

RELIC

ST. THERESE of LISIEUX

- ❖ She was born in 1873 into a middle-class family residing in the small Normandy town of Lisieux. Youngest of five girls, her mother died when she was four. When she was fifteen she received special dispensation to enter the Carmelite convent of Lisieux, where two of her sisters had already preceded her.
- ❖ The rest of her short life was spent within the cloister walls of this obscure convent. She died of tuberculosis in 1897 at the age of twenty-four. Hers was a short, uneventful cloistered life yet her fame circled the globe.
- ❖ What triggered these developments was the posthumous publication of her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, which exposed her distinctive insights into the spiritual life.
- ❖ She described her method of spirituality as performing her everyday actions and suffering petty insults or injuries as an act of love for God. So acute was her belief in the Mystical Body of Christ that she believed each act of devotion, each moment of suffering patiently endured, might be credited to other souls in greater need.
- ❖ Therese writes that she was called to all vocations. She felt a powerful vocation to be a priest – a warrior, apostle, Doctor of the Church, and a martyr. But ultimately Therese came to realize that her vocation was nothing less than Charity itself, a virtue embracing every other vocation.
- ❖ In 1894 Therese woke on the morning of Good Friday to find her mouth filled with blood. She rejoiced privately in the thought that she might soon be in heaven. But instead this simply heralded a period of agonizing pain as well as spiritual desolation. Before her end her suffering would constitute a virtual crucifixion.
- ❖ For three years she suffered this way until finally called by God to join Him in heaven. With her death came the publication of her autobiography which immediately struck a responsive chord, especially among the “simple faithful”. Few are they who are called to do great things, to witness before kings and princes, or to shoulder the cross of martyrdom. And yet, as Therese demonstrated, there is a principle of continuity between our response to the everyday situations in which we find ourselves and the “great” arenas in which the saints and martyrs have offered their witness. According to Therese, each moment. Accepted and lived in a spirit of love, is an occasion for heroism and a potential step along the path of sanctity.
- ❖ In the years following her death, Therese was credited with an extraordinary number of miracles. It was remembered that she had once said “ After my death I will let fall a shower of roses. I will spend my heaven in doing good upon earth”.