

## St Thérèse of Lisieux

### Saint Thérèse of Lisieux,

You have become a role model for so many people, because you lived your life trusting completely in the endless love of God. You give us a way of hope and encouragement, because in your life you showed that we do not have to do extraordinary things in order to be disciples of Jesus. As children of our loving Father, we are called to love God and love our neighbour – as you did every day, in your life of prayer and in your service to all who needed you.

Give us the strength and generosity to follow your “little way” of love, trust and gratitude, and in this way, to build your kingdom on earth.  
*Our Father...*

### A thought to take away

Thérèse’s example reminds us that it’s not always the actions which are loudest and most noticed that are the most important, or that make the most difference. It’s the love which guides my actions that matters, not whether I’m noticed or “look good”.

### An action to complete

- During Little Way Week spend some time quietly sitting in the company of God.
- Spend some time reflecting on the gospel passage and on 1 Corinthians 13:1-8
- Now put your thoughts and reflections into action, and LIVE the “little way” of kindness, joy, generosity and love, in your “ordinary” everyday life, work and play

*Saint Thérèse of Lisieux  
Pray for us*



### Feast Day

1 October

### Birthplace

Alençon, France

### Born

2 January, 1873

### Died

30 September 1897

### Canonised

in 1925 by Pope Pius IX.  
Declared a Doctor of the Church (one of only three women at that time) by Pope John Paul II on 19 October 1997

### Patron saint of

France, missionaries and people living with HIV and AIDS



*...the one who becomes as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom... ”*

As we read the scripture for the feast of St Thérèse, we can clearly see that she lived her whole life in the spirit of the gospel.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus says that “the one who becomes as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom”.

Think of all the positive qualities of a child... trust, openness, kindness, a sense of wonder, gratitude, joy, a loving heart.

- Do I possess these attributes, or have I “left them behind” as unimportant??
- How can I bring joy, love and kindness into the lives of others?
- Am I grateful?

## The life of St Thérèse of Lisieux

**T**hérèse Martin was born in 1873 to Louis and Zélie Martin, a devoutly religious couple. Out of nine children, five survived, and they all became Carmelite sisters. When Thérèse's mother died in 1877, the family moved to Lisieux.

When Thérèse was nine, her older sister, Pauline, who had become a second mother to Thérèse, entered the Carmelite convent at Lisieux.

As a child, Thérèse suffered from ill health. As she was also the youngest child, she was quite spoilt.

**Nevertheless, at the age of 13 Thérèse decided that she was going to try to always put herself last, with God and other people coming first.**

Throughout her life, Thérèse never deviated from this promise. She had an early, strong sense of her religious vocation and after personally seeking permission from Pope Leo XIII because she was so young, she entered a Carmelite monastery at the age of 15.

Thérèse was a dedicated and committed Carmelite, working hard in the community, devoting herself to prayer and study of Scripture, especially the gospels. This inspired her "little way" – a simple and practical spirituality, within reach of everyone, based on living the gospel in everyday life and actions. It is a challenge to witness to gospel values not in dramatic ways, but simply in our everyday circumstances.

**Thérèse understood the message of the gospel as a call to love, and in her writing she states, "My vocation is love... in the heart of the Church".**

Her message is clear – Christian discipleship involves reaching out in love and behaving with love towards all people and in every situation. She saw her vocation of love as all-inclusive and part of everyday Christian living.

Thérèse's influence continues to grow, as her life gives us an example of how to live a life rooted in the gospel. Jesus shows us how we should behave towards others, and that everyone, no matter who, is important as a child of God. This reaching out to all has been recognised by the Church, making Thérèse – the enclosed Carmelite who never left her monastery – the patron of those living with HIV and AIDS, the patron of missionaries and priests, and a Doctor of the Church.

Thérèse died from tuberculosis at the age of 24. Her final words, like her "little way", were simple and profound: "My God, I love you."

## CAFOD's work in Afghanistan

**CAFOD has been supporting communities in Afghanistan since the late 1980s. CAFOD funds peace groups to improve relations between men and women, and to educate women about their basic rights, which helps them gain greater respect from their male relatives. Our partners also help women earn money for their families.**



At its heart, St Thérèse's "little way" encourages us to show acts of love to others in small ways.

In Afghanistan, Farzaneh\*, 18, is able to encourage other young women in her village, through a peace building project supported by CAFOD.

Farzaneh attended some peace workshops run by local experts, then managed to persuade her family to let her work in her community. She explains that "being a member of the young generation, I always wanted to work for my community and solve problems starting from my own family. When I heard about the peace workshops, I was keen to participate and increase my knowledge."

Farzaneh managed to persuade her family to let her participate in these workshops, which increased her confidence and her knowledge of her rights. She learned about some of the issues facing women in her community, including the basic right of every person to receive education.

Following the workshops, Farzaneh began working as part of an enterprise group, where she now supports others.

She is also able to use her tailoring and handicraft skills to increase her income. "I can help my family financially now and go ahead to help my community in the future. I have been encouraging other women to be aware of their rights and earn money using their skills too."

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

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