

# St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus

Virgin and Doctor of the Church



FEAST DAY  
— OCTOBER 1

JAN. 2, 1873 –  
SEPT. 30, 1897

*(St. Thérèse of Lisieux, “the Little Flower”)*


**S**t. Thérèse was the youngest of nine children. Four died at a young age, and the remaining five girls, including Thérèse, would all enter religious life. In her short life, Thérèse endured great suffering and gave great love.

At just four years old, Thérèse’s mother died, a hard blow for the little Thérèse. She suffered greatly from the loss and carried this weight into her early teenage years. Still, she was supported by the love and care of her father and sisters. She was taught by her elder sisters, Marie and Pauline, until age eight. Then she went to a Benedictine school; while she excelled at school, students treated her badly and caused her great sorrow. Her sister Céline supported her through this time. At age ten, her sister Pauline, who had acted as her second mother, left for the convent, and loss again hit Thérèse. She experienced a serious illness with physical and emotional symptoms that doctors could not treat. After months

of prayer by her and her family, Thérèse was miraculously cured. She attributed the cure to Our Lady of Victories.

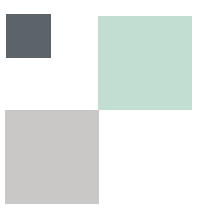
**Everything changed for Thérèse** one Christmas Eve in 1886. Nearly 14 years old, she had a profound conversion. In a single moment of grace, she received the strength to set aside her past sorrow and turn her energy outward toward loving others. This freedom, joy, and strength of soul prepared her for the next stage of her life. She soon actively sought to join the Carmelite order, following in her sisters’ footsteps. On a trip to Italy—speaking out of turn—she asked the pope for permission to enter religious life early. At age 15, she entered a cloistered Carmelite convent in Lisieux, Normandy, and took the name Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.

**At the convent in Lisieux**, she grew in her “little way” of holiness—seeking perfection in the ordinary things of life with a simple but total trust in God. Poor health made her dream of missionary work impossible, but the “Little



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Flower” soon realized that her true vocation was to love. She made small daily sacrifices for souls and sought to show love to her religious sisters by simple gestures. Thérèse’s personal spirituality was preserved in her autobiography, which a convent superior had directed her to write. Summing up much of her spirituality, she wrote, “What matters in life is not great deeds but great love.”

**In 1896, Thérèse contracted tuberculosis and died the following year at age 24.** The manuscript of her life story, *The Story of a Soul*, was published after her death and prompted popular devotion. She was canonized in 1925 and declared the patron saint of missions two years later. In art she is portrayed in her Carmelite habit with roses and a crucifix. St. John Paul II later declared St. Thérèse a Doctor of the Church.

