

St. Therese of the Child Jesus



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SERVING THE MISSION

IN 1895, Therese had another important moment of conversion. She was shown a letter from a young man who was studying for the priesthood who asked whether one of the sisters might offer prayers and sacrifices on his behalf.

From then on Therese dedicated herself to the spiritual help of those around her. If she suffered, she offered up that suffering for those who were sinners and who were therefore suffering spiritually. If she prayed and yet could not feel God's love in return, she then would pray that others might feel that love even if she did not.

Therese felt that she was called to be a missionary, but God had another plan. Because of her responsibilities and her poor health, she never had the chance to go to the missions herself.

Yet, she was continuously praying for those in the missions and she offered up many sacrifices for them. (When we give up something as an expression of love, that love can be dedicated to those who need it most.) Through her prayers and offerings, she did more good for the missions than many of those who actually work there.

It was for this reason that Pope Pius XI named her the Patron Saint of the Missions, for her heart had always been there.



TOTAL SURRENDER

THUS, on June 9, 1895, Therese totally surrendered herself to God's love. She offered herself to the Lord in the place of anyone who deserved to be punished for what he or she had done. She would bear their punishment so that they could experience God's love.

Therese wrote, "My Carmelite Mother allowed me to offer myself thus to God. Flames of love, or rather oceans of grace filled my soul. Since that day love surrounded and penetrated me: at every moment God's merciful love renewed and purified me, cleansing my soul from all traces of sin."

It was less than a year later, in April of 1896, that Therese was granted what she had asked for: to suffer for those who had lost their way. She began to experience the symptoms of a terrible disease that would bring on her death a year later. That disease was tuberculosis.

Throughout the first year of her illness, Therese continued to follow the everyday activities of the convent. She did not feel sorry for herself. She did not get angry or nasty. She believed that her loving Lord had called her to this hour of suffering, and she accepted it as best she could. God had called her to the cross, and she took up that cross with all her love.