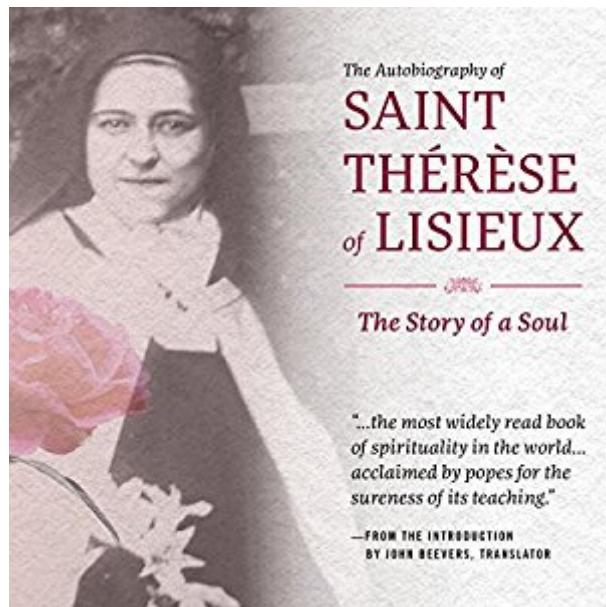


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The Autobiography Of Saint Therese Of Lisieux: The Story Of A Soul



Synopsis

Sharing memories from early childhood through her life as a Carmelite nun, Therese opens her heart to us. This bride of Christ reveals her passion and longing for union with God. Her simplicity is charming and we begin to believe that we can travel the path to salvation that she points out to us.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Beevers, a British layman, had a great love for St. Therese and introduced countless people to her and through two other books about her. His translation has been superseded by the translation of Father John Clarke, OCD, who worked directly from the original manuscripts and produced a translation for ICS Publications which has gone into three editions. That text is universally acknowledged as the authoritative English translation, and I would like to see all new readers start with it. We appreciate the Beevers translation as an important historical work in the rise of the cult of St. Therese.

St. Therese of Lisieux, "The Little Flower", was recently declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope John Paul II, the third woman to receive this honor in 2,000 years. She thus ranks with such intellectual and theological giants as St. Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas. This elevation is all the more astonishing when we consider her background; born to a bourgeois family in provincial 19th century France, she entered a cloistered convent at the age of 15, and died in obscurity at age 24. The posthumous publication of her spiritual journals created a sensation in the Catholic world

comparable to that produced in the postwar world by THE DIARY OF ANN FRANK. Adopted as a universal "little sister" by the French soldiers of World War I, St. Therese's naive, charming, but profound words were carried next to many an infantryman's heart. Therese's story and the effect of her powerful personality and passionate devotion have lost none of their force. "At last I have found my calling," she declared. "My calling is love." The core of her spiritual message, the "little way" is the recognition that any act, no matter how trivial, is infinitely valuable if done out of love. Her influence on other great 20th century figures such as Theresa of Calcutta and Edith Stein is obvious. This is a unique book, to be read with pleasure, with joy, and with the assurance of great spiritual benefit. The homely and human details of Therese's short life lead to the path of enlightenment.

Therese of Lisieux lived a very sheltered life. As we begin the book she actually seems to be spoiled by her family. Her parents were financially secure and devoutly religious. Therese knew she wanted to be a nun from the age of three. She had bouts of poor health and she suffered the loss of her mother early in her life. And then the sisters she relied on left one by one to join the convent. But she also had security and love from her family. She also had an incredible sense of self-direction. In her book Saint Therese describes souls as similar to different types of flowers. Some are roses, others lilies, and some like orchids, for example. And all can be equally pleasing to God in their own way, when seeking his role for them. People have different talents and different struggles, but these characteristics do not mean that any type is more valued than the other. Saint Therese describes the Christian Church as one body, and how she wants to be the heart that loves. She writes frequently of the many ways that God is love. She believed that heaven for her would be to be able to help people on earth after she died. She writes that any sacrifice in daily life can be offered to God, for the conversion of souls, or help of others, whether it is the suffering of an illness or loss, or the performance of a mundane daily chore. Therese also writes much she preferred to speak directly to God as a child when she prayed instead of using formal liturgy.

"Story of a Soul" is a collection of three manuscripts written by Therese of Lisieux near the end of her very brief life. Therese lived in France at the end of the 19th century and spent nine of her twenty-four years in a Carmelite cloister, yet this simple woman and her "little way" have touched millions of lives in the years since her death. Therese lived and preached a spirituality based on the scripture passages that urge becoming like a little child, living a life of trust in God. While she never did anything the world might consider "great", she made the most of the opportunities presented to

her. She took advantage of offering to God little sacrifices such as sitting straight in a chair without resting her back and going out of her way to be kind to a fellow sister she did not particularly care for. From her earliest years, she had an intimate relationship with Jesus. Although she was very close to her family, She writes, "I knew how to speak only to [Jesus]; conversations with creatures, even pious conversations, fatigued my soul." In her final year, as she was dying from tuberculosis, she welcomed her suffering even as she experienced a crisis of faith which plunged her into a dark night of the soul. The three manuscripts that comprise "Story of a Soul" each have a different tone due to the fact that they were addressed to three different people in response to three distinct requests. Manuscript "A" is addressed to Therese's sister Pauline, also known as Mother Agnes. She was a Carmelite nun as well and at the time was the Prioress of the convent. Mother Agnes had asked her to put down on paper her recollections from her childhood. It was intended as a "family souvenir" and as a result has a very familiar, sentimental tone. In it, Therese tells the story of her life from her earliest remembrances through her profession as a Carmelite. Manuscript "B" was directed to another of Therese's elder sisters, Marie, who also resided at the Carmel cloister. Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart later recalled that "I asked her myself during her last retreat (September, 1896) to put in writing her little doctrine as I called it." The shortest of the three manuscripts, it contains the heart of Therese's insights. It consists of a letter to her sister in which she explains that "Jesus does not demand great actions from us but simply surrender and gratitude," and a love letter to Jesus in which she confides her desire to be "the warrior, the priest, the apostle, the doctor, the martyr." Using the metaphor that St. Paul established in 1 Corinthians 12 of the body of Christ with its many parts, Therese comes to the conclusion that in order to fulfill her desire to be all things she must be love. "I shall be love. Thus I shall be everything, and thus my dream will be realized." In Manuscript "C", Therese returns to the story of her life, this time at the request of Mother Marie de Gonzague who had taken over as Prioress. It tells of her remaining years at Carmel up to three months before her death in 1897 when she no longer had the energy to write. In her final words she exclaims "I go to Him with confidence and love . . ." Therese never intended any of these words for publication, yet in the last months of her life she seemed to have had a premonition that her words would eventually do much good in the world. "Story of a Soul" provides a blueprint for a life lived in relationship with Christ. Therese comes across as extremely human, struggling with life as all of us do, yet she had such trust and faith. We are wise to learn from her example. [...]

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