager expectation to a large family. It mattered not to them whether God should deem fit to send them boys or girls, provided He would surely bless their home with at least one boy, who might become a priest and a great missionary who might carry God's Holy Gospel throughout the length and breadth of the world.

This manifestation of good will was amply rewarded by the God Who never turns a deaf ear to persistent and confident prayer. In the course of time, the Creator sent nine cherubs to breathe the saintly atmosphere of the Martin home and to fill it with heavenly delights.

Four of these precious gifts of God were recalled to Heaven by death, when they were in their early infancy. Their names were: Marie-Helene, Marie-Joseph-Louis, Marie-Joseph-Jean-Baptiste and Marie-Melanie-Therese. They had entered and departed from this world before our Little Saint was born, but their angelic spirits

hovered closely over her all during the course of her earthly existence, as shall be shown in a later chapter of this book.

## 17

At the time of Thesere's birth, four sisters survived to welcome the "Little Queen." (This title was given to Therese by her father immediately after her arrival.) You may be interested to know their ages at the time of the advent of the Saint. Marie was 13 years; Pauline, 11½ ; Leonie, 9; and Celine, 3½. With Little Therese, the family was complete; she was the last, though not the least jewel, to be set into the precious picture of that happy home.

## 18

### IV.

#### **THE "QUEEN'S" ARRIVAL**

ON THE very day of the birth of Therese (January 2, 1873), a little boy was singing a ballad in the street leading to the Martin home. When he came to the birthplace of the Saint he handed in his song, the last line of which read as follows:

Tu seras Rose un jour.  
Thou shalt be a Rose one day.

This incident is largely responsible for the name which was given to Therese from her very earliest days: the Little Flower.

Truly, the delicate "little missionary" resembled a tiny plant in the frailty of its constitution. It was thought best to hasten the preparations for Baptism, lest perhaps the newcomer might die without the precious grace which that life-giving Sacrament imparts. The baptismal ceremony took place in the church of Notre Dame on the afternoon of January 4, when Thèrese was but two days old. Marie, her eldest sister, was chosen as godmother. The privilege of officiating on this memorable occasion fell upon Abbe Lucien-Victor Dumaine, a priest of the parish of Notre-Dame and a personal friend of the family.

## 19

Years later, this same priest was to be one of the witnesses in the Process of Beatification of this child whom he baptized that day, under the name of Marie-Francois-Therese Martin.

The countryside of Alencon was clad with snow when they carried the babe back from the font to the cradle in the home of Louis Martin. Snow was a beautiful symbol of the spotlessness of her soul; snow was to have a special attraction for her throughout her subsequent life.

The early infancy of little Therese was a period of trying anxieties for her tender parents. Scarcely had the waters of Baptism dried upon the brow of the tiny one, than her health began to decline rapidly. It would seem that the four darling cherubs who had preceded her to Heaven, were beckoning to her and calling her to their realm of bliss.

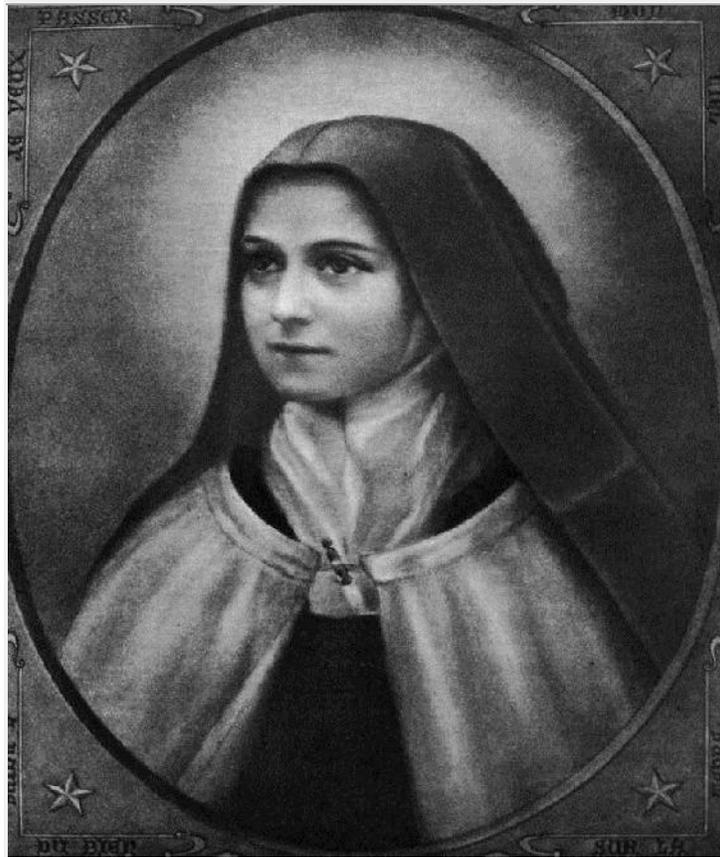
At the advice of the family doctor, it was decided that Therese be entrusted to the care of a healthy nurse. Mme. Martin placed full confidence in a certain Rose Taillé, better known as "little Rose," who had already nursed one of her children. No better choice could be made. When Rose arrived at the Martin home, the babe was battling, if that term might be used, for its last breath. The nurse shook her head discouragingly, as if it were already too late. The mother of the "little Flower," however, had a tender devotion to Saint Joseph, special patron of hopeless cases. In her room she had an image of the Spouse of Mary and the Foster-father of Jesus. Confidently she threw herself on her knees before the statue and pleaded for the recovery of her ninth child.

## 20

Saint Joseph came quickly to her aid. The child, who but a few moments previously had given every sign that death was impending, was now gaining sufficiently to warrant her transfer to the humble farmhouse of Rose Taillé.

Mothers of large families have little recess from worries and anxieties. Scarcely had little Therese been confided to the arms of the motherly "Rose" than Marie, the eldest daughter of the Martin family, was attacked by typhoid fever and was obliged to leave school at Le Mans. Between her fretful vigils at the bedside of this elder patient and her painstaking directions of the lace-making industry, there was little room for Mme. Martin to inquire concerning the condition of her "little Flower," who was now safely cared for by the faithful farmer's wife.

Louis Martin was deeply concerned about the precarious condition of his youngest and his eldest daughters. He left nothing undone in a material way to secure the attention of the best physicians to minister to their needs. However, his greatest hope lay in the power of prayer—prayer accompanied by more than ordinary sacrifices. Saint that he was, he saw nothing heroic in the pilgrimage which he made on May 5, 1873, for the recovery of Marie. This journey took him a distance of six leagues on foot to the ridge of Chaumont, where he pleaded with the Physician of all physicians to spare the lives of his two sick daughters. The distance of the pilgrimage and the difficulties of the climb were accentuated by the fact that Louis Martin went fasting and returned fasting.



*St. Therese of the Child Jesus.*

## 21

He was not the man to read about the fortitude of others without practising it to a heroic degree in his own life.

Providence listened benignly to the supplications of these pious parents. By the sweet alchemy of prayer, the two patients were kissed back to "out-of-danger" condition within the space of only a few months. Therese's recovery must, in some measure, be attributed to the healthy atmosphere which she breathed constantly in her rural surroundings. "When the farmer's wife was going to the fields, she placed Therese on some straw in the bottom of her barrow and thus wheeled her along the grassy paths through the clover and flowers to the spot where her husband was working. When milking-time came she carried the little one with her in her apron, so that Therese lived constantly in the open air amidst the fragrance of the fresh hay and the scent of ripe corn. In this way she became 'browned by the sun,' and grew daily more robust from inhaling the chemicals given, out by the harvest-bearing fields."

## 22

### V.

## CHILDHOOD TRAITS

EVERY MOTHER LOVES to record the trifling incidents which make up the early days of her child's infancy. The cradle days of Little Therese might be chronicled in much the same way as the early days of any other child, with this exception, that at an unusually early date there seemed to be very pronounced manifestations of the presence of the Holy Spirit in her soul. On November 30, 1873, when the Little Flower was only 11 months old, her mother wrote the following words to Pauline who was then at the Visitation Convent:

"I expect that she will be able to walk unaided in five or six more weeks. You have only to put her standing beside a chair, and she remains quite steady—never falls. She takes her own little precautions to accomplish this and appears very intelligent. She is continually smiling; she has the expression of one who is predestined."

The first words uttered by this chosen child were addressed to the "good Jesus." She was only twenty-two months old, when God saw fit to loosen that tongue which was to preach to the world the fascinating doctrine of the "little way" to Heaven.

## 23

Unexpectedly this infant of scarcely two years gave expression to some very surprising wishes of her heart. On one occasion, she threw her arms around her mother and told her that she wished her to die. "Oh, how I wish you would die, my

poor little mother." When the mother inquired concerning the reason for such an unheard of wish, the tiny Saint answered: "It is that you may go to Heaven, since you say that we must die to go there."

On earth Therese found her Heaven in church. She loved to watch the sacred functions, to listen to the inspiring chant, to breathe forth her simple prayers together with the slowly dying candles that burned beside the little home of Jesus in the tabernacle. She was drawn to Jesus as by a magnet, so much so, that she would often run away to church amid torrents of rain.

It would be wrong for us to suppose that there was not a trace of childish mischief in the early days of the Little Flower. The following letter written by Mme. Martin to Pauline, who was studying at the Visitation Convent at Le Mans, tells us something of the roguish disposition of the Therese of three years:

"She (Therese) is extraordinarily outspoken, and it is charming to see her run after me to confess her childish faults: 'Mamma, I gave Celine a push; I slapped her once; but I will not do it again.' The moment she has done anything mischievous, everyone must know. Yesterday, without meaning to do so, she tore off a small piece of wall paper; you would have been sorry for her —she wanted to tell her father immediately.

## 24

When he came home four hours later and everyone else had forgotten about it, she ran at once to Marie, saying: 'Tell Papa that I tore the paper,' and she waited like a criminal for the sentence. There is an idea in her little head, that if she accuses herself she will be the more readily forgiven."

Tersely and tenderly, Therese in her Autobiography tells us of the affection she entertained at that early age for her saintly sisters.

"I listened attentively while she (Marie) taught Celine, and I was very good and obedient so as to obtain the privilege of remaining in the room during lessons. Marie loaded me with little presents which, trifling though they were, afforded me endless pleasure." This passage reveals to us the innate thirst of the Little Flower for the dew of instruction in religious matters.

"When I was just learning to talk, Mamma would ask me: 'What are you thinking about?' and the invariable answer was 'Pauline.' " It was Pauline's example that inspired her tiny sister with the hope of one day becoming a nun. From the moment that wish took possession of her little heart it never more departed.

"Dear Leonie also had a warm place in my heart and my great love for her was fully returned. In the evening, when she came from school, she used to take care of me while everyone else went for a walk, and it seems as though I can still hear the sweet songs she sang to lull me to sleep. I remember perfectly the day of her First Communion, and I remember her companion, the poor child whom Mamma dressed, according to the touching custom of the well-to-do families in Alencon.

## 25

This child did not leave Leonie throughout all that happy day, and at the grand dinner in the evening she sat in the place of honor. I was too small to stay up for the feast, but, thanks to Papa's goodness, I had my share in it, for when the dessert came around, he himself brought his little Queen a piece of the First Communion cake." The nun's hand that wrote these lines, was fully conscious of the fact that things and persons of bygone years grow brighter as the years gild them.

Almost in the same breath with her praises of Marie, Pauline and Leonie, the Little Flower pays noblest tribute to Celine, the companion of her childhood. "My memories of her are so abundant that I do not know how to choose. We understood each other perfectly, though I was much the more forward and lively, and by far the less simple of the two." To have been called the companion of a saint—what an honored title and who could bear it more deservedly than Celine! She used every opportunity that presented itself to form the heart of her sister-playmate according to the desires of the Sacred Heart of the Child Jesus.

To Therese, childhood was a land of toys, a land of fairies, a realm of play, as it is to every other normal youngster. The visitor at Lisieux today may see the very objects which were used by the Little Flower during that simple though sacred state of her early girlhood. Her checker-board, her miniature set of dishes, her tiny doll bed—these and others are carefully preserved behind a large glass window in the reliquary of the convent where she maintained her simplicity and her innocence to her very dying breath.

## 26

Possibly due to her frail health, Therese indulged very little in the more rugged pastimes of the outdoors. She preferred to spend her time making colored mixtures with seeds and the bark of trees. "If the color turned out pretty, I would pour some of the liquid into a dainty little cup and coax Papa to taste. He would at once stop his work and with a smile pretend to drink."

Her fondness for color probably explains to some extent her special liking for flowers. Whenever her father took her on one of her favorite excursions into the country, Therese returned almost smothered with bouquets of wild-flowers which she had gathered here and there along the rustic paths. Flowers spoke to her silently, yet most powerfully, of the great God Who created every lovely thing that blooms. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin . . . Yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these."

From these cursory glimpses into the babyhood days of the Saint, we can see that there was a distinctly human touch about everything that she did and said. Falsifiers of the truth would have us believe that saints keep their heads forever turned toward the stars. It is true that the very first word which Little Therese learned to read unaided was "cieux" which means "heaven." She loved to converse with the Saints and particularly with Mary, the Queen of Saints.

## 27

Nevertheless, she was practical enough, even at her tender age, to realize that the eternal companionship of the inhabitants of Heaven could only be gained by charitable dealing with those souls on earth into whose sphere it has pleased God to place us. It is interesting to know that her Catechism, which is carefully preserved at Lisieux, is most pronouncedly thumbed and ragged at the page on which is found this question: "What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?" The answer to that question reads: "To love your neighbor as yourself means to do unto others as you would have others do unto you." It would appear that this was the Little Flower's favorite page in that book, which played such an important part in her religious training.

## 28

### VI.

## THE THORN OF THORNS

THE KEY to Therese's disposition at the age of three might be found in her own beautiful words: "Truly everything on earth smiled on me; I found flowers strewn at each step, and my naturally happy disposition helped 'to make life bright. But a new era was about to dawn. I was to be the spouse of Our Lord at so tender an age that it was necessary I should suffer from childhood."

The first and possibly one of the most piercing thorns that penetrated the heart of the Little Flower, was the death of her darling mother. In her early years, Mme. Martin had injured herself seriously against the corner of a table. The result was a lasting swelling in her breast. It was not characteristic of this noble lady to complain. She concealed the little pain which attended the swelling in the beginning. In the course of time, however, the malady developed into a fibrous tumor which gave the mother of this large family considerable concern. For more than sixteen years she succeeded in hiding her condition from her family. With a smile on her face and a prayer of resignation in her heart, she went about the manifold duties of wife, mother and lace-maker.

## 29

Gradually, however, the dread disease made itself evident upon the features and the frame of this saintly mother. When once her failing condition was detected, the members of her family prevailed upon her to be examined by a doctor. The physician wrote out a prescription and handed it to the patient. Receiving it into her hands, she queried: "Of what use will it be?" The doctor answered in a low voice, "It is useless; I give it to patients to please them."

Thus, the condition of Mme. Martin was officially declared hopeless as far as earthly remedies were concerned.

As is to be expected, the stricken mother had to give up her lace industry. Throughout the length and breadth of the land she had become reputed as one of the most skillful manufacturers of Point 'd Alencon lace, but she had woven a finer fabric in Heaven. No earthly piece of lace-work could begin to compare with the rich and lasting masterpiece which she had carefully, slowly and surely fitted together out of a million motherly sacrifices, firmly stitched together by prayers and works of mercy. She would soon be at the end of her weaving.

As a final token of tribute to the powerful Queen of Heaven, Mme. Martin decided to undertake a pilgrimage to Lourdes to implore the Lady of the Grotto to restore her to health, if that were the will of God. On June 18, 1877, she started out with Marie, Pauline and Leonie for the sacred spot where the Blessed Mother appeared to Little Bernadette. With prayers and tears, her three daughters stormed Heaven during that pilgrimage for the cure of their beloved mother.

## 30

Shall we say that their prayers were in vain? Worldlings, who understand not the nature of prayer, might say so. For reasons hidden from this world, Almighty God permitted the patient's condition to become worse so that when she returned to Alencon, a marked decline was noticed.

During the long and painful days that followed, the Little Flower's mother placed herself fully under the charge of the Blessed Mother of God. In a letter to her brother, she wrote: "My strength is at an end. . . . If the Holy Virgin does not cure me, then my term of life is over; God wills that I find a resting-place elsewhere than on this earth."

Ten days after she wrote this letter, Mme. Martin received the Last Sacraments, and two days later, August 28, 1877, half an hour past midnight, her merit-laden soul winged its way heavenward to receive the reward of an exemplary mother.

It was the first time that Therese was confronted with a corpse or a coffin. Years later, in reminiscing on this event, she wrote: "Once I found myself alone in front of the coffin, which had been placed upright in the passage, and for a long time I stood there lost in contemplation. I had never seen one before, but I knew quite well what it meant. I was so small that I had to lift up my head to see its whole length, and it seemed a huge and melancholy thing."

## 31

### VII.

## LES BUISSONNETS

THE DEATH of her mother marks the beginning of a new period in the life of the Little Flower. She, herself, terms it the most sorrowful ten years of her life. "Immediately after the death of Mamma my naturally happy disposition left me." This was in no way due to any lack of attention on the part of her father or her sisters. It seemed that Providence wanted to test her patience and steel her courage even at that early age. She became timid, shy and sensitive, so that it was a real source of pain to her to meet strangers. She was at ease only at home with her dear ones.

It frequently happens that after the demise of a loved one, the relatives seek a new domicile where they will not constantly and painfully be put in mind of the departed. This was not Louis Martin's motive when he decided to leave Alencon and settle down in Lisieux with his motherless children. His object, in making the change of residence, was to bring his girls near their mother's brother, M. Guerin, a chemist in

the town of Lisieux and to secure for them the advantage of the advice of Mme. Guerin. The Little Flower tells us that she "felt no grief in leaving Alencon."

## 32

Therese became quickly and devotedly attached to the new home which bore the name, Les Buissonnets. "The trim lawn in front of the house, the kitchen garden at the back, the distant view from the attic windows—all this appealed to my young imagination. Its situation, too, was an added charm, for it stood in a quiet part of the town, within easy reach of a beautiful park laid out with flowers. This pleasant abode became the scene of many joys, and of family gatherings which I can never forget. Elsewhere, as I have said above, I felt an exile; I cried and fretted for Mamma; but here my little heart expanded and I smiled on life once more."

The writer's first impression on visiting Les Buissonnets nearly a decade ago, was that its occupants must have been rather comfortably situated financially. This is not surprising. Louis Martin had been an honest and diligent jeweller of more than ordinary repute. Mme. Martin had acquired a considerable fortune in the lace-making industry. The combined earnings of these two industrious souls was sufficient not merely to care for the convenient rearing and educating of the children, but also to provide for them an attractive though modest home.

Our little Saint's love for the poor was fostered by the example of her beloved father. Elsewhere we have seen, that it was his desire to attend the early Mass in the parish church, so that he might pray with the poor who were the earliest worshippers in the morning.

## 33

On his fishing trips, in which Therese usually participated, he gloried in the anticipation of sharing his catch with the paupers of his town. This attention paid to unfortunates was bound to have a contagious effect upon the impressionable heart of the Little Flower. The winding path leading up the slope to Les Buissonnets soon became hallowed by the frequent spectacle of a little girl dealing out to the poor the little money that had been entrusted to her.

In the poor, the babe of the Martin family saw the reflection of the Christ-Child in Bethlehem's manger. Jesus also was once poor. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not whereon to rest His Head." The cave of Bethlehem had a special appeal to the heart of Therese. That she might

meditate even in moments of play upon the poverty of the Holy Family, she fashioned with her own hands the various figures of a miniature crib and placed them neatly in a recess hollowed out of the garden wall at Les Buissonnets. The tiny group may still be seen by visitors at that sacred spot.

## 34

### VIII.

## SERMONS IN STONES

THERESE has often been called the Apostle of the commonplace. We search in vain for startling events in her brief span of years here below. If anything seemed unusual for a girl of her tender years, it was her premature power of reflection upon the goodness and greatness of God and the brevity and vanity of this life. She was not yet five years old when the following incident occurred. Her "King," as she affectionately called her father, took her with him on one of his fishing trips. Towards the close of the afternoon, when it was time to return home, Therese decided to eat the remaining provisions in her little basket which had been prepared specially by Pauline. When she glanced into the basket, she noticed that the very slices of bread and jam looked different than they had in the morning. Then, "they were so fresh and tempting, and now they appeared so stale and uninviting." Commenting upon this experience years later he Little Flower wrote: "Even a trifle such as this made seem sadder, and I realized that only in Heaven re be unclouded joy."

In later years, as Novice Mistress, she was heard to say: "It frequently needs but a word or a smile to impart fresh life to a despondent soul."

## 35

She herself would probably have given way to despair, had she not read messages of hope and encouragement in the stars, the sea, the animals of the earth and the birds of the air. They all spoke to her of a land of unfading beauty, a house of many mansions where her beauty-thirsty soul would drink to its fill of the goodness and greatness of God.

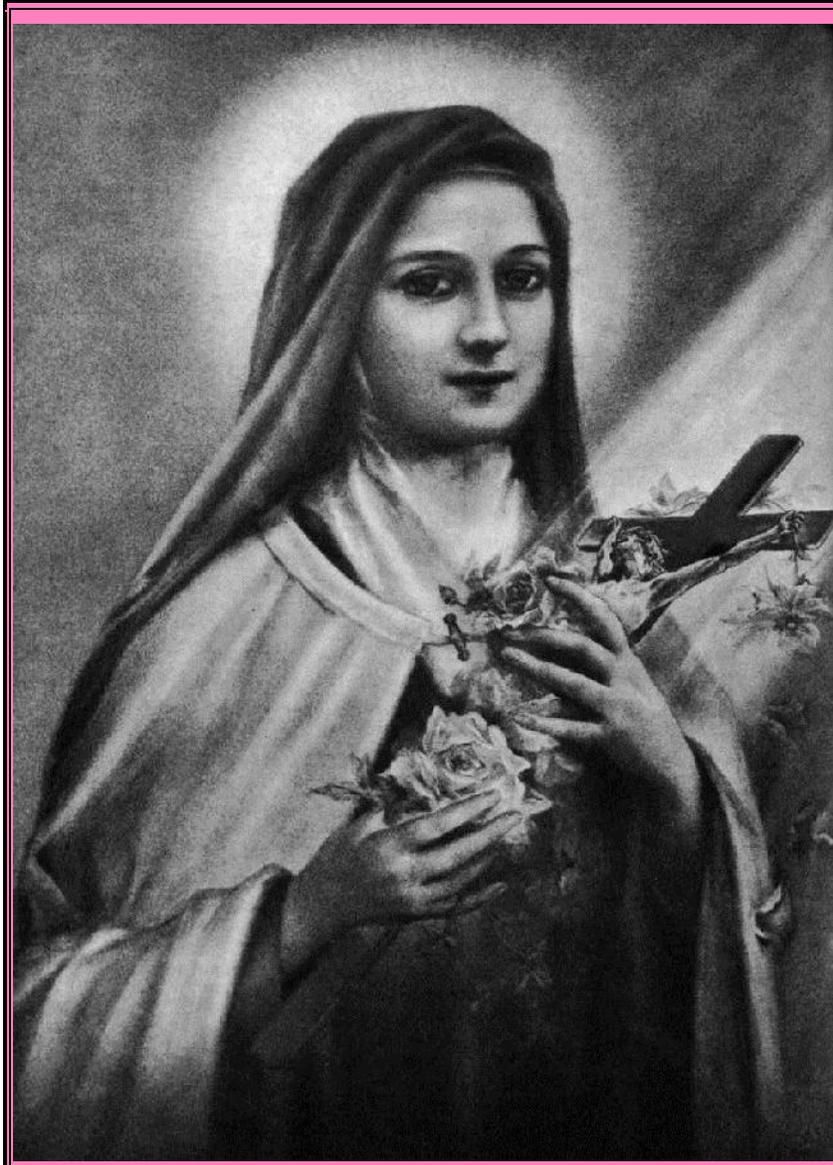
To other children, a starlit sky presents a world of diamonds and a host of fancies. To Therese, it was all that and more. On her way home from her uncle's once a week, she would point heavenward and tell her father that her initial "T" was written clearly

in the constellation which astronomers call Orion. Truly this was a unique discovery for a child of five to make.

The same serious trend of thought was revealed on the occasion of Therese's first visit to the sea. The six year old Saint was walking on the strand with her sister, Pauline, along the English Channel. The sun, a big ball of fire, appeared to dip into the immensity of the waves, leaving a furrow of golden light behind. Pauline explained to Therese that the furrow of light was the image of grace enlightening the path of faithful souls. Therese decided then and there, that she would ever remain a tiny bark on the ocean of life and that she would never lose sight of the sun of Justice, her God, Who would bring her safely to the port of Heaven.

## 36

The Little Flower saw "sermons in stones," yes, even in insignificant peach stones. One day when tripping lightly through the orchard, she came upon a peach hanging low from a bough. Immediately she began to philosophize something like this: "From this peach I can learn a lesson. See what the peach gives away and what it keeps for itself. It permits its skin to be pierced and torn for man. It permits its fleshy fruit to be consumed by man, and then—it keeps for itself nothing but the bare and dry stone! How different it is with selfish man. He keeps for himself what is the best and throws to others what is of little worth."



*The Little Flower of the Child Jesus—a portrait painted by her sister, Celine.*

37

IX.

**CONFESSION AND EDUCATION**

IT IS NOT surprising that she, who saw such grandeur in the world about her, should wish to keep her inner self beautiful and unspotted. This partly explains her eager desire to have her soul cleansed as early as possible in the Sacrament of Penance.

Therese refers to her first Confession (probably in the year 1878) as an especially consoling memory. We wonder what this five-year-old girl could have had to confess. On her death-bed eighteen years later, she could look squarely into the face of her Creator and declare: "Oh God, because I have never deliberately refused you one thing that you have asked of me, I know that you will never refuse me a single thing that I ask of you." What then could burden the heart of the Little Flower of five years?

She received this Sacrament in the beautiful Gothic church of St. Pierre, the Patron of Penitents. It was Pauline who prepared her for this event, and we have reason to believe that the preparation was very thorough. Writing to her instructor (Pauline) years later, Therese says: "You had told me, dear Mother, that it was not to a man but to God Himself that I was going to tell my sins, and this truth so impressed me, that I asked you seriously if I should tell Father Ducellier I loved him 'with all my heart,' since it was God I was going to speak to in his person."

## 38

Behold a little child grasping a truth which thousands of non-believers fail to comprehend in our day: That the priest is not a mere man when he sits in the tribunal of penance, but that he exercises a power that is divine by reason of the words addressed to him by Christ through the Apostles: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

Spiritual reading has always been a powerful factor in fashioning the lives of the saints. If Therese early caught the spirit of the Church, if she early learned to live its feasts and become an active member of its body, she could attribute this progress in large measure to the pious practice which prevailed in her home, of concluding the day with readings from an instructive book known as the Liturgical Year. Seated upon her father's knee, she would drink in every syllable which fell from the lips of the reader, who was usually her eldest sister, Marie. Thus did this "miniature of perfection," as Pope Pius XI loved to call Therese, become churchminded. Thus did she become instructed in the mysteries which the Church brings vividly before our minds with the recurrence of her beautiful feasts. To the Little Flower, every Sunday was a feast. First of all, it was Almighty God's feast and then a day of rest.

## 39

The Benedictine, Convent at Lisieux was privileged to give the Little Flower her first school training. It is with a note of disappointment, and yet with a tinge of triumph, that she writes of this experience: "The girls of my class were all older than I; one of them was fourteen, and, though not at all clever, she knew how to impose on her companions. Seeing me, in spite of my years, nearly always first in class, and a favorite with all the nuns, she became jealous; and paid me out in a thousand ways. Naturally timid and sensitive, I was unable to defend myself, and took refuge in tears. Neither my little Mother (Pauline) nor Celine knew of these troubles, and, as I was not advanced enough in virtue to rise above them, I suffered a great deal."

In those days of important beginnings, the Little Flower relied greatly for support on the encouragement and sympathy of her saintly father. Each evening she would climb upon his knee and tell of her accomplishments and receive a reward for her efforts. The prize was usually a tender kiss and a fond embrace from her "King." Once a week it assumed the form of a silver coin, which Therese was quick to drop into her money-box for the poor. The world would probably be minus a St. Therese today, had not Louis Martin surrounded his Little Flower with favors during that trying time. When she had grown to maturity, she looked back upon those early school days and wrote: "Such kindnesses were in my case a real necessity; the Little Flower needed to strike its tender roots deeper and deeper into the dearly loved garden of the home, for nowhere else could it find the nourishment it required."

## 40

Parents who read these lines might well ask themselves whether or not they are giving similar attention to the character building of their little ones. The city of the saints would probably become more densely populated if modern fathers and mothers would bother themselves more about the education of their children.

## 41

## X.

### **SATAN'S ASSAULT**

A NEW GRIEF was prepared for Therese in the departure of her sister, Pauline, for the Carmelite Convent in the year 1882. Her first mother had been taken away from

her by death when the Little Flower was but four years old. Since that time she had regarded her cherished sister, Pauline, as her second mother. Naturally, when the little Saint saw Pauline making preparations for entrance into Carmel, she experienced bitter anguish of spirit. Her little heart seemed broken. Within two months of the dreaded separation, she was stricken by a severe malady which puzzled her doctor and gave serious alarm to her father and sisters. The patient suffered constant headaches. At times she would become delirious. Everything frightened her. "The bed seemed to be surrounded by awful precipices, and nails in the wall would assume the ghastly appearance of huge, coal-black fingers, filling me with terror and at times making me cry out with fright. Once while Papa stood looking at me in silence, the hat in his hand was suddenly transformed into some horrible shape, and I showed so much fear that he turned away sobbing."

## 42

Little wonder that, in her Autobiography written more than a decade later, she refers to this sickness as an attempt on the part of Satan to avenge himself on her for the grief which was caused him by Pauline's entrance into the convent. He would employ all the powers of Hell to avert anything of similar nature from happening in the future. If his fiendish cunning could bring it about, he would keep the Little Flower from reaching such an age which would enable her to follow in the footsteps of her elder sister.

The Martin family knew how to meet the assaults of the evil one. When medical aid proved useless they did not despair. They turned to one who is "as powerful as an army in battle array." On numerous occasions the Mother of God had made her presence felt in the affairs of this motherless family. They now turned to her with renewed hope and redoubled confidence. Pilgrimages were made to the Shrine of Our Lady of Victory in Paris. Novenas of Masses were arranged with the priests there. Heaven could not be unmoved by the prayers which stormed the throne of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. A statue of the Heavenly Queen stood near the sick-bed of the tiny sufferer. One day when Therese's condition became more serious than it had been hitherto, her three sisters, Marie, Leonie and Celine threw themselves at the foot of this image and prayed as they had never prayed before. "That cry of faith forced the gates of Heaven." The Little Flower sweetly describes what happened. "Suddenly the statue became animated and radiantly beautiful—with a divine beauty that no words of mine can ever convey.

## 43

The look upon Our Lady's face was unspeakably kind and sweet and compassionate, but what penetrated to the very depths of my soul was her gracious smile. Instantly all my pain vanished, my eyes filled, and big tears fell silently, tears of purest heavenly joy."

Visitors at Lisieux today will find this miraculous statue in the little side chapel of Carmel, where the remains of St. Therese are encased in a rich reliquary donated by the faithful of Brazil. The image is called "Our Lady of the Smile" and is regarded as one of the most precious possessions of the Carmelite Convent.

44

XI.

## FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

THE MIRACULOUS CURE of the Little Flower served to deepen and broaden and lengthen the love of her child-like soul for the Savior, Whom she would soon receive into her heart for the first time. She prepared herself diligently for that day of days, by the study of holy pictures and the reading of religious books. One of the pictures, which made a firm and lasting impression upon her youthful mind, depicted a little flower blooming in the shadow of the Tabernacle. That picture expressed the dearest wish of her heart: to spend her life before God's tiny Eucharistic dwelling, consoling Him and affectionately caring for Him until the day should come when He would gather her into His eternal garden of Heaven.

Therese refers to the day of her First Holy Communion as "one of unclouded happiness." To her eldest sister, Marie, is due much of the joy which the little Saint experienced on that day. With the aid of a book entitled "Two Months of Preparation for First Communion," Marie gradually and thoroughly grounded her little sister in those sacred truths which prepare the soul for union with its God.

45

One thought that was more stressed than all others in the instructions was that it is folly to trample underfoot the treasures and opportunities which lie all about us, while we hurry on to heights too difficult to reach. Sanctity can be achieved more readily by doing little things well, than by attempting colossal undertakings which we are not certain of accomplishing. Why chase after the rare wild flower that is found on the

lofty ledges of dangerous cliffs, while the valley beneath your feet is replete with flowers of equal worth and beauty?

Tense are the hours and the minutes and the seconds that precede the first coming of Our Lord into the heart of a child. It would seem that the salvation of the world depended upon that meaningful meeting. We can imagine how the ambitious heart of the Little Flower glowed with the desire to help the poor on that auspicious occasion. Her prayers were not confined to the intentions of her relatives, but to the needs of the entire world. Like unto the missionary fathers who wear a crucifix in their belt to remind them that their love must be universal in its scope, Therese carried a crucifix in her belt when she was preparing herself for her First Holy Communion. Little did she realize at that early hour of her life what a consolation the image of the Crucified would be to her throughout her subsequent career. In imitation of Him, she would be pierced with the nails of disappointment, dug with the lance of disease, crowned with the thorns of scruples; in a word, she was to become a living replica of the King on the Cross.

## 46

It were folly to describe the Little Flower's First Holy Communion Day in other words than her own. "At last there dawned the most beautiful day of all the days of my life. How perfectly I remember even the smallest details of those sacred hours! The joyful awakening, the reverent and tender embraces of my mistresses and older companions, the room filled with white frocks, like so many snow-flakes, where each child was dressed in turn, and, above all, our entrance into the chapel and the melody of the morning hymn:

'Oh Altar of God, where the Angels are hovering.'

"How sweet was the first embrace of Jesus! It was indeed an embrace of love. I felt that I was loved, and I said: 'I love Thee, and I give myself to Thee for ever.' Jesus asked nothing of me, and claimed no sacrifice; for a long time He and little Therese had known and understood one another. That day our meeting was more than simple recognition, it was perfect union. We were no longer two. Therese had disappeared like a drop of water lost in the immensity of the ocean; Jesus alone remained—He was the Master, the King. Had not Therese asked Him to take away the liberty which frightened her? She felt herself so weak and frail, that she wished to be for ever united to the Divine Strength."

The occasion of Therese's First Holy Communion was a reunion with her dear mother departed and other loving souls who had long since passed from this world,

but not from her memory. The saintly First Communicant reasoned this: "How could our darling Mother's absence grieve me? Since Heaven itself dwelt in my soul, in receiving the visit of Jesus I received one from her as well."

## 47

She also regarded the Body and Blood of Christ received in Holy Communion as the bond which united her more closely than ever to her loved ones on earth. Theologians have written sublimely on the beautiful doctrine known as the Mystical Body of Christ. None of them have ever illustrated it more clearly or more convincingly than our little theologian, Therese, on the occasion of her First Holy Communion. Christ is the Head and the faithful are the members. We are all one in Christ. This is a soothing doctrine. The faithful on earth, the saints in Heaven and the souls in Purgatory are all one body in Christ Jesus Our Lord. When we are united with Him, there is no wall between time and eternity, between heaven and earth, between the faithful departed and the faithful living. If this truth were better understood, as the Little Flower understood it, our spacious churches would not present the pitiable spectacle of rows of empty pews. They would be crowded from communion Rail to vestibule with practical Catholics eager to receive the Bread of Life, the Strength of Souls, the King of the Living and of the Dead.

Strengthened by this Heavenly Manna, the Little Flower felt sure that she would be able to keep the three resolutions which she had made on the eve of her First Holy Communion Day: 1) "I will never give away to discouragement;" 2) "I will say the Memorare every day;" 3) "I will endeavor to humble my pride."

## 48

According to custom, M. Martin presented his "little Queen" with a precious watch as a souvenir of this festive day. Therese rejoiced in receiving this gift, though she did not permit it to disturb the peace of soul which flooded her heart at the advent of her Savior. It were like holding a candle to the sun to expect that any earthly jewel could add anything to the joy which she experienced in possessing the Maker and Redeemer of the world in her heart. He Who had set the first great timepiece, the sun, in its place and had ever since kept it glowing; He Who had fixed the stars in their spheres; He Who had set in motion the waters of the deep; He Who had conceived of and created the angels, the saints, and the inhabitants of all nations; He in Whom we live and move and have our being; He was now in her heart, and she would permit no thing fashioned by earthly hands to distract her attention from the Divine Guest of her soul.

## XII.

**THE LADY KNIGHT**

SHORTLY AFTER her First Holy Communion, the Little Flower felt a wave of consolation sweeping over her soul, bringing with it "an ardent desire for suffering" as well as the conviction that she should have many a cross to bear. From that time on, she considered suffering as a treasure, a charm which rendered her more like unto her Beloved Savior, nailed to Calvary's Cross.

We must not be led to think that Therese was presumptuous. No one was more convinced than was she, of the truth of Christ's words: "Without Me you can do nothing." She was fully conscious of the fact so frequently reiterated by the Apostle of the Gentiles: "Life is a warfare." She had been instructed that there was one Sacrament above all others which makes the Christian soul a soldier of Christ. Consequently, she prepared herself with special earnestness for the reception of Confirmation. She was confirmed on June 14, 1884. How completely and permanently the Holy Ghost took possession of her soul is apparent from the words of her confessor, R. P. Pichon, at the Process of her Beatification: "It was easy to direct that child; the Holy Spirit led her, and I do not think that I ever had, either then or later on, to warn her against illusion."

The same Spirit which enlightened her, steeled her will and gave her courage to wage the combat which confronted her. "The good God has not willed that I should fight like a common soldier; I received at once a knight's armour, and I set out to war against myself in the spiritual domain by renunciation and little hidden sacrifices. I have found peace and humility in this obscure combat where nature has no place."

This little lady knight did not find it necessary to search long for an opportunity to manifest her valor. Providence saw to it that she was early exercised in handling the shield of faith. Shortly after she received the Sacrament of Confirmation, she was tormented by scruples. Even the innocent act of tying her beautiful golden hair with "sky-blue" ribbons assumed the appearance of an ugly sin. At school, she constantly worried about the exclamations of admiration which were lavished upon her because of her sweet countenance, her beautiful hair, her excellent compositions. She fretted

over the fact that these attentions might make shipwreck of her humility. The situation became all the more tense when, in the month of October, 1886, the thirteenth year of the Little Flower's life, her sister, Marie, went to join Pauline in the Carmelite Convent. To whom could she turn now for support? To whom could she confide her secrets? From whom could she expect aid in overcoming her dreadful scruples? Oh happy thought: She remembered from the pages of her tiny Catechism that the angels and saints in heaven are in constant communion with the faithful on earth.

## 51

She was certain that there were four little angels in heaven, who had her interests at heart. They were the four darling children of the Martin family, who had been transferred to the heavenly choir soon after their birth. God wanted them near His Throne and He had perfect right to have them there. What should prevent the Little Flower from invoking their special intercession at a time when she so sorely needed their assistance? In her childlike way, she challenged them to come to her rescue and to help her conquer her sensitiveness, which often manifested itself in floods of tears. She made use of no high-sounding words in addressing these infant-angels. "I told them that I was the youngest of the family, I had always been the most petted and loved by my parents and sisters, and that if they too had remained on earth they would no doubt have given me the same proofs of affection. I told them also that the fact of their being in Heaven was no reason why they should forget me. On the contrary, since they could draw from the treasury of Heaven, they ought to obtain for me the grace of peace, and so prove that in Paradise they loved me still."

The answer to this prayer came with almost lightning speed. It would seem that the four cherubs (two brothers and two sisters) surrounded the throne of the most High and pleaded that their sister on earth receive her request on that feast day which Angels love so much, that day of "peace on earth to men of good will."

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God wrought the desired miracle on Christmas, December 25, 1886. The incident occurred in the following manner. Therese went to the midnight Mass with her father and sisters. She returned home with Jesus in her heart. She knew that she would find her shoes in the chimney-corner, filled with presents as in previous years. The gifts would afford her immeasurable joy, but her heart would be thrilled still more in seeing the enjoyment which her father derived as she "drew each fresh surprise from the magic shoes." But Providence designed that it should be otherwise on this particular Christmas. M. Martin, instead of manifesting his customary interest in this traditional

event, showed that he was somewhat annoyed that a girl of her years should have such childish inclinations. As Therese went upstairs, she overheard these words from the lips of her father: "All this is far too~babyish for a big girl like Therese, and I hope this is the last time it will happen." Each of these words was a barbed arrow to the sensitive heart of the Little Flower. What should she do?

Celine counselled her: "Don't go down just yet, you would only cry if you looked at your presents before Papa."

For once Therese refused to take counsel. She dried her tears as best she could and ran down stairs to the chimney corner where her father was waiting. Over her scorched heart, she preserved a happy front. One by one she drew the presents out of the magic shoes, "looking all the time as happy as a queen. Papa joined in the laughter and there no longer appeared on his face the least sign of vexation.



*The first tomb of the Little Flower in the cemetery of the Carmelites at Lisieux, France*

Celine thought she must be dreaming, but happily it was a sweet reality, and Therese had once for all regained the strength of mind which had left her when she was four and a half."

The conquest recorded in the last paragraph might seem trivial to some who scan these lines. To Therese it was anything but insignificant. She refers to it as her "conversion," a climax in her life. "On this radiant night began the third period of my life, the most beautiful of all, the most filled with heavenly favors. Satisfied with my good-will, Our Lord accomplished in an instant the work I had not been able to do in years . . . Thenceforth I was perfectly happy."

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XIII.

### **PRANZINI, THE MURDERER**

SOMETIMES the whole trend of one's life will hinge upon some commonplace incident such as that which occurred in the Martin home on Christmas night, 1886. A happening equally as insignificant and yet equally as important for Therese took place on a Sunday early in the year 1887. As the Little Flower was closing her prayer-book at the end of Mass, "a picture of the crucifixion slipped partly out, showing one of the Divine Hands, pierced and bleeding." The little Saint tells us that an indescribable thrill passed through her, such as she had never before experienced. "My heart was torn with grief at the sight of the Precious Blood falling to the ground, with no one caring to treasure it as it fell. At once I resolved to remain continuously in spirit at the foot of the Cross, that I might receive the divine dew of salvation and pour it forth upon souls."

A high ambition! A girl of fourteen years makes herself custodian and in a certain sense, dispenser of the Precious Blood of the Savior! From the very day on which she made that noble resolution to linger ever at the foot of the Cross, she could hear the cry of her Dying Master, "I thirst," resounding incessantly in her heart.

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Henceforth, it would be her sole desire to satisfy that thirst of her Lord, by snatching souls from the brink of hell and restoring them to the soul-thirsty Heart of the King of Kings. When He hung on Calvary's Cross, He complained not of loss of Blood, of

piercing pain through torn tissues in hands and feet, of brutal crown of thorns. No! These tortures would He gladly suffer, if only countless souls would be bathed in His healing Blood and reborn into the Kingdom of Life.

And see! That this might be accomplished, He touches the heart of a little girl with a ray of His glowing love. Therese's heart becomes an image of the Divine Heart of Jesus. Her soul becomes inflamed with love for her fellow men throughout the world. Her heart becomes thirsty for the salvation of souls. This thirst is never to leave her, if she is to have her way, until the end of the world. Even in Heaven she will not rest until she is assured that earth is no more and that every last soul has been judged.

The sympathetic Heart of Christ gave Therese a beautiful token of His appreciation for her readiness to suffer and to thirst with Him.

A modern Barabbas by the name of Pranzini, was at that time detained in a prison in Paris. He had been condemned to death in punishment for the murder of two women and a girl in the Rue Montaigu of that city. The dreadful circumstances of the crime were the topic of conversation and the headlines of the newspapers throughout Paris. Pranzini was a hardened sinner and it appeared that all attempts to move him to repentance would be futile.

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Here was Therese's chance. Save him from damnation she must, though she was but a weak child living at a distance of fifty leagues from the criminal and not even having the advantage of being acquainted with him. We can imagine how she stormed Heaven with the arrows of her most fervent prayers. We can picture her hurrying to her friends and neighbors, and pleading with them to unite with her in saving this unfortunate soul. To make sure her success, she offered "for the ransom of this unfortunate man the Infinite merits of Our Savior and the fruits of the Church's treasury."

A word of explanation might be welcomed by non-Catholic readers of this book. It is a Catholic teaching that "one drop of the Precious Blood of Jesus was enough to save the world." But Jesus shed all of His Blood. Was some of it then wasted? No. The superabundant merit of Christ's blood-shedding was stored away in a spiritual treasury from which the faithful of all subsequent ages might copiously draw. The same is true with regard to the superabundant merits of the saints. Let us take for example the merits of the sufferings of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother Most Sorrowful. We are certain that Mary was never tainted with the least trace of sin. Yet she suffered more than any other woman before her or after her. Her merits could not

be applied to her own soul because it was not in need of them. Were they wasted? No. They too were stored away, together with the superabundant merits of Christ and of all the saints, in what is known as the spiritual treasury of the Church.

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Little Therese was convinced of the immeasurable value of this treasury. Accordingly, in her childlike trust, she asked God to draw from that spiritual fund, the graces that would be necessary to save Pranzini. Her simple faith led her further. She asked God for a sign that her prayers had been answered. Pranzini was, as she called him, her "first sinner." If God should grant her request, she would call him her "first-born," in the spiritual sense of the word.

For three months, the Little Flower continued her campaign of prayer. For three months, she watched the columns of the local paper to see whether anything had eventuated in favor of her unfortunate "brother."

On September 1, she read the following lines in the paper, *La Croix*: "At the opened door of the prison the assassin appeared with livid face. The chaplain places himself in front to hide from him the fatal machine; the assistants help him along; he repels both priest and executioners. He now stands before the guillotine. Deibler pushes him and throws him forward on to it. An assistant on the other side seizes hold of his head and draws it under the knife, holding it there by the hair.

"But before the final stroke—it may be that a lightning-flash of repentance penetrated his conscience—he asked for the chaplain's crucifix, and three times kissed it. And when the knife fell, when one of the assistants lifted up by one ear the separated head, we said to ourselves that if human justice is satisfied, perhaps too this last kiss will have satisfied Divine Justice which demands, above all, repentance."

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It goes without saying that floods of consolation inundated the heart of the little missionary. She had won her first conquest and it was over the hardened heart of a criminal. In what better way could her Thirsting Jesus prove to her, that He was pleased with her "little way of confidence?"

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## XIV.

### HER CALL TO THE CLOISTER

IT WAS ONLY NATURAL for Therese to argue that there must be countless other souls throughout this spacious world, who are in just as great need as was the condemned man of Paris. Abandoned slave boys, despairing lepers, dying soldiers, profligate men and women, weary missionaries, neglected orphans, starving paupers, apostates, heretics, infidels—her love knew no bounds. Wherever a human soul was encased within a human body, there did she wish to be, encouraging, supporting, saving the stricken one. How could she best accomplish her mission of mercy? That was a staggering question. Did God want her to become a foreign missionary and labor in distant lands under the most trying circumstances and without the consolation of her loved ones? Was it His design that she should play the part of the Good Samaritan, ministering to the sick and to the injured in one of the large hospitals of the world? Certain she was that her life was to be spent in bringing aid to needy souls. Less certain she was as to the exact mode of pursuing that program.

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From early childhood, she had felt in her heart a special attraction towards the Carmelite Convent. This inclination became all the more pronounced, as she studied the life and the letters of St. John of the Cross. Somewhere in his writings, he gave expression to the thought: "The smallest movement of pure love is more useful to the Church than all works combined." Pure love would not permit her to consider her own advantage, but would aim directly at the greater honor and glory of God. Consequently, the more of her own likings she could renounce, and the less she became attached to the things of this world, the more perfectly would she be able to satisfy the pleading call of Christ from the Cross: "I thirst."

A major factor in determining her future career, was the reading of Abbe Arminjon's Conferences on the End of the World and the Mysteries of the Future Life. That book seemed to add the "Amen" to the conclusions which she had carefully, though painfully, reached without the help of any human advice. She would enter Carmel and there labor for souls.

Therese was fully conscious that many obstacles crossed the path between her and the cloister. She was but fourteen years old. Who would ever listen to the unheard of idea of such a child entering the convent? "I found but one soul," she declares, "to encourage me in my vocation, that of my dear Pauline. My heart found in hers a

faithful echo, and without her I would certainly never have arrived at the sacred shore which she had reached five years before."

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Both the Mother Prioress and Therese's eldest sister, Marie, refused to listen to the little one's immature plans. However, she who had moved the hardened heart of a sinner on his way to the scaffold knew that she could also move the resolute hearts of these two nuns, if all other obstacles were cleared away. The Little Flower's chief concern was to break the news gently to her beloved father, her "King." M. Louis Martin was then sixty-four years of age. His health left much to be desired. He had suffered a slight attack of paralysis and had been stung by a poisonous fly, the sting causing a small excrescence on his neck which refused to be healed. Both of these maladies gave the little Queen reason to worry and to doubt whether he would be able to bear the pains which would result from his separation from her own dear self.

Having given the matter due consideration, the youngest daughter of the Martin family chose Pentecost as the day on which to make her "great disclosure" to her darling father. Child of the Holy Ghost that she was, she felt confident that the Holy Spirit would prepare her father's heart for the stunning news. She thought it best to reveal her secret at an evening hour, when her father was sitting in the garden and admiring the wonders of nature. Her tear-filled eyes served as heralds to the important message which she was about to deliver. "What is it, my little Queen? Tell me..." Through her tears the future Saint spoke to him of her desire to enter Carmel. She pleaded her cause so cleverly and so simply, that the aged man soon yielded, but not without reminding her that she was very young to be deciding on such a grave matter. The conversation which followed and in which M. Martin

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was the chief speaker, took the form of some salutary advice and ended with the father's blessing. Then, according to her own blessed words, "he showed me some little white flowers, like miniature lilies, which were growing on a low stone wall. Picking one, he gave it to me, and remarked with what loving care God had brought it to bloom and preserved it until that day."

This incident is so touching and so significant that the writer presumes to continue the quotation: "I thought I was listening to my own life story, so close was the resemblance between the little flower and little Therese. I received it as a relic, and I noticed that in trying to pluck the slender blossom, Papa had pulled it up by the roots;

it seemed destined to live on, but in other and more fertile soil. He had just done the same thing for me, by permitting me to leave the sweet valley of my childhood's years for the mountain of Carmel. I fastened my little white flower to a picture of Our Lady of Victories, so that the Blessed Virgin smiles upon it and the Infant Jesus seems to hold it in His Hand. It is still there, but the stalk is now broken close to the root. No doubt God wishes me to understand by this that He will soon sever all the earthly ties of His Little Flower, and will not leave her to fade here below."

Therese's next step was to broach her secret to her uncle, whose advice she had learned to obtain in the more important affairs of her life. He said that he would oppose her early entrance to the convent in every possible way. Words were of no avail in inducing him to alter his attitude. Only by means of fervent prayers did she bring it about that, within four days, he was quite willing to permit her to follow the desires of her heart.

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Another obstacle was found in the obstinacy of the Superior of Carmel, Canon Delatroette. He would not allow her to enter until she was twenty-one. An emphatic "No," was the answer to the request that Therese be permitted to enter Carmel at the age of fifteen. Of course, as he stated, there was still one authority to be approached, the Bishop of Bayeux. Should he grant the girl's wishes, no one could object. This meant a trip to Bayeux, for the little one could not rest until she had the required permission. The Bishop treated Therese very kindly but gave her no satisfactory answer. In fact, thinking that he was pleasing the father of the tiny aspirant, told her that she ought to remain home some time longer. Thereupon, Louis Martin came to the aid of his daughter and stated that if the Bishop failed to grant the necessary permission, there was still a higher authority whose word would be final, the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII. The matter was of sufficient importance to warrant a journey to Rome, where the "little Queen" could present her cause to the Father of all Christendom. As the disappointed pair, Therese and her father, left the Bishop's residence, they heard a priest remark: "I have never yet seen such a thing—a father as anxious to give his child to God as the child was to offer herself."

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### XV.

## ONWARD TO ROME

ROMEWARD bound! No time was lost in making preparations for the journey. Within three days after their futile interview with the Bishop of Bayeux, the Little Flower was speeding toward the Eternal City with her father and her sister, Celine. The little Saint's Autobiography contains no more beautiful chapter than that in which she records the happenings on that memorable trip. "Though it taught me the hollowness of all things that pass away, I saw splendid monuments; I studied the countless wonders of art and religion; and, better than all, I stood on the very soil trodden by the Apostles and bedewed with the blood of Martyrs, and my soul grew strong by contact with those holy things."

This pilgrimage to Rome gave Therese an important bit of knowledge concerning the needs of God's priests. She observed that, despite the sublime dignity of the Priesthood which raises them above the Angels, they still remain men and subject to human frailty. The little faults and failings which she observed in these men of God during her month in Italy, moved her to conclude that her special vocation would be to pray for priests and especially for those among their ranks who might be called lukewarm priests.

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The poetic soul of the Little Flower is clearly reflected in her reaction to the scenic beauty of Switzerland. She experienced a foretaste of Heaven in "its lofty mountains, whose snowy peaks are lost in the clouds, its rushing torrents, its deep valleys with their luxuriant growths of giant ferns and purple heather. Now we were high up the mountain side, while at our feet a yawning abyss seemed ready to engulf us: a little later we were passing through some charming village with its cottages and graceful belfry, over which fleecy clouds floated lazily. Farther on, the calm, clear waters of a great lake would blend their azure tints with the glories of the setting sun."

Six days were devoted to visiting the hallowed spots of Rome. Naturally, the heart of the Little Flower beat rapidly when she touched the sacred precincts of the Coliseum and her eyes "beheld the arena where so many martyrs had shed their blood for Christ." In the Catacombs, she laid herself down in what had been St. Cecelia's tomb and felt herself overwhelmed with tender love for that martyr saint and queen of harmony. While the group to which she was attached was visiting the Church of St. Agnes, a fragment of red marble from an ancient mosaic fell at the feet of little Therese. She regarded this as a touching keepsake of that St. Agnes whom she called the friend of her childhood.

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All during the time when she was paying tribute to these sacred places and venerating the remains of the saints contained there, her joy was heightened by the expectation of seeing the greatest of all the wonders of Rome—Pope Leo XIII. "We spent six days visiting the chief wonders of Rome, and on the seventh we saw the greatest of all—Leo XIII." Therese's visit at the Vatican was by no means prompted by curiosity. She wanted to honor Christ's visible vicar upon earth. She desired to receive his powerful blessing. Most of all, she hoped to obtain from him permission to enter Carmel despite her tender age.

While the pilgrims were waiting their turn to pay the customary homage to the Holy Father, M. Révérony, the Vicar-General of Bayeux, who was standing at the right of His Holiness, clearly and distinctly forbade anyone to address the Pope. This caused Therese more than a little confusion. She looked to Celine for counsel. The answer to that look was a whispered command: "Speak!" In an instant, the Little Flower was on her knees and greeting the saintly Pope in the usual manner. Tears beaded her eyes as she addressed the Great White Shepherd of Christendom: "Holy Father, I have a great favor to ask of you." His Holiness benignly leaned forward until his venerable head almost touched the golden locks of the little girl from Lisieux. She continued: "Holy Father, in honor of your jubilee, allow me to enter Carmel at the age of fifteen." To the witnesses of this dramatic incident, Therese's conduct might have seemed indeed presumptuous. Some of them might accuse her of lack of decorum in thus familiarly approaching the highest authority in Christendom.

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The Little Flower did not feel in her heart that she was transgressing any law of propriety. In the person of the Holy Father, she saw Christ beckoning children to come and rest upon His knee. "Suffer the little ones to come unto Me and forbid them not." It was one of her favorite pictures: Christ entertaining and instructing a host of boys and girls. Again in that venerable figure of Leo XIII, she recognized Christ the Consoler, Christ the Strengtheners, Christ the Comforter. "Come to Me all ye that labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you." Had not Therese labored long and indefatigably to obtain her request? Was she not heavily burdened with the desire to save millions of souls by a life of rigorous penance and heroic sacrifice? Could the Pope refuse to refresh her by granting her request?

The Vicar-General feared that the simple eloquence of the little girl might prevail upon the Pontiff to yield to her petition. Accordingly, he lost no time in reminding His Holiness that there was some difficulty among the superiors at Carmel who were looking into the matter. This bit of information did influence the Holy Father and did have its effect upon his answer: "Well, my child, do whatever the superiors decide."

Therese was disappointed but not defeated. She presumed to make one last appeal: "Holy Father, if only you were to say 'Yes,' everyone else would be willing."

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The answer to this second pleading was kindly, though all too general to satisfy the yearnings of the Little Flower's heart: "Well, my child! well, you will enter if it be God's Will!"

When the two officials of the Noble Guard lifted the little pilgrim to her feet and bade her make room for others, Therese reverently kissed the hand of His Holiness and probably left upon it, a hot tear of sorrow. She had failed in her effort to elicit from his saintly lips the permission of which she stood so much in need.

Her journey to Rome was not considered to be a complete failure. She had frequently asked the Child Jesus to accept her as His little plaything. "I told Him not to treat me like one of those precious toys which children only look at and dare not touch, but rather as a little ball of no value that could be thrown on the ground, tossed about, pierced, left in a corner, or pressed to His Heart, just as it might please Him. In a word, all I desired was to amuse the Holy Child, to let Him play with me just as He felt inclined." The Child Jesus had willed that she should come to Rome to be pierced with the lance of sorrow, the spear of disappointment.

While at Rome, she venerated with profound reverence the relics of the True Cross together with two of the Thorns and one of the Sacred Nails. These precious treasures are carefully preserved at Santa Croce Church in the Eternal City. Therese made bold (it was not boldness for her!) to slip her little finger through an opening in the reliquary and "to touch the Sacred Nail once bathed by the Blood of Our Savior." During the eight remaining years that Providence had mapped out for her, she would not only feel the Nails but be pierced and dug by them, but not in such a way that people might behold the bleeding that was caused by them.



*The Little Flower, shortly before her death, displaying the cherished objects of her favorite devotion—the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.*

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Concerning the remainder of her trip, Therese has little to tell. The ruins of Pompeii spoke to her of the vanity and instability of all things human; the peacefulness of Assisi confirmed her in the thought that lasting refreshment can be found only in God and in sacrificing one's self for Him as did the Poverello Francis.' The "princely luxury" which she shared at the grandest hotels, made but slight impression upon her otherworldly heart. In the midst of all the comforts and conveniences of this

fashionable pilgrimage, she reflected thus: "Wealth does not make happiness! I should have been a thousand times more contented under a thatched roof with the hope of entering Carmel, than I was amid marble stair-cases, gilded ceilings and silken hangings, with my heart full of woe. I thoroughly realized that joy is not found in the things that surround us, but lives only in the soul, and that it may be possessed just as easily in an obscure prison as in the palace of a King."

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### XVI.

## CARMEL

ON THE Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28, 1888, Mother Mary of Gonzaga received the Bishop's answer authorizing Therese's immediate entrance into Carmel. The Superior did not delay to send this information to the Little Flower. The message, however, contained a sting. The Superior of the convent reserved to herself the right to postpone the time of admission until the close of Lent. This delay was decided for very wise reasons. The child's health was frail and the Lenten fast of the Carmelites was rather rigorous.

Therese used these three months to perfect herself by prayer and penances. We must not think of her as disciplining her flesh with barbed scourges or rough hair-shirts. She recognized a more efficient way of battling her pride and increasing her store of virtues. "I made my mortifications consist simply in checking my self-will, keeping back an impatient answer, rendering a small service in a quiet way, and a hundred other similar things." She loved to refer to these little conquests as so many diamonds with which to adorn her soul for the day, when she might become His cloistered Spouse.

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The coveted goal was now reached. A girl in her early teens was prepared to part with loved ones, turn her back to the riches and the pleasures of this world, renounce even the legitimate conveniences and comforts of an ordinary home and embrace the rigorous and abstemious life of a cloistered nun. Before we follow Therese in spirit through that door which will forever lock her from the world, it is well that we investigate somewhat into the nature of the life which she is to pursue.

Perhaps no institution in the Catholic Church is more frequently misunderstood by those who have not bothered about studying it, as is the Catholic Sisterhood. The reader has probably heard some thoughtless mother utter senseless statements such as the following: "Why, I would not want my daughter to enter the convent for love or money!" Such a mother appears to be ignorant of the fact, that ladies do not enter the cloister out of love for any earthly thing. They seek that peace which this world can not give because it does not possess it. Neither do they entertain any ambition of amassing wealth within the enclosure, unless it be the wealth which can be carried beyond the grave to the coffers of Heaven. A modern girl, once the liveliest senior in her class, possessed of immense vitality and enjoying extreme popularity, recently wrote these enlightening words from her cell in a Carmelite Convent: "Within the Carmel we are expected to be the victims for the sinful world. While men run after success in life, the soul in Carmel begs God to give them success in eternity; while they chase the multi-colored rainbow of joy, Carmel finds joy in praying for their ultimate happiness; while they sin, Carmel cries, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.'"

## 72

But what of the ridiculous reports that we sometimes hear concerning the absurd practices which are fostered within the convent walls? The same authority, who gave us the information of the previous paragraph, brands such reports as nonsensical: "We do not dig our own graves. We do not sleep in coffins. If we have a high wall about our buildings and their lovely grounds, it is not to keep us prisoners, but to keep out the noisy, obtrusive world. Of course, we never eat meat, though abstinence from it is voluntary. I never miss it. As for the silence, we have two hours recreation a day, and though for the rest there is silence, it is not the stillness of the tomb, but the cheerful quiet of a busy library— only instead of reading unimportant books, we are reading God's Word; instead of studying things that really matter very little, we are quietly thinking about the great truths of time and eternity."

The nun who penned the above words tells us that it was the reading of men like Durant and Shaw, while she was yet in the world, that helped her to become a Discalced Carmelite. Their works, like the biographies of Napoleon and Lincoln, thrilled her. But when she came to the end of their long stories and when she saw them die, something was all wrong. Their glory was ended. Glory that had an end could not satisfy her. She would seek lasting glory behind the walls of the convent. She would lay up her treasures in Heaven where the moth does not consume and where thieves can not break in and steal.

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Yet another motive animates the soul of the young lady, who bids farewell to the world to be forever wedded with Christ in the humble home of the convent—it is the winning of souls to God by a life of penance. Self-mortification is the daily routine of the Carmelite nun's life. Her sleep is broken by prayer at a midnight hour; her rest is taken upon rough planks covered with a coarse blanket; she observes an almost continuous fast. She never eats meat. She inflicts punishment upon her delicate body. She voluntarily imprisons herself behind ugly bars that shut her from her loved ones in the world. She wears thin sandals on her weary feet. She is clothed with a rough, coarse, brown habit. Her triple vow of poverty, chastity and obedience gives her a thousand opportunities to discipline her will and to save souls from the brink of destruction.

Vicarious suffering! Authors may expatiate upon it but the nuns live it! As Father Lord, S.J., beautifully says: "Always these brave and tender women are trying to make up to God for the lovelessness of His children. They love Him for the millions who actually hate Him, and they offer Him their hearts for the countless hearts that are given so freely to Satan..."

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"Between the anger of His Father threatening to strike and His sinful brothers and sisters, Jesus flung His Body. The blow fell upon Him, and He took it gladly, while He prayed that they might be forgiven. In exactly that spirit the contemplative nun throws her pure and delicate body between the justly angry God and sinful humanity. The blows of voluntary penance which she inflicts upon herself, joined to the unceasing prayers which she pours out for sinners, save the world from the sword that would avenge God's injured majesty."

It is not a matter of surprise, then, that a Bishop in charge of a midwestern diocese in the United States, once declared that if he were sent forth to organize a new diocese, the very first thing that he would do, would be to erect a convent for contemplative nuns. He felt that this would be the very best way of promoting the spiritual interests of the community and bring immeasurable blessings upon the diocese.

Such a power-house of prayer stands in the center of old Lisieux, not far from the church of St. Jacques. Other convents had given to the firmament of the saints bright stars of sanctity. This Carmel was to give to a needy world, a "little Saint" as brilliant

in virtue as the others, yet possibly more desirous of remaining close to earth until the last soul should be saved.

We are not fully conscious of our attachment to our homes until we are asked to leave them. So it was with Therese. She had been a home-girl and had become deeply enamoured of every object at Les Buissonnets. Now that she was to leave this sphere of her childhood activities, everything about the place seemed to speak to her of the happy past. There was the fireside where she had listened for hours on winter evenings to the thrilling accounts of the Lives of the Saints. There were the two armchairs which had been used by her parents as they gathered their little flock around them on familiar feasts.

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There were the spreading trees which sheltered her miniature cemetery in which she was accustomed to give fashionable burial to the little birds which had the misfortune to fall from their nests. There was the tiny grotto in the wall with its dwarfed figures of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the donkey and the ox, the angels and the adoring shepherds. With these she must part, and the parting would have been unbearable had she not been given the grace to see the spiritual treasures which would be given to her in exchange.

Deeply religious souls derive untold consolation and gain abundant courage from attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. So it was with Therese on the morning of her entrance into the convent (April 9, 1888). Even with this powerful spiritual aid, her brave heart experienced an agony which only they can understand who have gone through it. It was a heavy-hearted group that assembled about the convent altar that morning. Therese tells us that "at the Communion, when Our Divine Lord entered our hearts, I heard sobs on every side. I did not shed a tear, but, as I led 'the way to the cloister door, the beating of my heart became so violent that I wondered if I were going to die."

The moment of her dreams had arrived. "I embraced all my loved ones, then I knelt for Papa's blessing, and he too knelt as he blessed me through his tears. To see this old man giving his child to God while she was still in the springtime of life was a sight to gladden the Angels."

## 76

A deep peace, baffling all attempts at description, filled the heart of the Little Flower as she triumphantly entered those hallowed precincts where she was to spend the remaining portion of her exemplary life. Everything about her new home charmed her. Its bare walls and simple furniture made her feel that here she would be able to live like Christ, unhampered by any of the luxuries of the world.

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## XVII.

### Obstacles and Aims

FROM the very beginning of her convent life, Therese met with one mortification after another. The priest in charge of the convent had consistently opposed her entrance at such an early age. Now that she had gained her way, he chillingly thrust all responsibility upon the elder nuns of the community, insinuating that this "mere child" might become a source of disappointment to them.

Providence threw a guard of angels around this little one to keep her from temptation to despair. She was sorely tried by Mother Mary of Gonzaga at almost every turn. Hours which should have been spent in giving spiritual advice, soon turned into hours of complaints levelled at the innocent newcomer. Either Therese had left a cobweb in the cloister, or she had made little progress in weeding the garden, or she had failed in some other regard. Thoroughly grounded in humility, she took these chidings as "a sound and valuable training." She rejoiced that in the community she had not been made the pet, as had been the case in the world. Had her superiors been more indulgent to her than to the other postulants by reason of her delicate age, she might have become a spoilt child of Carmel. "Instead of seeing Our Lord in the person of my superiors I might have considered only the creature, and my heart, so carefully guarded in the world, would have been ensnared by human affection in the cloister."

78

Men and women of the world might conclude that the Little Flower must have derived considerable joy from the thought that her two sisters in the flesh were housed beneath the same roof and were subject to the same discipline. What was there to prevent the postulant from carrying her heartaches to those two devoted souls who had soothed her pains and quieted her worries in the world? That was exactly what Therese sought to avoid. She would ask for no concessions; she would seek for no privileges; she would look for no exemptions, simply because God had been good

enough to pluck three white lilies from the garden of her home. She was judicious enough to place her sisters on the same level with the other nuns and to mingle with them only when the ordinary hours of recreation would permit.

There was one to whom the Little Flower could turn and unburden her heart. Two months after she entered the convent, Father Pichon was sent to Carmel to conduct the Spiritual Exercises there. He had been the only one to encourage her, when she was but fourteen years old, to seek entrance to the cloister. Now that he was appointed her spiritual director, she regarded every word that fell from his lips as a special message from the Holy Ghost. Unfortunately, she was to enjoy his direction for but a brief space. "Hardly had Father Pichon undertaken the care of my soul when his superiors sent him to Canada, and I could not hear from him more than once in the year."

## 79

Obstacles which seem insurmountable to the aimless soul, are with less difficulty overcome by the man or woman who has a definite and noble purpose. On entering the convent, Therese was asked to state the reasons why she chose the life of Carmel. Her answer was couched in simple though meaningful words: *"I have come to save souls and especially to pray for priests."*

To pray for priests! What a sublime vocation and how productive of good it is!

A retreat-master in speaking recently to two hundred and fifty priests in Detroit, reminded them that in whatever way we consider the Church, Christ's Spouse, the priest holds a most prominent place of power and of honor. If we consider her an army in battle array, fighting against the powers of darkness, the priests are the officers, planning the attack or the defense, carrying the banner of the Cross, leading her hosts to certain victory. If we compare her to a ship, sent on a perilous voyage, freighted with the precious cargo of immortal souls, it is the priest who holds the helm, mans the oars, sets the sails, steers her past the rocks and shoals, wards off the attacks of pirates and brings her safely into the port of eternal life for which she is bound. If we consider the Church as the mystical body of Christ, the priests are the organs through which that body performs its functions; they are the eyes through which it sees, the ears through which it hears, the mouth through which it speaks, the hands through which it works, the feet by which it is carried from nation to nation, from country to country, from shore to shore. If we compare the Church to a kingdom, the priests are its princes, senators, legislators, judges. Without the priest, the Church would be lifeless, stationary, immovable.

Our little theologian, Therese, needed no one to tell her of the dignity and the responsibility of the priesthood. The Holy Ghost had secretly instructed her in this important lesson. She saw that by praying for one priest, she could benefit thousands of souls to whom that priest would minister. She had learned on her trip to Rome that priests were human and subject to temptations as are other mortals. She perceived that Satan is especially anxious to bring about the ruin of a priest because the priest never falls alone, but drags thousands of other souls with him to perdition. It was equally evident to her that the good priest was a source of special joy to the Sacred Heart of Christ. By praying for priests, she would be multiplying the number of souls that she might offer to sate the Thirst of Christ. She had something real, something definite, something noble, something far-reaching and far-embracing for which to pray and suffer. The pages of this book will, it is hoped, give the reader some notion of the fidelity with which she pursued her purpose.

## XVIII.

### A FATHER'S OFFERING

OUR little heroine in Heaven would be greatly displeased with any account of her life, which would not give special attention to her devoted father. The sanctity of this "King" of Therese's heart beams forth from every word of the letter which he wrote to a friend on the day after his youngest daughter entered Carmel. "Therese, my little Queen, entered Carmel yesterday. God alone can claim such a sacrifice, but He helps me so powerfully that, in the midst of my tears, my heart abounds with joy."

Like his little one, he was thoroughly convinced that the end of man is not to seek joy, but rather to make sacrifice and thus become like unto Christ. He, too, wanted to be a victim of love.

One day he came to the convent and said to his three daughters: "My children, I have just returned from Alencon, where I received, in the church of Notre Dame, such wonderful graces and consolation that I made this prayer: 'My God, it is too much; yes, I am too happy. It is not possible to get to Heaven in this manner; I want to suffer something for Thee....' And I offered myself...." The rest of the sentence was submerged in tears, but his daughters, who knew him thoroughly, understood perfectly what he meant. He had presented himself to the Lord as a victim.

## 82

The Lord accepted this offer sooner than M. Martin or his relatives anticipated. A second attack of paralysis threatened to dispatch his noble soul to the place of its eternal reward. But the Master of Life and Death had yet another earthly, rather we should say heavenly joy, in store for him. He was to be present at the clothing ceremonies of his "little Queen."

The time for this touching ceremony was fixed for January 10, 1889. Strange to say, M. Martin had recovered sufficiently to take an active part in the preparation for this feast. He wished that little Therese should wear a dress of white velvet, bordered with swansdown and enriched with point d'Alencon lace. His eyes must have been moist with tears and his heart filled with golden memories as he beheld his ninth child clad in purest white, a bouquet of white lilies in her hand, and her long hair falling in natural curls over her shoulders. One desire more than any other possessed his soul at that dramatic moment. He longed for his departed wife to be present. She was there in spirit, and we might well suppose that she was attended by her four angel-children who had gone before her into eternity.

## 83

Only the pen of the Little Flower can adequately describe the significant ceremony of that day. "Papa met me at the enclosure door, his eyes full of tears, and pressing me to his heart he exclaimed: 'Ah! here is my little Queen!' Then giving me his arm, we made our solemn entry into the public chapel. This was indeed his day of triumph, his last feast here below; the sacrifice was now complete—his children belonged to God. Celine had already told him that later on she also meant to exchange the world for Carmel, whereupon he cried in a transport of joy: 'Come, let us visit the Blessed Sacrament together and thank God for all the graces He has bestowed upon our family, especially for the great honor He has done me in choosing His spouses from my household. Were I possessed of anything better I would hasten to offer it to Him.'" It was a taste of Heaven on earth. M. Martin did not have to wait until eternity to be crowned with a halo of light. Three of his children had entered Carmel—Marie, Pauline and Therese. A fourth, Leonie, had entered a Convent of Poor Clares, but the discipline there was too rigid for her delicate health. Later she became a Visitation Nun at Caen and took the name of Sister Frances Teresa. The fifth child, once Therese's "playmate," Celine, entertained the hope of entering Carmel as soon as conditions at home would permit.

Could anything more be desired to make the day complete? Yes, there was one tiny wish still lingering in the heart of the Little Flower. She loved snow. Snow had greeted her eyes when first she saw the light of day. A snow-white cloth had been spread over her infant breast at the time of her Baptism to remind her that on Judgment Day a soul would be required of her just as pure as the one which had just been made whiter than snow in the waters of Baptism. Snow had always reminded her of the Immaculate Mother whom she loved most tenderly. Her one ambition was to cleanse the world by her sufferings until it might become as pure as the original world at the time of creation. All these facts account for her yearning to see the earth blanketed in snow on the day of her clothing.

## 84

The miracle actually happened! It must be regarded as such, for the temperature was warm and no weatherman would have suspected the possibility of a snow fall on that day. However, as soon as Therese set foot in the enclosure and looked towards the quadrangle, she saw that it was covered with snow. The young novice regarded this as "a delicate attention on the part of Jesus. To gratify the least wish of His little spouse He actually made her a gift of snow. Where is the creature with power enough to make even one flake fall, to please his beloved?" , In these last words, whether she was conscious of it or not, the Little Flower gave to the world a convincing proof for the existence of God. Only God can make a snow flake and cause it to fall from Heaven to earth.

Just one month after Therese's clothing day, M. Martin, beloved father of our Saint, was stricken with a third attack of paralysis. His doctor recommended that he be removed from Lisieux to a private asylum, where he remained for three years. Generally speaking, he had lost the use of his faculties and was in a pitiable condition when Celine insisted that he be brought back to Lisieux. During the three remaining years of his life, he was sedulously cared for by Celine. He died on July 29, 1894, closing the last chapter of his glorious life by fixing his gaze upon this devoted daughter and blessing her with an unforgettable smile.



*A sculpted image in the Chapel of the Carmelites at Lisieux, France, representing the "Shower of Roses from Heaven."*

## 85

One of the poets once fittingly wrote:

"We see but dimly through these earthly vapors

Amid these earthly damps;

What seem to us but sad funeral tapers

May be Heaven's distant lamps."

The affliction which befell M. Martin and which caused the last three years of his life to be a source of agony to himself and his beloved, was a blessing in disguise. A chapter in her Autobiography tells us how the Little Flower viewed those years:

"In Heaven we shall delight to dwell on those dark days, and even here the three years of our dear father's martyrdom seem to me the sweetest and most fruitful of our lives. I would not exchange them for the most sublime ecstasies, and in gratitude for such a priceless treasure my heart cries out: 'Blessed be Thou for the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us.'"

Only on Judgment Day shall we realize to the full, the powerful role which M. Martin played in the spiritual development of the Little Flower. Only on that day of great revelations, shall we see how she was strengthened by his noble example and steeled by his sacrifices.

86

**XIX.**

## **CHRIST'S BRIDE**

THE usual length of time in the novitiate before solemn profession in the Carmelite Order is one year. When that period had elapsed for Therese, she was informed that it was the wish of the Superior that her profession be postponed for eight months. To one less schooled in humility and less acquainted with the bitter chalice of trial, this delay might have seemed a crucifixion. To our "little Queen" it was a precious opportunity to prepare herself better for her eternal union with her spouse. She recalled how it was customary in the world for a bride to be arrayed in magnificent attire on her wedding day. Should she who was to become the betrothed of Jesus be less attractively prepared? No. Her soul must be adorned with the precious stones of sacrifice. It must be scented with the sweet perfume of prayer. It must present the appearance of a jewel-studded wedding garment, for it is to be espoused to the most beautiful of all Kings, the most loveable of all spouses.

87

Within the walls of the cloister, Therese found plenty of occasions to enrich that precious wedding gown. Space will permit mention but of one of these costly diamonds. "My first victory of the kind, though not a great one, cost me a good deal. It happened that a small jar which had been left by the window was found broken.

Believing that I was the culprit our Novice Mistress reproached me for leaving it about, adding that I was most untidy and must be more careful for the future. She seemed displeased, so without saying a word in self-defense, I kissed the ground and promised to be more orderly. I was so little advanced in perfection that even trifles like these cost me dear, as I have said, and I found it necessary to console myself with the thought that all would come to light on the day of Judgment."

Incidents like this show that the Little Flower was well along on her Little Way of perfection, long before the date of her profession which was fixed for September 8, 1890.

In a famous church at Rome, there is a unique painting of the Blessed Virgin. It is called "Madonna della Strada," which in our language means "Madonna of the Wayside." It is a famous shrine of pilgrimage. Before that image kneel little children who are just beginning the path of life, young men and maidens who have trod the way of innocence, men and women who have never strayed, and men and women who have walked through the dreary ways of sin and now return penitent to a Mother's love.

What a fitting symbol of the ever vigilant love of the Blessed Mother! She stands alongside every Christian and is ever prepared to do battle for him. She journeys with him along his perilous way. She illumines his path with her shining example and warms his heart with her motherly love.

## 88

It is significant that the day of Therese's profession was fixed for the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, September 8. Truly the Blessed Mother was a "Madonna della Strada" to the Little Flower. The Queen of Heaven had been her mother's special source of consolation throughout that noble lady's life and especially during the time of her trying illness. The Mother of God had smiled graciously upon little Therese when all earthly help had seemed futile, and the Little Flower raised its head and breathed again the atmosphere of health. The Blessed Lady's life contained in itself all that the little Therese hoped to attain, all that she could wish to accomplish. Mary, the Mother of God, was truly the guiding star along the Little Way of the Little Flower. We read of nothing startling in the history of the Blessed Mother. The same is true of the annals of Therese of the Child Jesus. Mary's greatest joy was in her Divine Babe. There, too, was the treasure of the little Saint of Lisieux. Heaven's Queen reached the very zenith of heavenly glory by doing little things well, by conforming herself in all things, both great and small, to the will of the Creator, by applying herself with her whole heart to every humble task and to every homely duty.

This, too, was the mode of ascent of the Little Flower to an enviable position among the Saints. In an age of inventions, when there are elevators which save us the trouble of climbing stairs, Therese found the spiritual lift by which she was raised unto God. She discovered this lift in the words of Scripture: "*Whosoever is a little one, let him come unto Me.*" *Prov. ix, 4.*—

## 89

To be raised up by the mighty hand of God, Therese, like her model Mary, must become and remain a "little one." Like the Mother of God, she must be humble and use little things as stepping stones to Heaven. Like her Heavenly Queen, she must refer all things to God. "For He that is mighty hath done great things to me and holy is His Name." At the same time, she must remember that "the prayer of the humble soul shall pierce the clouds." Did not the prayer of Mary open the Heavens and bring down the Savior to a storm-tossed world? And would not the prayer of the Little Flower also force wide open the gates of Heaven and bring down upon sinners torrents of mercy and of grace?

The devotion of Therese to the Blessed Mother was tender and intimate. She begged to differ with those preachers and spiritual writers who regard Mary more as a Queen than as a Mother. "How I love Our Blessed Lady!" she exclaimed shortly before her death. "How I would have sung her praises had I been a priest! She is spoken of as unapproachable, whereas she should be represented as imitable. . . . She is more Mother than Queen! I have heard preachers say that her splendour eclipses that of all the Saints just as the rising sun makes the stars disappear. How strange that a mother should take away the glory of her children! I think quite the contrary will happen, I am certain that she will greatly add to the splendour of God's redeemed."

## 90

To one who entertained such sentiments as these, it must have been a rare joy to realize that her profession was to take place on the feast of the Blessed Virgin.

We will recall that when she was a mere child, Therese had asked the Lord to treat her as a plaything, a little ball, which He might toss about, pierce, neglect, or press to His Heart as He might choose. Christ was now answering that invitation. In preparation for the day of her profession, He chose to test her fidelity to Him by apparently abandoning her, by permitting her to pass through a period of tense dryness and darkness of spirit. "Our Lord took me by the hand and led me into a subterranean way, where it is neither hot nor cold, where the sun never shines, into which neither

rain nor wind find entrance, a tunnel where I see nothing but a half-veiled light." Her response to this trial was simply an act of gratitude for the privilege of "having no consolation." She would be ashamed if her love should resemble that of earthly fiancées, who look for presents from the hands of their beloved. If by the darkness of her soul she could bring light to sinners, and if by the dryness of her spirit, she could wipe away a single tear from the Face of her Beloved Christ, she would gladly consent to spend the rest of her religious life in what she called "this sombre tunnel."

## 91

It is customary for novices, during the days preceding their profession, to make out a list of petitions which they will present to the Lord on the morning of their holy vows. In accordance with the will of her Superior, Therese asked that God cure her father, if it be the will of Divine Providence. A second wish concerned her sister, Leonie: "As regards Leonie, grant that by Thy will she may become a Visitation nun, and, if she has not the vocation, I pray Thee to bestow it on her; Thou canst not refuse me this." Such method of speaking with the Most High is surely indicative of unbounded trust in the Goodness of God.

Her petitions included not only her relatives in the flesh, but reached out and embraced the entire world. "No one was forgotten. I longed that every sinner on earth might be converted." Then, as if her thirst for souls could not be sated even by the conversion of the whole world, she asked that "all captive souls in Purgatory be set free." How Christlike were her ambitions!

In true childlike fashion, lest she might forget something on the day of her profession, she bore upon her heart a letter stating what she desired for herself:

"Oh Jesus, my Divine Spouse, grant that my baptismal robe may never be sullied. Take me from this world rather than allow me to stain my soul by committing the least wilful fault. May I never seek or find aught but Thee alone! May all creatures be as nothing to me and I as nothing to them. May no earthly thing disturb my peace!

"Oh Jesus, I ask for peace . . . peace, and above all, LOVE . . . love without limit. I ask that for Thy sake I may become a martyr—give me martyrdom of soul or of body. Or rather give me both...."

## 92

Heaven rejoices over such unselfish prayers. Hell does its best to prevent their fulfillment. On the very eve of her profession, our little Saint was sorely tried by the author of all evil. Satan cunningly and convincingly assured her that she was "wholly unsuited for the Carmelite life" and that by entering it, she was merely deceiving her superiors.

Fortunately, the Little Flower had learned, and put into practice, the lesson of referring all her doubts to her Novice Mistress. This experienced soul merely laughed at Therese's fears and assured her that they were the result of a ruse of the devil. Hell was conquered. The "little Queen" stepped forward triumphantly on September eight and pronounced her holy vows.

Sixteen days later, the newly professed nun received the veil. Her one regret on this occasion was that her aged father was too ill to attend the ceremonies. She consoled herself with the thought, that the Lord of all consolation would repay her in Heaven, the innocent joys which He had denied her here upon earth.

Within little more than a week after Therese took her veil, her cousin, Jeanne, was united in wedlock to Dr. La Néele. The bride did not forget to pay a visit to the Little Flower to tell her all the important details of the wedding, together with an account of all the little attentions that she lavished upon her husband. Therese listened with whole-hearted attention, not because she was particularly interested in any earthly union between bride and groom, but rather because the event reminded her how solicitous she should be to please her Heavenly Spouse. "I was greatly impressed, and I determined it should never be said that a woman in the world did more for her husband than I for my Beloved."

## 93

When the Little Flower received the announcement of her cousin's marriage, she set herself about composing an invitation which she might use for the instruction and edification of her novices. Her intention in penning this invitation was to impress upon her companion nuns, that "earthly unions, however glorious, were as nothing compared to the titles of a Spouse of Christ."

Through the kindness of our little Saint, we are able to present her announcement exactly as she wrote it:

"God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, and the Most Glorious Virgin Mary, Queen of the Heavenly Court, announce to you the Spiritual Espousals of Their August Son, Jesus, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,

with little Therese Martin, now Princess and Lady of His Kingdoms of the Holy Childhood and the Passion, assigned to her in dowry by her Divine Spouse, from which Kingdoms she holds her titles of nobility—of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face. It was not possible to invite you to the Wedding Feast which took place on the Mountain of Carmel, September 8, 1890—the Heavenly Court was alone admitted—but you are requested to be present at the At Home which will take place tomorrow, the Day of Eternity, when Jesus, the Son of God, will come in the clouds of Heaven, in the splendour of His Majesty, to judge the living and the dead. The hour being uncertain, you are asked to hold yourselves in readiness and to watch."

94

XX.

## HER DOUBLE TITLE

IN HER NEW capacity as Spouse of Christ, Therese wanted to be known, as is evident from her own writings, as "Therese of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face." In choosing the first part of that captivating title, she was aware of the words, "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." Therese was content throughout her earthly sojourn to remain beside the sleeping Christ-Child of the Manger, so that she might perfectly acquire the virtues of the Divine Childhood which are so necessary for admission to Heaven. In selecting the second part of her title, she desired that every time her name was mentioned it would be a reminder of that Sacred Face which, marked and scarred and resembling the face of a leper, moved the Heavenly Father to gaze into that mysterious Face, that Face of tenderness, that Face of love, that Face of virtue, so that by a sort of reflection, her own face and the soul which it imaged might become like unto it. Thus, when Jesus would look to little Therese, He would see His own image as in a mirror.

95

Providence graciously granted the little Saint ample opportunity to prove herself a worthy bearer of such a noble title. The dark night of her soul seemed to be deepening in its darkness. In quick succession, death snatched from her those souls who were sources of special consolation to her. One of these was the saintly foundress of Carmel, Mother Genevieve of St. Teresa. While the body of this venerable nun was lying in its casket in the choir of Carmel, an incident happened which proved that Therese had lost none of that tenderness which had characterized her in the world. Let us permit the Little Flower to tell the story in her own simple and forceful manner:

"Each of the Sisters hastened to claim something belonging to our beloved Mother, and you know the precious relic I treasure. During her agony I had noticed a tear glistening on her eyelash like a diamond, and that tear, the last of those she had shed on earth, never fell; I saw it still shining as her body lay exposed in the choir. So when evening came I made bold to approach unseen, with a little piece of linen, and now I am the happy possessor of the last tear of a Saint."

## 96

Therese's nineteenth birthday followed closely upon the happening recorded in the last paragraph. She was then acting as sacristan. It was a day rather of gloom than of festivity. An epidemic of influenza had broken out in the convent and Therese's birthday turned out to be the death-day of the Sub-Prioress and two other nuns. These heartrending events naturally added to the sacristy work which was already taxing the frail constitution of the Little Flower. However, like other saints who were especially devoted to the Blessed Eucharist, she found an inexhaustible source of strength in the Manna of the Tabernacle. In the fair days of her childhood, she had often expressed her yearning to spend her life as a little flower blooming beside God's Eucharistic Home. That longing was now being fulfilled. She loved the work of sacristan. She delighted in preparing the immaculate linens upon which the Body of Christ was to rest at Holy Mass. She felt a heavenly thrill in handling the precious vessels which were daily used to contain the Precious Blood. A favorite occupation of hers was to fill the ciboria with altar-breads, which would shortly be changed into the Living Body of the Savior. Most of all, she gloried in the privilege of receiving Holy Communion daily, at least during the time of the epidemic and for several months thereafter, a privilege which was not shared by the rest of the Community.

It was this intimate union with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, that prepared her to sustain the loss of her beloved father who died on July 29, 1894. The wound inflicted upon her heart by this soul-rending stroke could be healed only by the thought of the Communion of Saints, a thought which had stood her in good stead at the time of her mother's departure for eternity. In receiving Christ, she received Heaven which contained the soul of her darling father. His life had been changed but not destroyed, as we read in the Preface of the Mass for the dead.

## 97

Though the Little Flower seemed plunged into the dark night, as she called her spiritual dryness, God did not fail to send into her life at intervals rays of light. The flowers had scarcely faded over the grave of her father, when Celine, who had been

his nurse and last companion, gained admission to Carmel. Therese's joy was now complete. But one desire consumed her heart from henceforth, namely, "to love God unto folly."

In the attainment of this end, she had recourse to two books, the Holy Scriptures and the Imitation of Christ. All other learned treatises, save the writings of St. John of the Cross, had little appeal to her. "It is from the Gospels," she admits, "that I derive most help in time of prayer; I find in their pages all that my poor soul needs, and I am always discovering there new lights and hidden mysterious meanings." Practical-minded as she was, she managed to find a miniature volume of the Scriptures, so small that she could carry it continually upon her breast and refer to it frequently during the course of her work. Thus she became so familiar with the sacred passages of Holy Writ, that she could quote them freely and with facility in her letters and her conversation.

## 98

It was not with any desire to vaunt her learning that Sister Therese of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face applied herself so diligently to the study of the Scriptures. She wanted to know Christ in order that she might be able to live Christ. She wanted to be refreshed by His example and inspired by His obedience. Only one who had learned and practiced the principles contained in the Bible, could ever give utterance to such sensible words as these: "Oh my God! from how much disquiet do we free ourselves by the vow of obedience! Happy is the simple religious: her one guide being the will of her superiors, she is ever sure of following the right path, and has no fear of being misled, even when it may appear her superiors are mistaken. But should she cease to consult the unerring compass, then at once her soul goes astray in barren wastes, where the waters of grace quickly fail."

## 99

### XXI.

#### THE WORKER

THE DELICATE HEALTH of the Little Flower might have given her reason to seek exemption from the more rigorous tasks imposed by the rule of the Order and the will of her superiors. Therese did not ask to be excused. From the very beginning of her monastic career, she took her turn in weeding the garden, washing the linen, sweeping and scrubbing splintered floors, working in the kitchen, painting frescoes, mending

clothes, doing the work of sacristan. She showed no preference for this work or that. She uttered no complaint and expressed no regret when the particular task to which she was assigned seemed heavy enough to crush her to the earth. In and about each of her daily duties, she saw the rough hands of the Carpenter's Son beckoning her to follow Him along the sure, though rough way of labor.

Moreover, the little Saint tells us that it was chiefly in the midst of her daily duties that she received lights hitherto unseen, to guide her along her dark way.

"Ora et labora!" "Pray and work!" That has been the motto of the most successful religious orders of the world. That has been the secret of every saintly career.

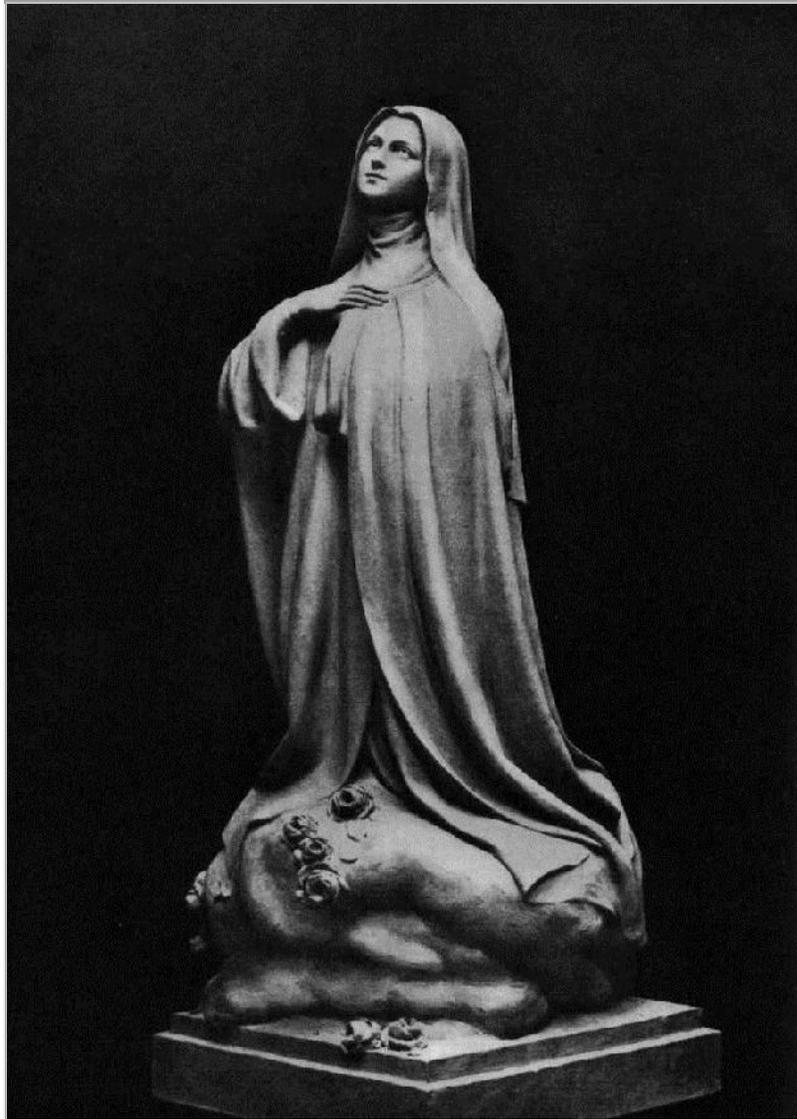
## 100

In the life of the Great Saint Teresa, (she is given this title to distinguish her from the Little Flower), who lived centuries before Saint Therese of Lisieux, we read the following interesting incident:

"Despite her constant illness and duties as Prioress, Teresa (of Avila) was foremost in every mean and humble office. Her cleanliness and conscientiousness shone so conspicuously in the kitchen that her nuns laughingly remarked that she might have been born a cook and never had performed any other duty. They never fared so well as when Teresa's turn came round to serve in the kitchen, even though she was sometimes found in an ecstasy, her face rapt and beautiful, her rigid hands grasping the frying pan. 'So true was it,' she wrote, 'That God walks even among the pots and pipkins.'"

In this wise, a great Saint has told us that work and prayer are not to be divorced from each other. Work becomes a prayer when it is performed with the right intention; work becomes doubly a prayer when it is carried out in the spirit of cheerfulness and gratitude, which are always contagious in their effect upon our fellow-laborers.

Let us return to the Little Flower. Unlike her namesake in this, that she was not granted the grace of ecstasy, at least as far as we know, she had a special message to convey to us with regard to our work. She would have us know that no matter how insignificant any task may be to which we are assigned, it can be turned to an instrument of tremendous spiritual profit to ourselves and a source of immeasurable joy to the Creator. Nothing is insignificant or trivial in the sight of God and our humblest works, performed with a smile, are precious pearls which purchase for us the favor of the Lord of the world.



The Saint of Lisieux, statue by R.P. Marie-Bernard in the cemetery of the Carmelites at Lisieux, France.

## 101

This thought is superbly expressed by the Little Flower in a letter to her sister, Celine, dated April 25, 1893. It will refresh the reader to study this simple though sublime communication:

"My Little Celine,—I must come and disclose the desires of Jesus with regard to your soul. Remember that He did not say: 'I am the Flower of the gardens, a carefully-

tended rose,' but 'I am the Flower of the fields and the Lily of the valleys.' Well, you must always be as a drop of dew hidden in the heart of this beautiful Lily.

"The dewdrop—what could be simpler, what more pure? It is not the child of the clouds; it is born beneath the starry sky, and survives but a night. When the sun darts forth its ardent rays, the delicate pearls adorning each blade of grass quickly pass into the lightest vapor.... There is the portrait of my little Celine! She is the drop of dew, an offspring of Heaven—her true home. Through the night of this life she must hide herself in the Field-flower's golden cup; no eye must discover her abode.

"Happy dewdrop, known to God alone, pay no heed to the roaring torrents of the world! Do not envy the crystal stream which winds among the meadows. The ripple of its waters may be most sweet, but it can be heard by creatures. Besides, the Field-flower could never contain it in its cup. One must be so lowly to draw near to Jesus, and few are the souls that aspire to be lowly and unknown. 'Are not the river and the brook,' they urge, 'of more use than the dewdrop? Of what avail is it? Its only purpose is to refresh for one moment some poor little field-flower.'

## 102

"Ah! they little know the true Flower of the field. Did they know Him they would better understand Our Lord's reproach to Martha. Our Beloved needs neither our brilliant deeds nor our beautiful thoughts. Were He in search of lofty ideas, has He not His angels, whose knowledge infinitely surpasses that of the greatest genius on earth? Neither intellect nor other talents has He come to seek among us.... He has become the Flower of the field to show us how much He loves simplicity.

"The Lily of the valley asks but a single dewdrop, which for one night will rest in its cup, hidden from all human eyes. But when the shadows begin to fade, when the Flower of the field becomes the Sun of Justice, then the dewdrop—the humble sharer of His exile—will rise up to Him as love's vapor. He will shed on her a ray of His light, and before the whole court of Heaven she will shine eternally like a precious pearl, a dazzling mirror of the Divine Sun."

## 103

### XXII.

### LOVE'S SECRET

AS GUIDING principle of her whole life, St. Therese adopted the motto: "Love can be repaid only by love." Could she spend a thousand years upon earth and could she combine into one vast army all the souls that dot the world and prevail upon them to love God with all their hearts, she would still feel that the total of it all would leave much to be desired. Consequently, she made use of every opportunity to love God to the utmost of her ability and to draw others to His love.

At Les Buissonnets, that "shrine of love," she had learned from her darling father, in a most practical way, that there are two parts to the Commandment of Love, and that "the second is like to the first: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It was only after her profession that the full significance of these words dawned upon her willing soul. From that time on, she saw Jesus in the depths of her neighbor's soul. "Whatsoever you do to the least of these little ones you do it unto Me."

## 104

Her deep understanding of this important truth showed itself in many ways. If anyone asked her for anything, she considered herself honored by the request for service. Whenever she found it necessary to refuse a request, she did it so graciously that the refusal afforded almost as much pleasure as the gift itself. She had very specific views with regard to lending: "When a Sister comes to you and says: 'I have our Mother's leave to borrow your help for a few hours, and you may be assured that later on I will do as much for you,' we may be practically certain that the time so lent will never be repaid, and therefore feel sorely tempted to say: 'I will give what you ask!' The remark would gratify self-love, it being more generous to give than to lend, and in addition, it would let the Sister feel how little reliance you put in her promise."

Therese's heart, enlarged by charity, bore patiently with all her neighbors' defects, was not surprised in seeing mistakes in others and was edified at the smallest virtues in her fellow-Sisters. She tells us candidly in her Autobiography, that when the devil brought before her the defects of one of the Sisters, she rather hastened to look for her virtues and good motives. "I call to mind that though I may have seen her fall once, she may have gained many victories over herself which in her humility she conceals, and also that what appears to be a fault may very well, owing to the good intention that prompted it, be an act of virtue." What a Paradise this world would be, if people would utilize the time which they spend in carping criticism for some more noble purpose in the interests of the welfare of mankind!

## 105

The Little Flower has bequeathed to the world some very important lessons in the art of giving. These teachings are all the more remarkable, when we consider that they came from the pen of one who was in her early twenties when she wrote them.

*1) To give to everyone who asks is less pleasant than to give spontaneously and of one's own accord.* The truth of this statement of the Saint of Lisieux is so evident, that words of explanation would only serve to befog it.

*2) If a thing be asked in a courteous way, consent is easy; but if, unhappily, tactless words have been used, there is an inward rebellion, unless we are perfect in charity.*

These words tell how well acquainted Therese of the Child Jesus was with human frailty. They reveal that she had grasped vigorously the broom of charity and had swept her soul diligently against the grain of personal inclinations, until she had rid herself of every trace of selfishness.

*3) In the act of giving, the fewer the words that accompany the act, the more meritorious the act will be.*

Any worded tag that is attached to a favor that we grant or a service that we render, can serve only to embarrass the one who asks for the favor, or to promote in ourselves the spirit of selfishness. Moreover, it is a waste of time for us to be explaining why we give or what difficulties we suffer in giving. To be Christlike, we must give without any consideration of personal gain.

## 106

These thoughts, while they spring naturally and spontaneously from the heart of the Little Flower, are not claimed by her as private property. "Should any thought of mine please my Sisters, I find it quite easy to let them regard it as their own. It belongs to the Holy Ghost, not to me, for St. Paul assures us that 'without the Spirit' of Love we cannot call God our Father,' and is not the same Holy Spirit free to use me as a channel to convey a good thought to a soul, without my daring to look on that thought as my private property?"

In all these passages which we have quoted so freely, there is proof that the soul of the Saint of Lisieux was immersed in love. She regarded love as the key to all spiritual progress, the path to happiness, the way to God. "For my part, I do not want to be little, mortified and humble that I may learn to love. That is not my way. I wish to love in order to be little, I wish to grow in love that I may be mortified, I wish above all to love much that I may be very humble." She saw that the best way to attain to the

heights to which she aspired was "to begin by love, to go on by love and to reach the crowning point by love."

Therese's strength of body was not equal to her strength of soul. The Lenten fasts which she observed in all their rigour, were too much of a tax for her delicate constitution. Her ever active mind, busy even during periods of recreation about the work of instructing and assisting other novices, needed more rest than its owner allowed it. She spared herself in nothing. She did not ask to be excused from any of the exercises which were enjoined upon the more healthy members of the community.

## 107

It is not surprising, then, nor did Therese consider it disastrous, that on one Good Friday morning, shortly after midnight, her frail body gave unmistakable sign that it was being overtaxed. The Little Flower had returned to her cell at midnight, after having spent some hours with Our Eucharistic Lord late on Holy Thursday evening. Scarcely had she laid her head upon the pillow when she felt a hot stream rise to her lips. She thought she was going to die, and, strange to say, her heart almost broke with joy. Her curiosity was aroused. She had already put out her lamp. Should she rise and investigate the cause of this unexpected happening? No! It was the anniversary of the great day on which her Beloved shed His Sacred Blood to save the world. Out of pure devotion to her dying Savior, she would suppress her curiosity until the morning when the sun would come stealing into her cell; that would be time enough to investigate the source of the trouble. Accordingly, she went peacefully to sleep.

At five o'clock, the time for rising, she found as she had expected, that her handkerchief was saturated with blood. It was her first hemorrhage. Unlike thousands of worldly mortals who regard the first signs of deadly disease as a scourge, the Little Flower accepted this sign as a token of love from her Heavenly King. "What hope filled my heart! I was firmly convinced that on the anniversary of His death my Beloved had allowed me to hear His first call, like a sweet distant murmur, heralding His joyful approach."

## 108

Did this incident interrupt the routine of her life? By no means. She maintained that she felt no fatigue and experienced no pain and, therefore, she should be given permission to finish Lent as she had begun it. Her request was granted. On that Good Friday, she shared in all the austerities customary in the Carmelite Convent and assures us that "never had they appeared sweeter."

The midnight hemorrhage of Good Friday eve repeated itself on the following evening just as the Little Flower was falling asleep. Again she regarded it as a second call announcing the sweet angel of Death, which others, less schooled than she, might call the grim spectre.

"Troubles come not singly." Scarcely had Therese thanked the Lord for having visited her with the second sign of a consuming disease, when He tried her still further by plunging her soul into thickest gloom. Her greatest consolation during the dark months that followed was the fact that Christ, the Lord of the sunlit country of Heaven, "had come to dwell for thirty-three years in the land of darkness, though alas! 'the darkness did not understand that He was the light of the world.'"

109

**XXIII.**

### **THE NOVICE MISTRESS**

IT WOULD SEEM that the more Therese tasted of exile, the more she longed to become exiled. She dreamt of a convent where she might be forgotten even by her companion Sisters, where she might be deprived of the many attentions which she received at the Carmel of Lisieux. She had heard of the need of Sisters in the convent of Hanoi and had resolved that she would volunteer to hasten thither, should she recover from her sickness and should her superiors be willing.

God had other designs for her. Carmel of Lisieux was in need of a saint. Work awaited her there which was just as important as her activities might have been in the far-off convent of Hanoi.

Much as Therese sought to divert attention from herself and focus it upon her companions, it was decreed by Providence that she should play a very important role in the affairs of her community.

In February, 1893, Mere Marie de Gonzague had finished her term of office as Prioress. The rules of the Order called for a change. By an interesting coincidence, Therese's sister, Pauline (Soeur Agnes de Jesus) was elected to the important position of Prioress.

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As might be expected of a member of the Martin family, the new superior felt no inclination to relegate her predecessor to the rank of an ordinary nun. Sister Marie de

Gonzague had rendered outstanding services to the community and it was only logical and just that this should be taken into consideration. Finally it was decided that the former Prioress should become Mistress of Novices. This office stood in need of one who was possessed of an evenness of disposition, which was sometimes lacking in its newly appointed occupant. Accordingly, Mere Agnes de Jesus decided on giving the Novice Mistress an assistant and for this office she chose none other than the Little Flower.

This move is an important indication of the spiritual progress which Therese had made and of the high regard in which she was held by the members of the community. Keep in mind that the Little Flower was but twenty years old, when she was entrusted with the work of counseling and directing and correcting novices, some of whom were older than herself.

How did Therese accept her new responsibility? Her thoughts on that memorable occasion are beautifully preserved for us in the eleventh chapter of her Autobiography. "I am the brush our Lord has chosen to paint His likeness in the souls you have confided to my care. But an artist must have at least two brushes: the first, which is the more useful, gives the ground tints and rapidly covers the whole canvas; the other, a smaller one, is employed for the details of the picture. You, my dear Mother, represent the valuable brush Our Lord holds lovingly in His hand when He wishes to do some great work in the souls of His children; and I am the little one He deigns to use afterwards to fill in the minor details."

## 111

Oh sweet simplicity of the Little Flower! Far be it from us to debate with her whether or not she should have called herself the "little brush." Her method might be termed the Little Way and her littleness and childlikeness of spirit might justify her in giving herself the title of "little artist"; but only on Judgment Day when her masterpieces, the souls whom she directed, are arrayed before us, shall we comprehend the tremendous power of her touch and understand the devotion with which she applied herself to her work.

It was not easy for her to correct companions who were older than herself. But she had not picked the path of ease. Her business was to lead the novices to God and that she would do, no matter how steep and stony the road might be.

One of her first tasks in her new capacity of Novice Mistress, was to reprove one of her closest friends for an altogether too natural affection for the Prioress. The

correction was ministered with such tact and tenderness, that the guilty Novice admitted herself to be wrong and promised to begin a new life.

Therese was blessed by God with clear-sightedness and prudence in dealing with souls. "From the beginning I realized that all souls have more or less the same battles to fight, but on the other hand I saw that since no two souls are exactly alike, each one must be dealt with differently. With some I have to humble myself and not to shrink from confessing my own struggles and defeats; by this means they have less difficulty in acknowledging their faults, being consoled by the discovery that I know of their trials from my own experience. In dealing with others, my only hope of success lies in being firm and in never going back on what I have said, since self-abasement would be mistaken for weakness."

## 112

She was too concerned about the spiritual progress of her subjects to spare them discomfiture. Some of them tried to convince her that she should be less severe. Her only answer to such a suggestion was: "No one is a good judge in his own case. During a painful operation a child would be sure to cry out and say that the remedy was worse than the disease, yet how great would be the little one's delight if at the end of a few days he should find himself cured and able to run about and play. The same thing happens with souls."

In all her work of correcting and perfecting others, the Little Flower strove constantly for her own improvement. What would it profit her if she were a mere sign post pointing to others the way to Heaven, if she herself would make no progress thither?

"When I am talking with a Novice," she tells us, "I am ever on the watch to mortify myself, avoiding all questions which would tend to gratify my curiosity. Should she begin to speak on an interesting subject, and leaving it unfinished pass on to another that wearies me, I am careful not to remind her of the digression, for no good can come from self-seeking."

## 113

Therese's place at meditation was near a Sister who fidgeted constantly either with her Rosary or with some other object. The irritating noise caused by the Rosary scraping over the kneeling-bench, became a source of great annoyance to the Little Flower. She was tempted to turn around and "with one glance silence the offender." The distraction grated so upon Therese's nervous sensibilities, that she became bathed

with perspiration and she could not even pray. Here was a chance for self-conquest. The little Saint did not try to muffle the displeasing sound. She rather tried to regard it as sweet-sounding music. And she succeeded so well that, within a short time, she welcomed the opportunity of putting up with this "music" for the sake of Christ and of souls.

In the more menial tasks of her career, the Little Flower manifested to those around her that she had traveled far along the road of self-abasement.

"On another occasion when I was engaged in the laundry, the Sister opposite to me, who was washing handkerchiefs, kept splashing me continually with dirty water. My first impulse was to draw back and wipe my face in order to show her that I wanted her to be more careful. The next moment, however, I saw the folly of refusing treasures thus generously offered, and I carefully refrained from betraying any annoyance. On the contrary I made such efforts to welcome the shower of dirty water that at the end of half an hour I had taken quite a fancy to the novel kind of aspersion, and resolved to return as often as possible to the place where such precious treasures were freely bestowed."

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Thus did a "very little Saint" teach her novices, and the world, how to turn the homely stones of daily routine into the golden steps of her Little Way leading to God.

115

## **XXIV.**

### **THE GOLDEN WAND OF PRAYER**

THE TWO KEYS by which the Little Flower found her way into the hearts of her novices, and later into the hearts of millions of men and women, the two swords by which she drove back every evil spirit that menaced her, the two supports upon which she mounted to her Calvary on earth, the two wings by which she soared aloft to the highest summits of perfection were prayer and sacrifice. "My whole strength," she told her sister, Mere Agnes de Jesus, "lies in prayer and sacrifice: these are my invincible weapons, and experience has taught me that the heart is won by them rather than by words."

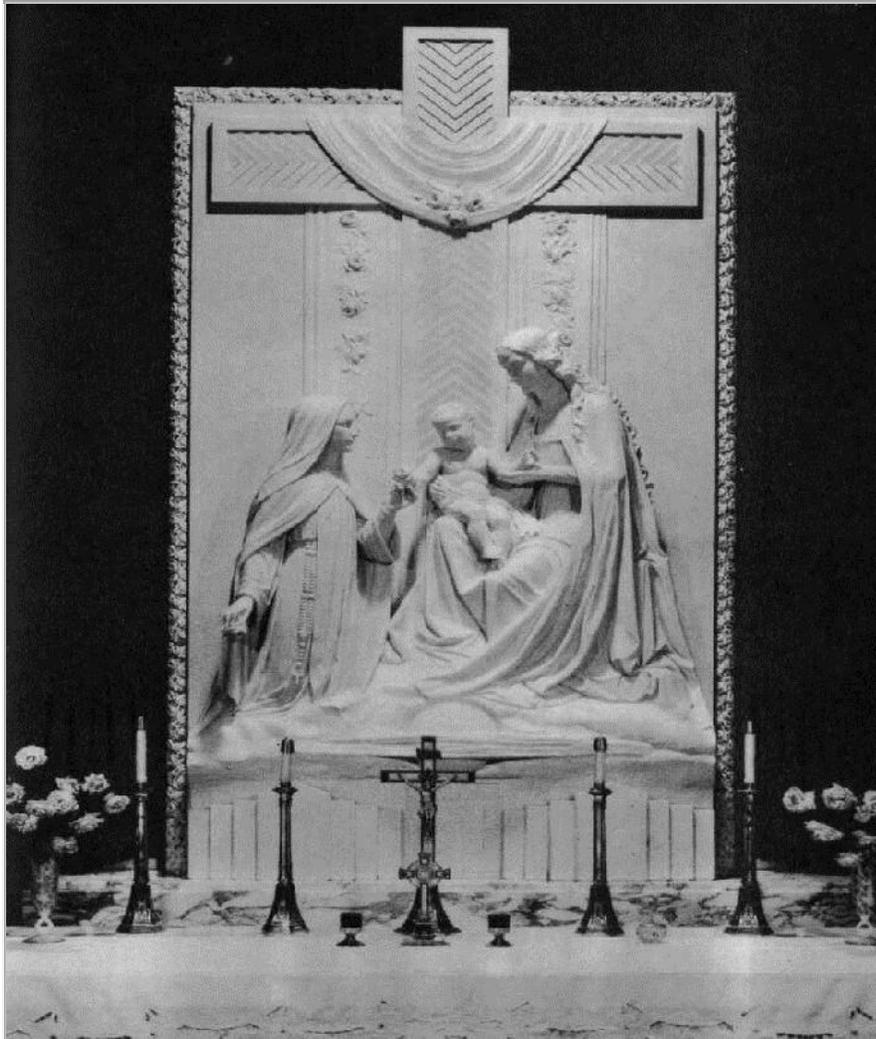
She likened prayer to a queen, who having free access always to the king can obtain whatsoever she asks.

Her prayer was simple and childlike. She admits that she did not have the courage to search through ponderous volumes for beautiful prayers. She could never recite them all and it would make her head ache to choose between them. It was enough for her to say what she wanted to say to God quite simply. Her prayer was "the uplifting of the heart, a glance towards Heaven, a cry of gratitude and of love in times of sorrow as well as of joy." When her soul felt dry and incapable of bringing forth one prayerful thought, she would repeat slowly the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary." In these she found sufficient consolation and food for her soul.

## 116

The sentiments of the Little Flower with regard to prayer, have been beautifully embodied in the writings of Father Faber, who lived long before the world dreamed of St. Therese: "Oh, for faith in prayer! for only faith in prayer! for faith in simple prayer! and the interests of Jesus shall spread like a beneficent conquest all over the world, and the glory of God shall cover the earth as the abounding waters cover the bed of the sea, and the choirs of the redeemed souls shall multiply and multiply, till the Good Shepherd should be, were it any other than He, overladen with the sheaves of His prolific Passion!"

What modern engineers and mechanics have done to speed up production in the material order, St. Therese accomplished in the spiritual order. Hers was a simple, though advantageous method of producing abundant spiritual results. She realized that "the zeal of a Carmelite ought to embrace the whole world." By what magic power could she reach the millions of souls scattered throughout the vast expanse of this world's circumference? She wanted her prayers to extend to all times and to all climes. Of her Beloved it could be said: "There is no one who can hide himself from the heat of His Love." That too was her desire: to make her influence felt in the remotest corners of the globe. Her simple device for bringing this wish into fulfillment was: Prayer for the intentions of the Pope and of priests throughout the world.



*Marble group in Narthex of Shrine of the Little Flower, Royal Oak, Mich.*

## 117

The Little Flower was thoroughly convinced of the Catholic teaching that, as Karl Adam says, "the whole Church rests on Peter." In other words, the Pope of Rome is steward of the entire house of God upon earth. He alone has the charge of the keys of Christ's kingdom on earth. He has to supervise every department of the Church. By praying for his intentions, one can promote the interests of the millions of souls who come under his care. St. Therese was church-minded enough to see this. "Like our Holy Mother, St. Teresa (of Avila)," she said, "I wish to be a true daughter of the Church, and to make prayer for all the intentions of Christ's Vicar the one great aim of my life." Little did she dream at that time, that she would one day be recognized by

one of the Popes as the guiding star of his pontificate. Little did she suspect, that she would be proclaimed by him as patroness of the Missions of the entire world.

The cause of the Holy Father is the cause of the priests throughout the world. Though they labor in one particular field, they labor for the salvation of the world. Otherwise they could not be called other Christs. While the Little Flower seemed to be especially interested in the work of the missionaries in distant lands, she did not forget to pray for those zealous apostles who labor in our large cities and in our rural districts against all manner of odds. "I pray for all, without forgetting our priests at home, whose ministry is often as full of difficulties as that of the missionary preaching to the heathen."

## 118

Therese's mindfulness of the priesthood and her desire to help priests is beautifully reflected in the letters which she penned to the two brother missionaries who were given to her as spiritual brothers. She constantly admonished them to "sing the mercies of God," to preach the love of the Sacred Heart, to "work together for the salvation of souls. We have but the one day of this life to save them, and so to give to Our Lord a proof of our love. Tomorrow will be eternity. Then Jesus will reward you a hundredfold for the sweet joys you have given up for Him. He knows the extent of our sacrifice."

Resigned suffering has been called the most efficacious form of prayer. The Flower of Carmel did not fail to utilize this in behalf of priests.

One day at the beginning of her last illness, when she was spending part of her time in bed and part on her feet, she was strolling in the convent garden and taking the customary quarter of an hour's recreation prescribed by the Sister infirmarian. One of her companion Sisters observed that this compliance with the rule was costing Therese much effort and accordingly tried to persuade her to take a rest. "Sister Therese, it would be much better for you to rest. Walking like this can not do you any good. You only tire yourself!"

"Yes, that is true," replied the little Saint, "but do you know what gives me strength? I offer each step for some priest in the missions. I think that possibly over here, far away, one of them may be weary and tired in his apostolic labors, and to lessen his fatigue, I offer mine to the Good God."

## 119

The very thought of the vocation of a priest caused the Little Flower to burst forth into exclamations of highest admiration: "The vocation of the Priesthood! With what love, my Jesus, would I bear Thee in my hands when my words brought Thee down from Heaven! With what love, too, would I give Thee to the faithful! And yet, with all my longing to be a priest, I admire and envy the humility of St. Francis of Assisi and feel drawn to imitate him by refusing that sublime dignity.

"Like the prophets and doctors, I would be a light unto souls. I would travel the world over to preach Thy Name, O my Beloved, and raise on heathen soil the glorious standard of the Cross. One mission alone would not satisfy my longings. I would spread the Gospel in all parts of the earth, even to the farthest isles. I would be a missionary, but not for a few years only. Were it possible, I should wish to have been one from the world's creation and to remain one till the end of time."

Besides praying for the Pope, priests and missionaries, the Little Flower had another unique mode of prayer. It was suggested by the words of Solomon: "Draw me; we will run after Thee in the odor of Thy ointments." Therese knew that if she were drawn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, her loved ones would also be drawn to that same sacred Source of Life. Consequently, one of the most cherished intentions of all of her prayers was that she might more and more powerfully be magnetized toward God. "When a soul has been captivated by the odor of Thy perfumes, she cannot run alone; as a natural consequence of her attraction towards Thee, all those whom she loves are drawn in her train."

## 120

So many forget this important truth that in order to magnetize others, it is necessary that we first become magnetized ourselves.

This thought was forcefully expressed by Pope Benedict XV on the occasion of the Promulgation of the Decree concerning the virtues of the Venerable Therese of the Child Jesus. "We have every reason to hope," he wrote, "that the example of this new French heroine will be the means of swelling the ranks of perfect Christians, not only in her own country, but wherever the children of the Catholic Church are to be found."

## 121

### XXV.

### LOVE'S MARTYR

THE WORDS AND THE WORKS, the prayers and the sacrifices which made up the life of the Little Flower, were all colored with the little Saint's desire for martyrdom. In the early days of her girlhood, she offered herself to the Child Jesus "to be His plaything." She told Him "not to treat her as one of those precious toys which children only look at and dare not touch, but rather as a little ball of no value that could be thrown on the ground, tossed about, pierced, left in the corner or pressed to His Heart, just as it might please Him."

This invitation was accepted by her Jesus, when at Rome He pierced the heart of the Little Flower with the lance of disappointment, the refusal to give her assurance that she would be able to enter Carmel.

Again our memory will serve to remind us that on the occasion of her profession, she carried upon her heart a letter containing the words: "I ask that for Thy sake I may die a martyr—give me martyrdom of soul or of body. Or rather give me both."

The closing pages of her Autobiography almost turn to red, as they reveal Therese's yearning to shed her blood for the cause of Christ. "The greatest of all my desires is to win the martyr's palm. Martyrdom was the dream of my youth, and the dream has only grown more vivid in Carmel's narrow cell. Yet this too is folly, since to slake my thirst for suffering, not one, but every kind of torture would be needful.

## 122

"Like Thee, O my adorable Spouse, I would be scourged, I would be crucified! I would be flayed like St. Bartholomew, plunged into boiling oil like St. John, or like St. Ignatius of Antioch, ground by the teeth of wild beasts into a bread worthy of God.

"With St. Agnes I would offer my neck to the sword of the executioner, and like Joan of Arc murmur the name of Jesus at the burning stake."

Seeing in each hemorrhage that drained her frail frame of its life's blood an indication that God would probably not grant her the grace to shed her blood at the hands of torturers, she prayed that she might at least become a martyr of His love.

Shortly after the death of the little Saint, a miniature copy of the Gospels was found upon her breast. It had been her constant companion and her sweet comforter throughout the trials of her life. Within its well-thumbed pages was discovered a precious prayer of her own composition and labelled "An Act of Oblation." It is valuable to us, not only because it was frequently upon the lips of a Saint, but also because it is a model prayer for us to repeat in our strivings after holiness. The text reads:

"In order that my life may be one Act of perfect love, I offer myself as a victim of Holocaust to Thy Merciful Love, imploring Thee to consume me unceasingly and to allow the floods of infinite tenderness gathered up in Thee to overflow into my soul, that so I may become a very martyr of Thy Love, O my God. May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear in Thy presence free me from this life at the last and may my soul take its flight—without delay—into the eternal embrace of Thy Merciful Love!

## 123

"Oh my beloved! I desire at every beat of my heart to renew this Oblation an infinite number of times, 'till the shadows retire' and everlastingly I can tell Thee my love face to face."

These words were first uttered by the Little Flower on the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, June 9, 1895. While she was praying for martyrdom, her heart was slowly suffering martyrdom by the keenness of her desires.

Her intense longing to do something really great for Christ and the Church were partially satisfied, when one day God permitted her to penetrate deeply into the meaning of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. In the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of that letter of the fiery Apostle, the doctrine of the mystical Body of Christ is powerfully and clearly explained. Christ is the head and the heart of that Body and we are all the members. There are diversities of ministries in that Body, but the same Lord worketh all in all. In the human body there are different members with different functions. Yet they all serve the same body. The feet serve to carry the body whithersoever it wishes to go; the hands furnish the body with necessary nourishment; the ears warn the body against danger; the eyes give it light to see what it is doing.

## 124

And so on with the other members. It is similar with the mystical Body of Christ. It is made up of Apostles, Martyrs, Prophets, Priests, Nuns, business men, laborers, and so forth. They are all designed to do a special work. The function of one will differ from that of another. Yet all serve the same Lord. All are united under the same Head, Jesus Christ, Who is the heart and the power working within them all.

This doctrine was very consoling to the Little Flower. She wanted to be the heart of that great mystical Body. She saw that by being most intimately united to the Sacred Heart of Christ, by loving it until she became absorbed into it, she could make her

influence felt in the lives of the martyrs, in the preaching of the Apostles, in the ministry of the priests, in the labors of the workingmen throughout the world.

Upon making this discovery, our little Carmelite nun cried out in a transport of joy: "Oh Jesus, my Love, my vocation is found at last—my *vocation is love!* I have found my place in the bosom of the Church, and this. place, O my God, Thou hast Thyself given to me; in the heart of the Church, my Mother, *I will be Love!* . . . Thus shall I be all things and my dream will be fulfilled."

125

**XXVI.**

### **HEAVENWARD**

NO ONE PREACHES more eloquently than from his bed of suffering or more convincingly than from his deathbed. The last days of Therese's simple, though most meritorious life, together with her edifying death, have given the world more food for thought than the thickest volumes of the most profound philosophers.

Throughout her illness, this servant of delicate frame maintained an unflinching courage. Countless times she attended services and participated in the customary penances, when suffering from vertigo or violent headaches might have excused her from these exercises. "I am still able to walk," she was accustomed to say, "and therefore I should be at my post." Little wonder that soldiers and other men of mighty responsibility have chosen her as their patron. She was faithful to duty—obedient unto death.

In the matter of food, she always accepted what was placed before her. In vain did the Sisters try to discover the dishes which she preferred. Even when her own sister in the flesh, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart (Marie), held the office of procuratrix at Carmel, the Little Flower showed no desire of receiving special attention. "She (the procuratrix) looked after me with a mother's tenderness. To all appearances I was pampered, and yet endless were the mortifications which she imposed upon me by serving me according to her own taste which was entirely different from mine." Her sensitive stomach had its likes and dislikes. Yet she succeeded in concealing her preferences in order that she might become more like unto her Divine Model, her Crucified Savior.

126

Shortly before her death, the little Saint made the following revelation: "All during my religious life the cold has caused me more physical pain than anything else—I have suffered from cold until I almost died of it." Night after night she would lie shivering on her mattress of straw, with two thin blankets to cover her. Her sleep was frequently interrupted by spells of coughing, which often caused her to remain awake most of the night. She did not complain. These sufferings were diamonds for Jesus.

Hemorrhages of a most serious nature took place during the last days of July, so that it was deemed advisable to have her receive the Last Sacraments. Encircled by the members of her community, Therese begged pardon of them all and then received the last anointing. Such joy lighted up her countenance and such devotion characterized her prayers, that the witnesses were moved to tears. It was expected that the Little Flower's soul would be released from its mortal bonds without much effort or struggle. But that would not be entirely in keeping with the Saint's desires.

## 127

She knew that little souls usually go through an agony when the end draws near. If she was to be imitated by little souls, she must also die in the manner that is usual to them. Possibly she had prayed that she might suffer to the end, not only for the sake of Christ and for the good of her soul, but also that her example might be of consolation to all who might witness her last sufferings. God did not disappoint her. He granted her two months of physical torture after she had received the Last Sacraments.

The greatest trial that Therese of the Child Jesus endured during the concluding days of her life, was her inability to receive Holy Communion. During the preceding winter, she had dragged herself from her cell to the chapel under the most trying circumstances to receive the Divine Food. Nothing had helped her more than the partaking of this Bread of the Strong. But now, even that consolation was to be denied her. From August 16 till the day of her death, her vomiting spells were so frequent and so violent that it was impossible for her to receive her Lord in the Holy Eucharist. The intensity of the pain which this privation caused her can, in some way, be ascertained from her words, "But I reflect on the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch: 'I also must be ground by suffering in order to become the wheat of God.'" In other words, Therese compared being deprived of Holy Communion to the torture of being torn apart by lions. Such a comparison could be based only upon her vehement desire to unite herself with her Divine Master in Holy Communion.

## 128

We should err greatly if we were to think that Providence withdrew every trace of consolation from the Little Flower during those last trying days of her mortal career. One day, before she took to her bed, as she was walking in the garden she halted in her steps to observe a little white hen sheltering its chicks under its wing. This spectacle touched the heart of the tender nun and set the fountain of her tears to flowing. "I can not remain here any longer," she replied, "let us go in!" Upon reaching her cell she was still in tears. Looking at one of her companions, she explained: "I was thinking of Our Lord and of the touching comparison He chose in order to bring home to us how tender He is. All my life long He has done that for me—He has completely hidden me under His wing. I can not tell you all that has just stirred my heart; it is indeed well for me that God conceals Himself, only rarely allowing me to see the effects of His Mercy, and, as it were, from 'behind the lattices.' Otherwise I could never survive the sweetness."

On another occasion, an ear of corn was brought to her bedside in the infirmary. After gazing on it, the invalid said to the Mother Prioress: "That ear of corn, dear Mother, is the image of my soul which God has loaded with graces for me and for many others, and it is my earnest desire to bend always beneath the weight of His gifts, acknowledging that all comes from Him."

## 129

God blessed the little sufferer with the consciousness of the mission which she would one day fulfill. Thus we find her giving joyful vent to such prophetic words as the following:

"AFTER MY DEATH I WILL LET FALL A SHOWER OF ROSES," and "I WILL SPEND MY HEAVEN DOING GOOD UPON EARTH."

Other Sisters of her Community frequently reminded her of the Heaven of rest and repose which she would soon enjoy when once her Beloved had called her from this vale of tears. Such sentiments were not entertained by the Little Flower. To her, Heaven would not be an abode of rest or idleness.

To anyone else but Therese, the jibes thrust at her by thoughtless Sisters of her community might have inflicted a deep wound. God had given her the grace to be absolutely indifferent to the opinion of creatures.

One day when the Little Flower was resting in her cell, after an exceptionally painful remedy had been applied to her side, she overheard the following words coming from the kitchen window: "Soeur Therese will not live long, and really I wonder sometimes what our Mother Prioress will find to say about her when she dies."

She will be greatly puzzled, for though the little Sister is very good, she has certainly never done anything worth speaking about."

The infirmarian compassionately turned to Therese and remarked: "If you relied on the opinion of creatures, you would certainly be disillusioned today."

## 130

"The opinion of creatures!" replied the patient, "happily God has given me the grace to be absolutely indifferent to it. Let me tell you something that showed me once and for all how much it is worth. A few days after my clothing I went to my Mother's room. 'Mother,' remarked a lay-sister who happened to be there, 'this novice certainly does you credit. How well she looks! I hope she may long be able to observe the Rule.' I was feeling really pleased at the compliment when another Sister came in, and looking at me, said: 'Poor Soeur Therese, how very tired you look, you quite alarm me. If you continue like this I am afraid you will not be able to keep the Rule very long.' I was only sixteen then, but the incident made such an impression on me, that I never again set store on the variable opinion of creatures."

How far mortals can err from the truth, was shown by the current conviction at Carmel that the Little Flower had not suffered much. On one occasion when one of the Sisters made a remark to that effect, Therese pointed to a glass which contained some medicine of a bright red color. "Do you see that glass?" she asked. "One might suppose that it contained a most delicious draught, whereas in reality it is more bitter than anything I take. Well, it is the image of my life. To others it has been all rose color; they imagine that I have drunk of a most delicious wine, but to me it has been full of bitterness. I say bitterness, yet, after all, my life has not been sad, because I have learned to find joy and sweetness in all that is bitter."

## 131

The gnawing and consuming pangs of disease, the numbing pain produced by the cold and the barbed shafts of criticism leveled at her, were as nothing compared with the storm of temptations against Faith aimed at her by the evil one. "Were it not for this trial," she said in reference to these temptations, "I think I should die of joy at the thought of soon leaving the world." Possibly God permitted Satan to foresee the vast army of souls that would be rescued by the Little Flower down through the centuries. Certainly such a vision was a distasteful sight to him whose business it is to drag souls down to ruin. Consequently, the disturber of souls did all in his power to envelop her in darkness and bring her to despair.

Out of these temptations she emerged victorious. Once after she had thus bitterly been assailed, she cried out in words that must remind the reader of the celebrated words of the twenty-second Psalm: "The Lord is My Shepherd." She must have studied the Psalmist's words carefully to be able to express such sentiments as these: "I have no fear of the last struggle, or of any pain, however great, which my illness may bring. God has always been my help; He has led me by the hand since I was a child and I count on Him now. Even though suffering should reach its furthest limits, I am certain He will never forsake me."

In a letter to one of her "brother missionaries" she wrote, "I count on not being idle in Heaven, for it is my wish to continue to work for the Church and for souls. I ask this grace from God and I am certain He will grant it. So you see that if I am leaving the battlefield, it is not with the selfish desire of taking my repose. It is a long time since suffering became my paradise on earth, and I find it hard to understand how I shall become acclimatized in a land where joy reigns supreme and alone. Jesus must entirely change this soul of mine, otherwise it could not endure eternal bliss."

## 132

The heavenly-minded sufferer found reason to rejoice even in the expensive medicines which were ministered to her, though she knew for a certainty that they could not stay the approach of death. If they were to profit her nothing, why should she consent to take them? Her motive was a very noble one. Like St. Gertrude, she did not want to rob her benefactors who supplied the medicine, of the reward which comes to those who practise charity.

Enough has been said to prove that Therese was ever on the look-out for the bright side of things. Even in death she saw a friend, not a smiting angel, come to tear her loose from all that she held dear, but rather an angel of peace come to usher her to the region of lasting delights. Shortly before her departure from this world, the chaplain asked her if she were resigned to die. Her simple answer was that she needed more resignation to live than to die and that the thought of death brought her nothing but pure joy.

To the surprise of all, the little sufferer lived on into the month of September. On the sixth day of that month, the God of All Consolation sent into her sickroom a visible sign that He was well pleased with her patience in suffering. She had long desired to obtain a relic of Blessed Theophane Venard,\* the French Missionary, who was martyred in Tonkin, China, in the year 1861. Now that coveted treasure was brought to her very bedside. She kissed it repeatedly and refused to part with it.

**\*THEOPHANE VENARD**— Blessed French missionary, born at St-Loup, Diocese of Poitiers, 1829; martyred in Tonkin, February 2, 1861. He studied at the College of Doue-la-Fontaine, Montmorillon, Poitiers, and the Paris Seminary for Foreign Missions which he entered as a sub-deacon. Ordained priest June 5, 1852, he departed for the Far East, September 19. After fifteen months at Hong Kong he arrived at his mission in West Tonkin, where the Christians had recently been tried by a series of persecutions under Minh-menh, a monster of cruelty. Shortly after Father Venard's arrival, a new royal edict was issued against Christians, and bishops and priests were obliged to seek refuge in caves, dense woods and elsewhere. Father Venard, whose Constitution had always been delicate, suffered almost constantly, but continued to exercise his ministry at night, and, more boldly in broad day. On November 30, 1860, he was betrayed and captured. Tried before a mandarin, he refused to apostatize and was sentenced to be beheaded. He remained a captive until February 2, and during this interval lived in a cage, from which he wrote to his family beautiful and consoling letters, joyful in anticipation of his crown. His bishop, Mgr. Retord, wrote of him at this time: "Though in chains, he is as gay as a little bird."

On the way to martyrdom, Father Venard chanted psalms and hymns. To his executioner, who coveted his clothing, and asked what he would give to be killed promptly, he answered: "The longer it lasts the better it will be." His head, after exposure at the top of a pole, was secured by the Christians and is now venerated in Tonkin. The body rests in the crypt at the Missions Etrangères, Paris. Other precious relics are in the hands of the martyr's brother, Canon Eusebius Venard, cure of Assais Deux Sevres, France, who possesses, also, most of the martyr's letters, including those written from the cage. In a letter addressed to his father, Theophane refers thus to his approaching sacrifice: "A slight sabre-cut will separate my head from my body, like the spring flower which the Master of the garden gathers for His pleasure. We are all flowers planted on this earth, which God plucks in His own good time: some a little sooner, some a little later . . . Father and son, may we meet in paradise. I, poor little moth, go first. Adieu." The cause of his Beatification was introduced in Rome in 1879, and he was declared Blessed, May 2, 1909. The Beatification ceremony brought a large delegation from France, including the bishop of Poitiers and the martyr's only surviving brother. Theophane Venard was beatified in company with thirty-three other martyrs, most of whom were natives of Tonkin, Cochin-China, or China.

—The Catholic Encyclopedia.

## 133

The reason for Therese's devotion to this young martyr, was, according to her own explanation, threefold:

- 1) "He is a *little* Saint, and his life was quite ordinary."
- 2) "He had an ardent love of our Immaculate Mother."
- 3) "He likewise had a great love for those at home."

It was her death-bed wish that the life of Theophane Venard might be studied closely by her fellow-sisters and thus his virtues might be sung throughout the world. "His soul and mine," she said, "resemble each other, and his words reecho my thoughts."

## 134

As a parting gift to the members of her community, the Little Flower had copied some of the priest-martyr's last words to his beloved relatives at home. A glance through these passages will reveal a pleasing parallel between the philosophy of the martyred missionary and that of our Saint of Lisieux:

"Nothing on earth can make me happy, for the desires of my heart are too vast, and nothing of what the world calls happiness can satisfy them. Time for me will soon be no more; and my thoughts are fixed on Eternity, and my heart is full of peace, like a tranquil lake or a cloudless sky. Thirsting for the waters of Life Eternal, I leave the world without regret. Yet a little while and my soul will have quitted this earth, will have finished her exile, will have ended her combat. Heaven is won. I am about to enter the abode of the Blessed—to see what eye hath never seen, to hear what ear hath neverheard, to enjoy those things which the heart of man hath not conceived.

## 135

"I have reached the hour so coveted by us all. It is indeed true that God chooses the little ones to confound the great ones of the world, and I do not rely on my own strength but upon Him Who, on the Cross, vanquished the powers of hell. I am a spring flower which the Divine Master gathers for His pleasure. We are all flowers, planted upon earth, and God will gather us in His own good time—some sooner, some later. . . . I, a little flower that has lived but one day, am the first to be taken! But we shall meet again in Paradise, where we shall enjoy unending bliss."

Therese faced her last agony with all the calm and resignation which characterized her martyred friend, Theophane Venard. Until two days before her death, she would not permit anyone to remain with her through the night. In life she had sought to imitate her Savior; in death she wished to suffer like Him—alone. Only in compliance with the wish of her superiors would she permit the infirmarian to look into her cell from time to time, during those long and painful nights that preceded her departure from this world.

From September 25 until the end, the Little Flower was so weak that she could no longer make a move unaided. The least sound tormented her. She was so consumed by

fever and so exhausted by her battle to gain breath, that she could not speak a word without sensing severe pain. This condition continued until September 29, when the death rattle in her throat seemed to announce that the end was near. The doctor, making his usual visit, assured the Prioress that the patient would not see the dawn of another day. His prediction proved inaccurate. One more painful night, and one more day, almost dark as night, stood between her and Heaven. When Thursday, September 30, dawned, the pain-scorched eyes of the sufferer fell for a moment upon a miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin which was facing her bed. Recalling the night of agony through which she had just passed, the Saint exclaimed: "Oh! I have prayed to the Blessed Lady so fervently, but it is pure agony without any measure of consolation."

## 136

The long hours of her last day on earth were punctuated by frequent ejaculations of resignation to the Will of God, and numerous petitions to her fellow-sisters that they support her by their prayers in her last agony.

In the middle of the afternoon when she was so weak that she could scarcely speak, she placed her arms in the form of a cross, bespeaking thereby that she was ready to suffer the keenest possible pangs that death might bring.

It would seem that each new act of resignation coming from her generous heart drew down upon her some new deluge of trials, some cruel rain of suffering. Even she was surprised at her capacity for suffering. "I would never have believed," she said, "that it was possible to suffer so much, never, never! I can not explain it except by the ardent desire I have of saving souls."

## 137

At five o'clock a decided and sudden change came over the countenance of the Little Flower. Her sister, Mere Agnes de Jesus, who was alone with her, took this as an infallible sign that death was imminent. Accordingly, she called the members of the community to the infirmary to witness the death of a Saint. For each of them, Therese, true to her name, "Therese of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face," had a sweet smile, even for those who had been her severest critics during her years in the cloister. Then, as if to indicate whence she drew her strength and consolation, she turned her head towards her crucifix and became lost in contemplating her Dying Savior.

Two hours of writhing and of struggling followed. Her entire body quaked with pain. The sweat of death became so copious that the bed-covering and the mattress were saturated. The dying nun's lips were parched by the burning fever which was consuming her entire frame. Sister Genevieve (Celine), hastened to fetch a small particle of ice to refresh the lips of the Little Flower. As she applied the cooling cube to those saintly lips, must she not have recalled the beautiful words of Our Lord: "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, Amen, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Sister Genevieve needed not to wait until eternity to be rewarded for this last attention to her dying sister. The look of infinite tenderness and the smile of grateful appreciation on the face of the Little Flower were recompense for the little service rendered.

## 138

At seven o'clock in the evening, the condition of Therese had not improved notably, nor had it become more grave. The Mother Prioress, thinking that the patient would live at least two more hours, dismissed the community. This gesture seemed to be of some concern to the dying nun. "Has the agony not yet come, Mother?" she asked. "Am I not going to die?"

"Yes," answered the Superior, "this is the agony; but the good God wishes perhaps to prolong it for a few hours. . . ." Nothing remained for the submissive soul of the Saint, but to add her "fiat" to the designs of God in her regard. She did so tersely, though beautifully, with the words: "Well, then, let it be so. Oh, I would not wish to suffer less!" Thereupon, she fastened her gaze upon her crucifix and with failing voice uttered her dying words: "Oh! I LOVE HIM! . . . MY GOD, I LOVE . . . THEE . . . " The Little Flower's soul, purified by suffering and laden with diamonds of sacrifice, winged its happy way to a blissful eternity.

Heaven rejoiced that night; a million angels celebrated the homecoming of a little Saint who had taught the world to travel the Little Way to happiness. Four cherubs furnished the music for her reception—Marie Helene, Marie Melanie Therese, Marie-Joseph-Louis, and Marie-Joseph-Jean-Baptiste, her sisters and brothers who had preceded her to Heaven. Two tender parents, Louis and Zelig Martin, pressed their Little Flower to their saintly hearts and thanked God for having kept it free from harm, though not from suffering.

## 139

The precious body of the "little Queen" was laid out near the grille of the choir so that the public could profit by one last look at Therese of the Holy Face. Upon her

head rested naturally a crown of white roses. In her hand was placed a palm-branch, which must have sweetly recalled to her companion sisters the Saint's often repeated wish: "I desire at all costs to win the palm of St. Agnes; if it cannot be mine through the shedding of blood, it must be mine through love." This impressive spectacle drew large crowds to the monastery to pray before the remains of the Little Flower and to have religious articles touched to her body, that thus they might have some precious keepsakes of her whom they had already canonized in their hearts.

In accordance with the expressed wish of the Saint, who had a special liking for flowers during her life, there were no flowers about her casket. She preferred that the missions should profit by her death. On one occasion she had said: "You must not let people give wreaths to place around my coffin, as was the case with our good Mother Genevieve. But ask them to use the money in rescuing poor little negroes from slavery. Tell them they will please me by so doing."

## 140

Even before her remains were lowered into their grave, Therese's soul began its mission of doing good upon earth. One of the lay-sisters who had been a source of continual annoyance to the Little Flower all during the latter's life in the cloister, was now suffering seriously from cerebral anaemia. It happened that this nun was most deeply impressed by Therese's heroic suffering and edifying death. Possibly she had used a saint as a target for her ugly criticism. She was stricken with compunction and overwhelmed with devotion to the deceased Little Flower. She had heard of the "shower of roses" which the young nun had promised to scatter upon this needy world. Why could not she, though a former persecutor of the Saint, be the first to receive one of these petals? Filled with these sentiments, she approached the casket containing the body of Therese, kissed the Saint's feet and leaned her head for some minutes upon them. Behold the first cure wrought by the Flower of Lisieux! The lay-sister was suddenly and completely freed from the dreaded disease which had caused her so much discomfiture and worry. This miracle was the first "rose" of that plentiful shower, which the little Saint had promised to send down upon this world.

The funeral of the Little Flower took place on October 4. It happened quickly and without ostentation, just as Therese would have desired. Some few days later, a simple wooden cross was erected at the head of her grave. Upon it were carved her name, Soeur Therese de l'Enfant Jesus and the words of her promise: "**JE VEUX PASSER MON CIEL A FAIRE DU BIEN SUR LA TERRE.**"—"I shall spend my Heaven doing good upon earth."



*Little St. Therese in her glory.*

141

**XXVII.**

**SUNLIGHT FOR ALL**

PROPHETIC words are those which the Little Flower wrote to her godmother, Marie, in her celebrated canticle of love: "I am a child of Holy Church. I do not ask for riches or glory, not even for the glory of Heaven—that belongs by right to my brothers, the

*Angels and Saints. My own glory will be the reflection of the radiance that streams from the brow of my Mother, the Church."*

Childlike soul that she was, she little knew the honor that was in store for her. Yes, her Divine Spouse wanted her to be the reflector of His virtues, the mirror of the perfections of His Church. But His designs did not end there. He destined her to be a tutor, a director, a leader, a guide for the whole human race.

Scarcely had her body been consigned to its grave, when her Autobiography, the History of a Soul, made its way into every corner of the globe. From 1898 to 1925, approximately 410,000 copies of the complete edition were distributed throughout the world. In addition to these, two million copies of the abridged Life of the Little Flower went into an almost unprecedented circulation. During the same interval more than 30,000,000 pictures of the Saint were demanded by her devotees scattered over the face of the earth.

## 142

How shall we account for this wave of enthusiasm for a little tubercular nun, whose life within the convent walls was characterized by nothing extraordinary? Is it not the very simplicity of her little way of confidence and self-abandonment? "Without going beyond the common order of things," says Pope Pius XI, "she followed out and fulfilled her vocation with such alacrity, generosity and constancy that she reached an heroic degree of virtue." The same venerable Pontiff has declared that Therese's way is "not merely a possible, but an easy way for every soul."

Her Autobiography, more than anything else, was the blessed instrument whereby millions of souls in every walk of life became acquainted with the Flower of Lisieux. In its pages the sick found the secret of turning their pains to precious pearls with which to purchase the kingdom of Heaven. From its paragraphs, business men and women, crushed beneath the weight of unavoidable responsibilities, and laborers dragging out their lives in work-shops and in factories, learned the lesson of sanctifying the routine of their existence. By the Little Flower's lucid explanations of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, men of property were moved to be more considerate to their employees. Monsignor Lavielle tells of a rich factory-owner in Liverpool, who was completely transformed by reading the life of Therese. This employer of more than a hundred workers of both sexes acknowledged that before he came to know of St. Therese de l'Enfant Jesus, he never gave a thought to ameliorating the condition of his employees. He read the *Histoire d'une Ame*, and became a new man. Not content with distributing copies to each of the workers, and having the picture of the Saint put up in his work-shops, he gave an annual holiday of

eight days to everyone in his employment during which they received their usual wages. He organized little social gatherings to bring some rays of joy into their dull and monotonous lives; he sent many of them to make retreats, "for," said he, "it is eternal happiness above all, which I wish to procure for these poor people." He advanced with steady strides in the "little way;" he had learned the lesson of love.

## 143

It would require a ponderous volume to record the numerous conversions and the thousands of vocations which owe their origin to the reading of the life of the Little Flower. Bishops laboring in remote corners of the globe were so fascinated by the study of her life, that they sent to Lisieux for a few particles of earth from her grave. In one instance, while one of these prelates was preaching to an obstinate band of Esquimaux, he strewed some of these particles over the heads of his hearers. Behold! The entire tribe, hitherto unmovable, approached him after his sermon and begged to be baptized.

In the matter of vocations, we are informed that Carmel of Lisieux could by no means accommodate the large number of postulants who felt themselves drawn to the cloister after reading the Saint's account of her life. Young ladies from all parts of the world sought admission to the enclosure which had been hallowed by the footsteps of little Therese.

## 144

Devotion to the Little Flower was given an added impetus in the millions of miracles wrought through her intercession in every part of the known world. It was God's way of setting His royal seal upon the doings and the sayings of a saint. As in life her prayers had gone out to every class of mortals, so too, after death her miracles were worked in behalf of every class. Now it was the cure of a stricken nun in the quiet of the cloister. Again it was the miraculous protection from death of a soldier on the front line of battle. At another time, it was the instantaneous recovery of a priest on the point of death. On numerous occasions, she showed her predilection for little ones, by straightening the limbs of children, correcting their eyesight, healing them of the most malignant diseases. No one was forgotten in her mission of mercy.

## 145

### **XXVIII.**

### **EXALTED!**

THE ELOQUENCE of the miracles wrought by the "little Queen" soon prevailed upon ecclesiastical authorities to begin the Cause of her Beatification. Let it here be understood that the Church has no power to "make saints." A soul reaches the heights of sanctity by cooperating with the graces that are vouchsafed it by Almighty God; a soul becomes a saint by repeated acts of self-denial, by continued acts of love, by constant abandonment of one's own will to the will of God.

In giving a servant of God the honors of Beatification, the Church simply gives permission to venerate the "blessed one" (beatus) locally or within a certain territory. In canonizing one of God's chosen souls, the Church officially commends the honor of that saint to the entire world.\*

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\*Monsignor P. E. Hallett is the author of an admirable and thorough pamphlet on the Canonization of Saints. This treatise was published by the Catholic Truth Society, London, 1935.

## 146

The Cause of the Beatification of the Little Flower was undertaken in the year 1909, by the Very Reverend Father Rodrigo of St. Francis of Paula. In accordance with custom, the relics of the little Saint had to be identified and measures had to be taken for their safe custody. This required that her grave be opened and its precious contents examined. On the way to the cemetery, many curious souls expressed the wonder whether or not the flesh of the "little Queen" would be found intact as had been the case with many other saints, even decades after interment. There was one nun who could have answered this question. On the night before the exhumation ceremonies, Therese had appeared to Mother Carmela, Prioress of the Carmelite Convent at Gallipoli, in Italy, and had declared: "They will find only my bones." That is what ordinarily happens when graves are opened, nothing but bones remain. The Little Flower sought no privileges in life. Neither did she desire that her remains be spared the humiliation of decay. The contents of her grave were placed in a cemented vault, which was conveniently placed near the center of the community plot.

Ten years later there was a second opening of the grave. Two medical experts identified the bones which were then laid in a chest of carved oak, which in turn was enclosed in a rosewood case lined with lead.

From this time on, the Cause of the Little Flower's Beatification proceeded with almost unprecedented rapidity, though with painstaking thoroughness. Inasmuch as

many of the witnesses had walked and talked and lived with the young Carmelite nun, only two miracles were required to permit her name to be entered upon the list of the beatified. Bundles of records of miraculous cures were at hand. So numerous were the marvelous reports that flowed into Lisieux, that authorities there found difficulty in recording them. Out of all this abundant "shower of roses," only two miracles were selected to promote the Cause of Therese's Beatification.

## 147

The first of these wonders was worked by the Little Flower in the year 1906, in behalf of a young man, Charles Anne, studying for the priesthood at the Seminary of Bayeux, France. The story of his cure is extremely touching.

Charles was brought to the very brink of the grave by that relentless and consuming disease of tuberculosis. Medical examination revealed that the malady had reached its most advanced stage. Large cavities were discovered in either lung. A novena made by his friends to Our Lady of Lourdes, through the intercession of the Little Flower, was without avail. The invalid had always been a staunch admirer and a zealous devotee of the wonder-worker of Lisieux. He would not relinquish his hope in her, who had offered up her whole life for the sake of priests and priestly vocations. With all the fervor of his soul, he began a novena to the recently deceased Carmelite, reminding her of her promise to spend her Heaven in doing good upon earth. Therese could not resist his powerful pleadings. One day, after a violent hemorrhage which announced to bystanders the advent of death, the seminarian cried out to his patroness: "I did not come here to die! I came to work for God! You must cure me!" Then, utterly exhausted and clutching a relic of the Saint in his hands, he fell asleep. During that sleep, Therese worked her miracle! When Charles Anne awoke, he was completely cured— marvelous reward for his unbounded trust in the power of the Little Flower.

## 148

Not less remarkable was the second cure selected for the Cause of our heroine's Beatification. Sister Louise of St. Germain, one of the Daughters of the Cross at Ustarritz in the south of France, had been terribly tortured ever since her novitiate (1911-12) by a malignant ulcer in her stomach. In the year 1915, it was deemed advisable to administer to her the Last Sacraments. Like Charles Anne, she had recourse to the Little Flower to whom she had a tender devotion. Periods of improvement were followed by periods of decline. In September, 1916, Sister Louise began a second novena to St. Therese. One night (September 10) the Saint appeared to her and promised to cure her, provided she would only be generous with God. On the

following morning, the invalid's companion sisters found rose petals of various colors strewn about the bed of the sufferer. Whence they had come was a mystery. Equally unaccountable was the serious relapse which Sister Louise experienced immediately after the termination of the novena. But Therese had not abandoned her devoted protege. When the stricken nun awoke on the morning of September 25, she was completely cured. The evening of that day found her participating in the regular routine of the convent.

After both these miracles were duly scrutinized and discussed by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, gave them his approval on the eleventh day of February, 1923. On March 19, the same Pontiff published the decree known as the "De Tuto," which formally authorized the Beatification of the Little Flower.

## 149

It was a triumphal procession which wended its way nine days later from the cemetery gate to the chapel door of Carmel. The precious relics of our "little Queen" were transferred from the privileged vault which had enclosed them, to the magnificent reliquary prepared for them in the convent chapel. This event took place on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25. It was a day of glad tidings to the nuns within that favored cloister which had given a saint to the world.

Only four days intervened between the transfer of Therese's remains and the Beatification. April 29, 1923, was a day of joy for the entire world, a day of great moment for Pope Pius XI; for on that day, His Holiness had the pleasure and the privilege of adding the name of Therese of the Child Jesus to the list of the Blessed.

Fresh showers of miracles fell upon the world on the day of the Little Flower's Beatification. Within twenty-four hours from the moment when she received the title "beata," thirty remarkable favors were recorded. This overwhelming flood of graces together with the thousands of petitions coming from priests and people throughout the world, moved the Holy Father to promote at once the Cause of Therese's Canonization.

Again two new miracles were selected and examined by the Congregation of Rites.

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The first was the cure of Maria Pellemans of Brussels, Belgium. Since October of 1919, she had been a victim of pulmonary tuberculosis, followed by gastritis and

intestinal tuberculosis. Her devotion to the Blessed Mother prompted her to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes in August, 1920. The Lady of the Grotto refused to cure her, reserving that privilege to the "Little One" of Lisieux. In March of 1923, the sufferer accompanied a band of pilgrims to the tomb of the Little Flower. While kneeling before the remains of the recently beatified Saint, Maria Pellemans was suddenly and completely restored to health.

The second miracle used to promote the Cause of Therese's Canonization was wrought in favor of Gabriella Trimusi, a nun of the Convent of the Poor Daughters of the Sacred Heart in Parma, Italy. Gabriella's trouble began with a lesion at the knee-joint, caused by breaking firewood across her knee. Gout of the knee and tuberculosis of the vertebrae, accompanied by curvature of the spine, combined to reduce the nun to an almost hopeless condition. The best doctors were employed and the best possible means were used to restore her to health. All remedies failing, Gabriella was recommended to take part in a public novena in honor of the Little Flower. At the close of the nine days of prayer (June, 1923), she took off the iron jacket which she had worn for the support of her spine and declared herself free from pain. The curvature of the spine had disappeared and Gabriella was perfectly cured.

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The usual Sessions were held and both miracles received the approval of the Holy Father. His Holiness triumphantly announced that he would officiate at the Little Flower's Canonization on Sunday, May 17, 1925. It was to be the first event of its kind to take place within his pontificate and he would take every measure to make it the most impressive ceremony in the history of his career.

Let us hear the story of little Therese's Canonization from the lips of a beloved Bishop,\* who was an eyewitness to the scene.

"I never witnessed such a magnificent spectacle as when the Holy Father, surrounded by hundreds of bishops and dignitaries, hundreds of guards in brilliant medieval uniforms, and a vast concourse of 80,000 people, solemnly declared the humble nun a saint of God. The scene at the Consecration of the Mass was sublime beyond description. In Jerusalem of old, at the sound of a trumpet, 100,000 Israelites in the streets or on the roofs of their houses, all turned toward the temple and fell on their knees. That scene was dwarfed by the grand spectacle in St. Peter's. Thousands of soldiers who stood till then, fell on their knees, a hush came over the vast throng, and then Christ descended on the altar, which became another Bethlehem, while high up in the dome a trumpet sounded and thousands outside joined with those in the

basilica in an act of adoration. No court in the world could ever evoke such splendor and enthusiasm.

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•Most Reverend Michael James Gallagher. D.D. Bishop of Detroit, July 18, 1918 to January 20, 1937.

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"As I witnessed this grandeur of the Catholic liturgy, I could not repress the thought that this magnificent demonstration was inspired by a simple girl who died at an age less than thirty years previously and was now raised to the honors of the altar."

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**XXIX.**

### **THE GUIDING STAR**

IN MAY 17, 1925, His Holiness, Pope Pius XI granted an audience to Cardinal Dougherty, Archbishop of Philadelphia, who had crossed the sea to participate in the Canonization of the Little Flower. In the course of that interview, the head of Christendom stated that it was the supreme moment of his life. He congratulated the American prelate on having undertaken such a long voyage to share in the honor of the Saint of Lisieux. "In America," remarked the Pope, "you call her the Little Flower, but I call her my guiding-star."

With unbounded joy did the Holy Father refer to St. Therese as the very first of those privileged souls whom he declared blessed (beata). With equal exultation did he point to her as the very first whom he placed on the list of canonized saints (canonizata). However, his admiration for this little Saint rested upon deeper foundations than these two coincidences. His devotion to her was grounded upon the unfailing help which she had rendered him on numerous occasions. To the Bishops who visited him, the aged Pontiff always gave this timely piece of advice: "In your difficulties, go to St. Therese of the Child Jesus. I invoke her incessantly and she refuses me nothing."

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Pius XI's deep regard for the Little Flower expressed itself more eloquently in deeds than in words. To her, he confided the most perplexing problems of his

Pontificate, such as the solution of the Roman Question and the quieting of the religious disturbances in Mexico and Russia. He did not hesitate to place the new Collegium Romanum in Rome under her patronage. In the year 1927 (December 14), to the joy of the entire world, he proclaimed St. Therese, Universal Patron of the Missions of the Church. What a day of rejoicing this must have been for Louis and Zelig Martin, who had so frequently petitioned Almighty God to send them a "little missionary"!

Again, when the cornerstone of the College of the Propagation of the Faith in Rome was brought to the Pope for his blessing, he requested that it be carried into the Vatican Gardens, where he blessed it at his own private Shrine to St. Therese. It was not an unusual sight to find the aged Vicar of Christ kneeling in profound prayer before the Little Flower's statue, which he had installed in this Shrine with his own hands. When the inclemency of the weather detained him from his customary stroll through the Vatican Gardens, he spent more than a little portion of his free time in praying before her portrait and her relic which adorned the desk in his study.

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Happy shall we be if we imitate the example of this venerable Pontiff. The success which he enjoyed shall be ours if we only call upon the Little Flower to lead us along her Little Way. It is a path in which we all can follow, because it is not too steep and its steps are not too far apart. It is a direct route that takes us through the valleys of humility and over rough rocks of trial. It is the simple, normal, beaten track that brings us through the midst of commonplace cares. It knows no detours around the fields of labor or the hills of suffering. Two unpretentious signs mark out its course: "Confidence!" and "Love!" The tiniest soul that sets out upon this road and pursues it faithfully under the guidance of little Therese, will reach the journey's end laden with the precious pearls of prayer and the costly diamonds of sacrifice which it has gathered all along the way.

*THE END*