

SAINT OF THE MONTH



Saint Thérèse of Lisieux Patron of the Missions



Heaven's Heroes: growing in faith with a little help from the saints

This month, we are inspired by

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

Feast Day

October 1

Canonized

May 17, 1925

Catholics are encouraged to pray to the saints for strength and guidance.

Reading about the lives of saints can serve as inspiration to us for our daily lives. May the following lesson, follow-up questions, prayer, and activities bring us closer to Jesus and help us to grow as missionary disciples.

Goals of the Lesson:

- To inspire children to have a love for saints
- To help students understand that we are all called to holiness
- To teach children to turn to saints in prayer

Materials Needed:

- This lesson plan
- A map or globe
- Paper, crayons, colored pencils, or markers for flower craft

It may be helpful to remind students that a saint is a person who lived their lives in a way that honored Jesus' teaching and by doing so, taught others about Him. Also, it is important for them to know that it is not only those whom the Church has proclaimed a saint who are in Heaven. The official recognition simply allows us to venerate them. Finally, this saint was young - just like them!

In the Classroom

Prepare students to listen to Saint Thérèse's story by inviting them to remember that she was holy because she lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus. Read, or have read as much, or as little, of the story as you deem appropriate for children of your grade level. Though much has been written about her, this lesson focuses on Thérèse's call to be a missionary.

Use the suggested follow-up questions to begin or enhance your discussions about Saint Thérèse. The hands-on activities are meant to draw students into a closer understanding of the charism of the saint we call "The Little Flower."



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Saint Thérèse of Lisieux was born Marie Françoise Martin in Alençon, France in 1873, and was the youngest of nine children. Only Marie Françoise and four sisters lived past infancy. Her father was a watchmaker. Her mother, who was a lace maker, died of breast cancer when Marie Françoise was five. The family then moved to Lisieux, where she was raised by her elder sisters and an aunt.

Two of her sisters went on to become Carmelite nuns. Marie Françoise wanted to become a nun, too, but was refused because of her youth. She appealed to the Pope at a General Audience in Rome. He blessed the bold girl kneeling at his feet and assured her that if it was God's will, it would happen.

After she returned home, the local bishop gave his permission — Marie Françoise made her vows in 1890 and was given a new name as a sign of her new life: Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Although periods of illness followed, Thérèse lived a spirit of patience and prayer. She was asked to write the story of her childhood and, later, of her life in the convent.

Throughout her Carmelite life, Thérèse wanted to be a missionary. She hoped to be sent to Vietnam, where there were two Carmelite monasteries that were started by Sisters from Lisieux.

The Prioress (*head Sister*) in Lisieux recognized Thérèse's missionary vocation but hesitated to send Thérèse's to the missions because of her poor health.

Thérèse found a way to be a missionary right where she was: she wrote letters! A young man studying to be a priest (*a seminarian*) wrote the Prioress and asked that a sister devote herself to helping him through her prayers and sacrifices.

A year later, another seminarian asked that a sister be chosen to pray for him and his future mission. The prioress asked Thérèse to take charge of the spiritual interests of these future missionaries. One of them went to China and the the African country now called Malawi.

Thérèse prayed, sacrificed, and offered her hardships to God for the missions. She wrote in a poem, "In God's eyes there is no distance. For God, the whole universe is one speck. My weak love, my little sufferings, blessed by God, make God loved far and wide."

As her death approached, Thérèse asked that instead of purchasing flowers after her death, the money should be contributed to the missions to baptize and support little girls who were found abandoned.

Thérèse also spoke of being in heaven and what she would do from there, "I feel especially that my mission is about to begin, my mission of making God loved as I love God, of giving my little way to souls. I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth."

Thérèse spoke of herself as "a little flower gathered by Jesus". In her life story she compared the human spirit to flowers in a field. "Not all can be great like the rose or lily. God created smaller blossoms, like the daisy or violet, that also give joy to God who glances about and sees our wondrous variety and beauty and colors to Christ".

Thérèse died of tuberculosis on September 30th, 1887 at the age of 24, just seven years after making her final vows as a Carmelite. A short 28 years later, she was declared a saint of the church. Within two years she was named as a patroness of all missionaries and missions, along with Saint Francis Xavier.



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Pray

Saint Thérèse, you once said that when you prayed, you would, “say quite simply to the good God what I want to tell Him, and He always understands me.” Help us to remember that Jesus is our friend and is always ready to listen to us. Our own words and loving actions, like yours, are most pleasing to God. Show us your “Little Way,” Dear Saint! Amen.

Think

1. Saint Thérèse faced many difficulties in her early life. She always turned to God. Discuss the importance of leaning on your faith in times of both happiness and sadness.
2. Why do you think Thérèse wanted to be a missionary? What do you think calls people to be missionaries today? Do you think God would call you to be a missionary?
3. Thérèse talked about people being like flowers. What does that mean to you?

Act

All students: Saint Thérèse talked about living life in her “Little Way”, meaning that she did small tasks with great love and offered them as service to God. Hold a “Little Way Week” in your class. Spend a week doing little things for others—holding the door, carrying groceries, sitting still in class—and praying for others as you do these things. Ask God to bless the people you serve. Write down five words at the end each day that describe how you felt.

Younger students:

Make flowers in the colors of the World Mission Rosary using the attached templates. Write your five words from “Little Way Week” on your flowers. Display your “Little Way Garden” on a bulletin board.

Older students:

Saint Thérèse was a Carmelite Sister. Invite a professed Religious Sister to speak to your class about her life as a Sister.



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Patron of the Missions*

