

## St. Therese of Lisieux



St. Therese of Lisieux was born (like St. Julie) in Alencon in France on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1873. Her parents were Catholics and, amazingly, they also have been recognised as saints! Louis, her dad, was a jeweller and mum, Zélie, was a lacemaker! Both parents had considered living religious lives as a priest and nun but this didn't work out for either of them and they found each other and fell in love. They ended up having 9 children – four of whom died young. The remaining 5 all became nuns with Therese being the youngest!

Her mother died when she was just 4 years old. And just after this, her family moved to the town of Lisieux. Therese admitted herself that, as a child, "I was far from being a perfect little girl." She did not really enjoy school. She was clever and other children were sometimes unkind about this. She said "The five years I spent at school were the saddest of my life!"

As a child she suffered from serious illness – probably what we would now call mental health issues. But when she was 10 she experienced a sudden cure that she felt was a miracle – which was brought about because of her sister's prayers in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary.

### 17<sup>th</sup> May Anniversary of the canonisation of St. Therese of Lisieux

In many ways, she lived an uncomplicated life. She did not make a fuss, nor seek publicity nor do anything we might consider particularly heroic. However, her simple way of life resonated with many and inspired people like: the Holy Father Pope Francis, Mother Teresa and the hero of the holocaust – Maximilian Kolbe. Her attitude to life became known as 'the little way'.

In 1927, the Pope gave her the title of "The Keeper of the Vatican Gardens" and, at St. Julie's, the house candle and flag for Therese are orange in recognition of the colourful flowers in those gardens!

When she was 15 – she started the process to become a Carmelite nun – joining three of her sisters in the convent! The order was a very strict one – and the sisters were not allowed to chat during the day. Therese found it hard as some of the nuns were unpleasant with her at times.

She wore a habit and at the age of 17 and a half she took became a novice –taking vows (holy promises) of poverty, chastity and obedience. Therese lived a life of prayer and accepted criticism in silence. She prayed for those who were unkind to her. She had a particular devotion to an image called The Holy Face of Jesus.

At the age of 23, Therese developed tuberculosis – which, at the time, was incurable. Around this time, she started to write her autobiography which she called "The Story of a soul".

This became very famous and influenced many people. She died on 30 September 1897, aged 24. On her death-bed, her last words were, "My God, I love you!"<sup>1</sup> When her body was dug up 13 years later it was found to be uncorrupted! 28 years after her death, Therese became St. Therese of Lisieux when Pope Pius XI canonised her!

She loved flowers and saw herself as the "little flower of Jesus," who gave glory to God by just being her beautiful little self among all the other flowers in God's garden. Because of this beautiful analogy, the title "little flower" remained with St. Therese.

### PRAYER

St. Therese, help me to always believe, as you did,  
in God's great love for me,  
so that I might imitate your "Little Way" each day.

AMEN