

# Talking about St Therese of Lisieux



**missio**   
Scotland

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Hi \_\_\_\_\_ I see you're wearing your Missio Champion Badge.

Hi \_\_\_\_\_. Yes this is my badge showing that I support Missio Scotland.

## **What is Missio Scotland?**

Missio Scotland is the Scottish branch of the Pontifical Missions Society—the Pope's charity for overseas missions. We help people all over the world by building schools, training teachers, feeding the hungry, tending to the sick and training those who want to be priests and nuns on every continent in the world.

## **My goodness that's a lot of good work, how do you manage it?**

Well we are very lucky because we are the official charity for Catholic primary schools in Scotland and every year boys and girls help us by raising money that we can use to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Every year in October, the Bishops of Scotland ask everyone who is at mass to give a little extra for Missio Scotland. This really helps us.

## **What has Missio got to do with St Thérèse of Lisieux though?**

OR

## **Why is St Thérèse associated with the missionary church?**

Well St Thérèse of Lisieux is one of the patron saints of the missions. St Thérèse loved the missions and wanted to travel to spread the Gospel all over the world and show how Jesus loves all people. In fact one of the famous things she said was 'I would like to preach the Gospel on all the five continents...'

## **Wow! Tell me more about St Thérèse?**

Thérèse was born in France on January 2nd, 1873. Her mum was Marie-Azélie Guérin, (she was called Zélie) and her dad was Louis Martin. He worked as a jeweller and watchmaker. Thérèse Martin was the last of nine children born to Louis and Zélie Martin. However, only five of these children lived to reach adulthood. Thérèse lived a very simple and holy life. At age 15, she entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux to give her whole life to God. She took the religious name Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.

## **So St Thérèse became a nun?**

Yes. St Thérèse became a Carmelite nun at age 15 entering the convent at Lisieux. In fact she had four sisters and they all became nuns as well, dedicating their lives to God. St Thérèse said: "I will seek out a means of getting to Heaven by a little way—very short and very straight, a little way that is wholly new." In fact she asked special permission from the Pope to become a nun so young!

**My goodness how did this make her mum and dad feel when all of their daughters became nuns?**

Louis and Zélie Martin were very proud of their daughters and showed them great love, but sadly Zélie, her mother, died when Thérèse was only four years old. Their mother never got the chance to see her daughters become nuns dedicating their lives to God.

## **What was St Thérèse's life like as a nun?**

Living a hidden, simple life of prayer, she was gifted with a great closeness to God. Through sickness and dark nights of doubt and fear, she remained faithful to God, rooted in His merciful love. After a long struggle with tuberculosis, she died on September 30, 1897, at the age of 24. Her last words were the story of her life: "My God, I love you!"

## **Then why is St Thérèse a patroness of the missions if she never actually went?**

That's a great question. St Thérèse is a patron saint of the missions because what makes a missionary are not the legs but the heart! A missionary is a person whose heart burns with love for Christ and passion for souls and answers to the call of Jesus: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, Baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. She prayed a great deal for everyone involved in the missions during her life especially when she was in the convent.

## **When did St Thérèse become a saint?**

Thérèse was made a saint (we call this being Canonised) on May 17th, 1925 by Pope Pius XI, only 28 years after her death. All four of her sisters were still alive when their little sister Thérèse was declared a saint. St Thérèse of Lisieux is the patron saint of aviators, florists, illnesses and the missions. She is also considered by Catholics to be the patron saint of Russia. Her feast day is October 1st. St Thérèse of Lisieux is one of the most popular saints in the history of the Catholic Church.

## **Why is St Thérèse so popular all over the world for so many people?**

St Thérèse saw herself as a child of God. She liked to keep things simple and focused as a child does. Trust, especially trust in God, is a childlike virtue. Thérèse's love for God was very simple and she called it her 'little way.' She teaches us that God is everywhere—in every situation and person—and in the ordinary, simple details of life. It is because of this that so many people have followed her example and grown to love her because she shows us that we can love God in simple acts of kindness and love for others. We are privileged that the relics of St Thérèse are here and we should use this as a time to learn more from her. If we follow the Little Way of St Thérèse we can grow in our love of God and love of our neighbour.