

## **St Theresa of the Child Jesus**

Theresa was born on 2nd January 1873 and died of TB on 30th September 1897 at the age of 24. In that short and mostly hidden life, she responded to the grace of God in a unique way. She was no plaster Saint, out of touch with reality. We all could identify with her because she became holy through the ordinary events of life.

She wasn't impressed by heroic deeds or severe penances. In her own words she says "my mortification consists simply in checking my self will, keeping back an impatient answer, rendering a small service in a quiet way." She is called the 'little flower' because she believed we are all little children before God. She had total confidence in God as Father and fear of God didn't enter into it. She said: 'I have always remained little, having no other occupation but to gather flowers, the flowers of love and sacrifice. She took the words of Jesus to heart - 'unless you become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' She told us never to be discouraged by our weaknesses or those of others - we must approach the Lord with utmost confidence in His mercy. She said: 'to be little is not to be discouraged over one's faults, for children fall down often, but they are too little hurt themselves very much. By myself I cannot attain what I desire and yet everything in my heart tells me I cannot give up, so I must bear with myself as I am with all my imperfections.

Self-seeking was never part of her agenda. She says: 'If we go through life without anyone noticing our good deeds, so much the better. God loves little souls who offer Him the hidden sacrifices of day to day living." Any goodness she had she attributed to God. She says. "I know that when I am charitable to someone, it is not me, but Jesus who is acting through me." She goes on: "true charity consists in bearing with the faults of those about us, in never being surprised at their weaknesses but being edified by the least sign of virtue in them."Theresa

made particular friends in her Carmelite community with the nuns who weren't the easiest in the world to live with. And she always showed kindness with a smile and never begrudgingly. She says: "Jesus loves people who are cheerful and ready to smile". Theresa was no stranger to suffering: She says: "suffering makes us kind and indulgent towards others, let us not believe that we can love without suffering".

Theresa also suffered spiritually by going through a *dark night* of temptations against faith prompted by the Evil One. In her writings she says: "I hear a mocking voice which says: *you dream of a land of light and fragrance. You believe that the Creator will be forever yours. Hope on, hope on, look forward to Death. It will give you not what you hoped for, but a night that's darker still, the night of utter nothingness*". She saw her mental and physical sufferings and temptations as a share in Christ's passion and she offered them to him for the conversion of sinners and unbelievers.

She had the utmost confidence in God even during the times when he seems far away. She longed for Heaven and the glittering prizes of this world meant nothing to her. She didn't feel at home with saying beautiful prayers composed by others. She says: "Prayer is a cry of the heart, a glance towards Heaven".

Shortly after 7pm on Wednesday 29th September 1897 while on her deathbed she looked at her crucifix and said in a low voice "Oh I love you, my God I love you". Her head fell back. Then she raised her head again and stared with a look of amazement and extreme happiness. She then drew her last. After her death numerous miraculous cures were attributed to her. At her canonization in 1925, 60,000 pilgrims gathered in St Peter's square and as many again were on the streets. Rome's 400 church bells announced the news to the world. Her words ring out to us today: "I will spend my Heaven doing good upon Earth".

*St Theresa of the Child Jesus, pray for us.*