

Mary, my mother, I love you. I give myself to you, as your possession and property. Please make of me, of all that I am and have, whatever most pleases you. Let me be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for bringing the greatest possible glory to God. Amen.

This last week I have felt drawn to St. Therese the Little Flower. She was born in 1873, entered the convent in 1886 and died in 1890.

Therese was aware of her littleness. "It is impossible for me to grow up, so I must bear with myself, such as I am, with all my imperfections. But I want to seek out a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way that is very straight, very short and totally new."

Therese went on to describe the elevator in the home of a rich person. And she continued: "I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus for I am too small to climb the rough stairway of perfection. I searched then in the Scriptures for some sign of this elevator, the object of my desires, and I read these words coming from the mouth of Eternal Wisdom: 'Whoever is a little one, let him come to me.' The elevator which must raise me to heaven is your arms, O Jesus, and for this I have no need to grow up, but rather I have to remain little and become this more and more," And so she abandoned herself to Jesus, and her life became a continual acceptance of the will of the Lord.

Most of the time we feel like St. Therese, small and childlike. Our lives are ordinary and routine. This is precisely where St. Therese sought her holiness—in the little things of life.

Imagine a group of sisters all leaning over a tub of hot soapy water at the same time. Each was washing her own things. There was silence. A sister splashed water on Therese's face—not on purpose. She was not aware that her washing was with such great agitation that she splashed up on the other sisters. St. Therese considered an angry reaction. Then she called to mind her "little way," which called St. Therese to quiet her anger and be patient.

The sisters were in the chapel for six hours a day—two hours for personal prayer and four hours for liturgy. One of the nuns made strange, clacking noises in chapel. Therese did not say, but the good lady was probably either toying with her rosary or was afflicted by ill-fitting dentures. The clacking sound really got to Therese. It ground into her brain. Terrible-tempered, Therese was pouring sweat in frustration. She tried to shut her ears, but was unsuccessful. Then, as an example of her 'little ways,' she made a concert out of the clacking and offered it as a prayer to Jesus.

Imagine—these little gestures of patience were the makings of a saint! Many of us live lives that are simple and routine. In them we feel small and even childlike. We cannot imagine Jesus asking us to do anything notable or heroic. This is the insight of St. Therese: to do the small things with Jesus is heroic! To be patient and to forgive is a little way of holiness. Little by little, these acts of tiny sacrifice lead us to participate fully in the grace of the cross of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus asks you to follow him, he is likely walking in the steps of your daily life. What can you do to make each day a participation in the "little way" of sainthood?

In a few moments we will be invited to receive Holy Communion. In Communion, Jesus fills us with life; he binds us to lasting charity so that we may bear fruit that will last.

If you are little, take up the "little way."