



St. Therese of Lisieux

Generations of Catholics have admired this young saint, called her the "Little Flower", and found in her short life more inspiration for their own lives than in volumes by theologians.

Yet Therese died when she was 24, after having lived as cloistered Carmelite for less than ten years. She never went on missions, never founded a religious order, never performed great works. The only book of hers, published after her death, was a brief edited version of her journal called "Story of a Soul." (Collections of her letters and restored versions of her journals have been published recently.) But within 28 years of her death, the public demand was so great that she was canonized.

Over the years, some modern Catholics have turned away from her because they associate her with over-sentimentalized piety and yet the message she has for us is still as compelling and simple as it was almost a century ago.

Therese was born in France in 1873, the pampered daughter of a mother who had wanted to be a saint and a father who had wanted to be monk. The two had gotten married but determined they would be celibate until a priest told them that was not how God wanted a marriage to work! They must have followed his advice very well because they had nine children. The five children who lived were all daughters who were close all their lives.

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