

October 1: The “Little Way” of Loving

The “mission month” of October opens with the feast of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, patroness of mission. She was born in France on January 2, 1873. Her exemplary parents, Zélie and Louis Martin, were canonized on October 18, 2015 by Pope Francis. Thérèse died of tuberculosis on September 30, 1897, at the tender age of twenty-four.

Thérèse would have probably attracted little notice, except for her posthumously published autobiographical manuscript, *The Story of a Soul*. Essentially, the work is about the path to holiness in everyday life. Thérèse was canonized on May 17, 1925, only twenty-eight years after her death. On December 14, 1927, Pope Pius XI proclaimed her the principal patroness, equal to Saint Francis Xavier, of all missionaries, men and women, and of all the missions in the whole world. More recently on World Mission Sunday (October 19, 1997), Pope John Paul II named Thérèse a Doctor of the Church.

Saint Thérèse understood that what is important in the Christian life is great love and not great deeds. Thérèse, the saint of the “little way,” developed a spirituality of ordinariness, in which one offers each moment and every deed simply and lovingly to God. Known as “the Little Flower,” Thérèse is a source of deep hope to millions who desire to serve God through their littleness, simplicity, and love. They find in Thérèse their own vocation and spirituality, their “doable” and “livable” pathway of daily sanctification.

We listen to brief excerpts from Thérèse’s profound insights. “Merit is not to be found in doing much or in giving much, but rather in receiving and in loving much.” “Perfection consists in doing his will, in being that which He wants us to be.” Indeed, Thérèse’s “little way” is the way of hope for all desiring to be missionaries and “saints of the ordinary.”