

October 1 Feast of Saint Thérèse

Saint with a Secret

by Sister Patricia Edward, FSP

Have you ever heard of St. Thérèse or her secret? Do you know why so many people have picked her to be their best saint friend? Let's try to find out....

Thérèse's Story

Thérèse Martin was born in the town of Alençon, in France, on January 2, 1873. She was the youngest of five girls. While she was still very little, her mom got cancer. In those days, they didn't have all the medicines and special treatments we have today. The doctors tried their best to help, but Mrs. Martin only got worse. She died when Thérèse was only four years old.

That's when Thérèse's dad decided it would be best to move to Lisieux, another town, where some of their relatives lived. There was a Carmelite monastery there. A monastery is a convent for sisters who have the special work of praying for the whole world. When Thérèse was ten years old, one of her older sisters, Pauline, entered the Carmelite monastery in Lisieux. That was really hard for Thérèse. Pauline had been her "second" mother, taking care of her and teaching her and doing all the kinds of things your mother does for you. Thérèse missed Pauline so much that she became very sick. Even though Thérèse was sick for a whole month, none of the doctors could figure out what was wrong with her. Mr. Martin and Thérèse's four sisters begged God to help her. Then one day the statue of the Blessed Mother in Thérèse's room smiled at her and she was completely cured!

Another time, Thérèse heard about a man who had committed three murders and wasn't even sorry. She decided to pray and offer little sacrifices for him (like giving up things she liked or doing things she didn't like so much). She asked God to change the man's heart. Right before he died, the man asked for a crucifix and kissed the figure of Jesus. Thérèse was so happy! She knew that the man had told God he was sorry.

Thérèse loved Jesus very much. She wanted to give her whole life to him. She wanted to join the Carmelites so she could spend every day working and praying for people who didn't know or love God. But there was one problem. She was too young. So she prayed and waited and waited and prayed. Finally, when she was fifteen, she was allowed to enter the monastery.

What did Thérèse do in the monastery? Nothing special. But she did have a secret: LOVE. One time, Thérèse said, "God doesn't want us to do this or that, he wants us to love him." So Thérèse tried to love. She tried to be kind and patient with everyone, and that wasn't always easy. Back then, the sisters used to wash all their clothes by hand. (Washing machines hadn't been invented yet!) One sister always splashed dirty water right in Thérèse's face. But Thérèse never got mad at her. Thérèse also offered to help an elderly sister who was grouchy and complained a lot because she didn't feel well. Thérèse tried to treat her just as she would treat Jesus. Thérèse knew that when we love others we are also loving Jesus. To love made Thérèse very happy.

Thérèse only lived as a nun for nine years. She got a disease called tuberculosis which made her suffer very much. There was no cure for this disease in those days. The doctor could do very little to help her. Thérèse died when she was only twenty-four years old. But before she died, she promised that she would not give up her secret. She promised to keep on loving and helping people from heaven. Before she died, Thérèse said, "I will spend my heaven doing good on earth." And she meant it! All over the world people who have asked St. Thérèse to pray to God for them have received answers to their prayers.

Thérèse's Secret

Thérèse discovered a "little way" for everyone to reach God: Thérèse wanted to be a saint. She knew God would help her. She trusted God and she loved him with all her heart. Then she was good to everyone around her, even in just little ways. Thérèse's "little way" is something you can do too. It's a sure way to become a saint!

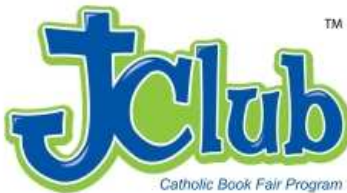
A Prayer You Can Say

O little Thérèse of the Child Jesus,
please pick for me a rose
from the heavenly gardens and
send it to me as a message of love.

O Little Flower of Jesus,
ask God today to grant the favors I now place
with confidence in your hands....

(tell Thérèse about a special need you have)

St. Thérèse, help me to always believe as you did,
in God's great love for me,
so that I might imitate your "little way" each day.
Amen.



Copyright © 2016 Daughters of St. Paul. All Rights Reserved.

