

Therese of Lisieux lead a simple and hidden life

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## **ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX AND THE LITTLE WAY**

VATICAN CITY, 6 APR 2011 (VIS) -

In his general audience in St. Peter's Square today, attended by more than 10,000 people, Benedict XVI dedicated his catechesis to St. Therese of Lisieux, or St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, "who lived in this world for only twenty-four years at the end of the nineteenth century, leading a very simple and hidden life, but who, after her death and the publication of her writings, became one of the best-known and loved saints".

"Little Therese", the Pope continued, "never failed to help the most simple souls, the little ones, the poor and the suffering who prayed to her, but also illuminated all the Church with her profound spiritual doctrine, to the point that the Venerable John Paul II, in 1997, granted her the title of Doctor of the Church ... and described her as an 'expert in scientia amoris'. Therese expressed this science, in which all the truth of the faith is revealed in love, in her autobiography 'The Story of a Soul', published a year after her death".

Therese was born in 1873 in Alencon, France. She was the youngest of the nine children of Louis and Zélie Martin, and was beatified in 2008. Her mother died when she was four years old, and Therese later suffered from a serious nervous disorder from which she recovered in 1886 thanks to what she later described as "the smile of the Virgin". In 1887 she made a pilgrimage to Rome with her father and sister, where she asked Leo XIII for permission to enter Carmel of Lisieux, at just fifteen years of age. Her wish was granted a year later; however, at the same time her father began to suffer from a serious mental illness, which led Therese to the contemplation of the Holy Face of Christ in his Passion. In 1890 she took her vows. 1896 marked the beginning of a period of great physical and spiritual suffering, which accompanied her until her death.

In those moments, "she lived the faith at its most heroic, as the light in the shadows that invade the soul" the Pope said. In this context of suffering, living the greatest love in the littlest things of daily life, the Saint realised her vocation of becoming the love at the heart of the Church".

She died in the afternoon of 30 September, 1897, uttering the simple words, "My Lord, I love You!". "These last words are the key to all her doctrine, to her interpretation of the Gospel", the Pope emphasised. "The act of love, expressed in her final breath, was like the continued breathing of the soul ... The words 'Jesus, I love You' are at the centre of all her writings".

St. Therese is "one of the 'little ones' of the Gospel who allow themselves to be guided by God,

in the depth of His mystery. A guide for all, especially for... theologians. With humility and faith, Therese continually entered the heart of the Scriptures which contain the Mystery of Christ. This reading of the Bible, enriched by the science of love, does not oppose academic science. The 'science of the saints', to which she refers on the final page of 'The Story of a Soul', is the highest form of science".

"In the Gospel, Therese discovers above all the Mercy of Jesus ... and 'Trust and Love' are therefore the end point of her account of her life, two words that, like beacons, illuminated her saintly path, in order to guide others along the same 'little way of trust and love', of spiritual childhood. Her trust is like that of a child, entrusting herself to the hands of God, and inseparable from her strong, radical commitment to the true love that is the full giving of oneself", the Holy Father concluded.