



Ep #494_ St. Thérèse of Lisieux and The Little Way

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0:00:43.0 Sonja Corbitt: Welcome to the Sacred Healing 12:30 Podcast. I'm Sonja Corbitt, your Catholic Evangelista, and today we are beginning our series called The Little Way: Healing the Inner Child. I have been absolutely so excited to present this. I've had it kinda rolling around in my mind for quite some time. We're gonna talk first about where The Little Way comes from. Where does that term even come from? So today we're gonna look at St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Most of this will be review for many of you, and some of you will have never heard of St. Thérèse, and some of what I'm gonna share today probably will be new, whether you've heard anything about her or not. I have a devotion to her because St. Thérèse of Lisieux was the first saint, well actually she was the second saint, but she was the first to actually really step into my life in a way that I understood she was doing so.

0:01:37.8 SC: And that started for me in the second public speaking event that I did. I did a Deacons Wives retreat for a weekend at a Thérèse of Lisieux Retreat Center on Thérèse of Lisieux's Feast Weekend. And they had a chapel there with her relics. And when I went to that event, my godfather, every single time I ever asked him about anything, he would send me a bunch of books. And I had received from him a book on Thérèse of Lisieux. And I took it with me not realizing... Not connecting that I was at the Thérèse of Lisieux Retreat Center with the relics of St. Thérèse of Lisieux with the book on St. Thérèse of Lisieux. And I texted my godfather while I was there and I said, "You're not gonna believe this." And I kinda gave him that spiel and he said, "Sonja, just ask her what she wants."

0:02:37.0 SC: And that's the first time I ever... Coming from a Southern Baptist tradition, I had never considered that she might actually be speaking to me or have something to share with me or something to show me. And so I went straight to the chapel where her relics were, and I asked her, I said, "What do you want me to know?" And that's where the "dream big" thing started with me. It was with her, but also she sort of inspired me to start... I just realized while I was there that she was a Carmelite. And I had been trying to be a Dominican because Dominicans have a teaching charism and they like the study and I do too. And so I was... We have a really vibrant local Dominican population here. We have a beautiful convent of sisters in Nashville that are very well-known.

0:03:38.5 SC: And my godfather's oldest son is a Dominican priest and brother. And so I was surrounded by Dominicans and because they were local, I went and tried to enter into that third order Dominican community, but it just didn't fit. There was something just off, you know how you have that boyfriend and he's perfect on paper, but something just doesn't jive? And it was a little bit like that. I was trying to be Dominican, but there was only really one part of it that I loved. And it was the prayer, the community prayer. So anyway, I was at this St. Thérèse retreat center, and here I was asking St. Thérèse, "What is it you want me to know?" And she sort of started that "dream big" thing for me, but also led me to the realization that she was Carmelite and my patron St. John of the Cross was also Carmelite.

0:04:31.8 SC: And then I started to realize, "Oh my gosh, everything I read coming into the Catholic church was Carmelite," and I... Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, these Carmelite sort of just gathered me in. And I started to pursue just the question, are there third order Carmelites? And indeed there were, and that started that sort of journey. But for us, little Thérèse has something wonderful to teach us. In fact, I would say she, well, and I don't say this necessarily as much as John Paul II said it, that she is the greatest saint of these last centuries. And I have to say, I believe that her little way is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven because of what Jesus says about the little ones. The little ones are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

0:05:28.6 SC: And so we really need to know what that means. Is he calling us to be childish and stay in our habits of tantrums and self-medication and immature behavior and immature relationships? Is that what he's calling us to when he talks about children? And she teaches us exactly what that means. So we're gonna look at Thérèse today, and then we're gonna look at what it means for us. How do we bring the child in us to Christ? How do we let the little children come to Jesus as he asked us to? And how do we follow the scriptures and follow Saint Thérèse's little way in healing that inner child so that we can live that little way through the elevator? Which I'll get to in a moment. The elevator that lifts us up into the heavens, into the unity of love in the Trinity.

0:06:29.7 SC: St. Thérèse teaches us in this most beautiful, most simple way. I absolutely love this. You're gonna love it. She's called the Little Flower and we'll see why in a few moments. But what is amazing about her is that she was a French Carmelite nun who lived in the 1800s and died in 1897 at the age of 24. And she died of tuberculosis. And she remained cloistered in her convent for her entire lifetime as a nun, which began at 15 years old. So she was cloistered living a very simple, hidden life of holiness to the point that even her sisters, her fellow sisters in the convent, saw absolutely nothing exemplary in her after she died. And her sisters, her biological sisters, began to make a case for her canonization. The rest of the sisters in the convent were... They even said, "What is there to say about her?"

0:07:30.0 SC: Why in the world could you say she was a saint?" And this speaks to the hiddenness and the smallness of who she was. So if you are one of those people who hears me speak about God's call on your life and God has a purpose for your life, and you stand around looking at the minutiae of what your life looks like, maybe it's diapers, maybe it's funneling kids back and forth to church, maybe it is the drudgery of a job that you hate, maybe it's all of those things. But whatever it is in your life and your... The landscape of your life you know you're called to greatness. And yet all you see is this smallness. And it can be discouraging when someone like me says, "God has called you to greatness." You have a purpose for your life. She struggled with this, and she lived

this sanctity and holiness in such a hidden way that nobody saw it.

0:08:33.5 SC: And yet, look at her now she is arguably one of the biggest and greatest of the Catholic saints in the history of the church. She died when she was 24 and she had only lived as a nun, a Carmelite nun, for less than 10 years. She didn't go on missions, she didn't found a religious order. She never did any kind of great work that anyone saw. They all commented at how simple and how small and how nothing she was. She didn't even write books. The only book about her in the beginning was this edited version that her sister did of her journal called 'The Story of a Soul'. And honestly, some of the flowery language in it kinda puts people off if you read it because it's very Victorian, which is very flowery. But that's the extent, really, in the beginning of what we know about her.

0:09:27.2 SC: But her sister edited that and spread it. And within 28 years of her death, the public demand was so great that she be canonized that she was. Actually pretty quickly compared to the time that it usually took Saints to be beatified and then later canonized. There's a long process of that which I don't wanna go into right now, but one of the things that sort of tells us who St. Thérèse of Lisieux was, is the name that she received when she entered the order. There's this sort of title that is hung on the end of someone's name when they enter into the Carmelite monastery, and it singles out the mystery that the person is supposed to contemplate with special devotion throughout their lives as Carmelites. And so she took Thérèse of Lisieux of the Child Jesus in commemoration in part of her Christmas conversion, because she was contemplating the childhood of Jesus and the smallness of him coming as a baby.

0:10:35.5 SC: And that's what inspired this huge conversion that she had one Christmas, which we'll get into in a moment, but I just wanna look at her title. So St. Thérèse of Lisieux of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, because the Holy Face was the adult face of Jesus, particularly in Isaiah 52, the suffering servant of the Messiah of God who was disfigured and hidden and persecuted, and who suffered so greatly and contemplating the child Jesus and the holy face of Jesus, particularly in Isaiah 52 that suffering servant was her lifelong contemplation, and her lifelong will say, ambition, to become that small, that hidden, and yet that salvific in Christ her Savior.

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0:13:08.6 SC: Thérèse of Lisieux was born in 1873 and she was spoiled. She was a pampered little daughter of a mother who was a lace maker who herself had wanted to be a saint and a father who had wanted to be a monk and the two had gotten married, but decided that they would remain celibate and live as brother and sister until a confessor told them that that's not how marriage was supposed to work. So they must have followed his advice because they had nine children after that and only five of them lived. All of them were daughters and they remained close for the rest of their lives, and all of them entered the convent. So Martin and Zélie were the first and only couple who were canonized together. To this day, they remain the only couple who have been canonized together. Isn't that cool? And another thing that I love about them is that Zélie was a lace maker and she had her own business.

0:14:04.9 SC: And she was so successful that Louis who was a watchmaker, he quit that job and went into business with his wife and did the administration and the business side of her lace-making because she traveled and she made the lace and yet he did the administrative part and helped with the business side. I love that idea because my husband and I do that very thing. So we have an example there of a couple who was canonized together and they remain as the only couple, to this point, who have been. But Thérèse suffered very, very early when her mother died of breast cancer when Thérèse was only four and a half. And her 16-year-old sister Pauline sort of stepped in and became her second mother. And Thérèse wrote of that part of her life, she said, "The first part of my life stopped that day."

0:15:02.6 SC: Now, before I even move forward, I want to point out that little Thérèse Martin of Lisieux experienced a trauma of the loss of her mother at four and a half. So as a very small child, she experienced this abandonment from her mother, which actually was exacerbated when her older sister Pauline entered the Carmelite convent herself five years later when Thérèse was only nine. So she actually the... When her Sister Pauline entered the Carmelite convent, that trauma of her mother's death just got reopened. And she became so ill with a fever really soon after that, that people thought she was actually dying. And she wrote of herself, "When mommy died, my happy disposition changed. I had been so lively and open now I became diffident and oversensitive crying if anyone looked at me, I was only happy if no one took notice of me. It was only in the intimacy of my own family where everyone was wonderfully kind, that I could be more of myself."

0:16:13.7 SC: So three months after her mother died, her father moved from their family home to the country to live closer to Zélie's pharmacist brother. And they lived very close to the brother-in-law and his wife and their two daughters. Louis sold the lace-making business and moved into the country. And looking back on that, Thérèse wrote that, "That was the second period of my life," the most painful of the three periods of her life. She says, "It extends from the age of four and a half to 14 the time when I'd rediscovered my childhood character and entered into the serious side of life." So it was at that point that they lived in Lisieux in France. So nowadays we would say that Thérèse was acting out, she was acting out the loss of her mother, and she developed this terrible fever so that everybody thought she was dying.

0:17:12.9 SC: And she probably was. But for her, the worst part was seeing everybody sitting around her bed and they were staring at her. She called 'em a string of onions and her sisters brought in a statue of Our Lady to her room. And Thérèse prayed to the blessed mother and she saw

Our Lady smile at her and suddenly she was cured, physically cured. And she tried to keep that away from people but when she did talk about it, and it sort of got around, people found out and they started asking her a bunch of questions about what Our Lady was wearing and what she looked like. And Thérèse didn't want to answer. She was sort of trying to keep it like a private special thing between her and Our Lady. And she wouldn't satisfy their curiosity.

0:18:03.5 SC: So they started to say that she had made the whole thing up. And because she was so insecure and very young, she started doubting that it even happened. She started thinking she was lying to herself that Our Lady appeared to her or smiled at her in that statue at all. And yet she had the proof of her actually becoming well. And this was a time when she was... She entered school and she had some issues with bullying 'cause she cried all the time and she cried so much that people started to say she had a weak character. And her other sisters, Marie and Léonie, they also left to join religious orders. And that left her alone with her last sister Celine and her father. So now little Thérèse has lost her mother, five years later she lost her older sister Pauline to the convent at nine years old. And then her other sisters, Marie and Léonie, her older sisters, they also left to join religious orders. And now she's alone with her sister and her dad. And she wrote that she wanted to be good, but she had an odd way of going about it because she was so spoiled and she didn't want to do housework and she didn't want to...

0:19:10.0 SC: She didn't wanna do anything that she was supposed to do. And she wrote that she thought if she made the beds, that she was doing everyone this big great favor. And every time she thought someone was criticizing her or didn't appreciate her and her efforts, say, making the beds or doing a little bit of housework, she would cry. And then she'd cry because she had cried and she knew that she was being immature and childish and baby-ish. And she would try so hard to be good, but as soon as anyone made the smallest comment or the smallest criticism, she would just wilt into tears. And so she wanted, at around 14 or 15, well, actually it was earlier than that, she started already playing like she was a nun and she wanted to enter the Carmelite convent to join her sisters, Pauline and Marie.

0:19:58.4 SC: But she couldn't convince anybody that she could handle it because she couldn't even control her own emotional outbursts. And she kept praying and praying that God would answer her and fix her of all this emotionalism. But there didn't seem to be any sort of answer. Now, I hope at this point, if you've been attracted to this series at all, you have a wounded child and maybe it wasn't that your mother died, but you probably have something in your background that was very hurtful and your inner child is emotional. And all this emotion comes out in what I call pop quizzes at the most inopportune time when you're trying very hard to be good, and you have found that you're not able to be good. And we can see that all of this sort of trauma from the loss of her mother was compounded over her sisters' leaving.

0:20:51.5 SC: Everyone thought little Thérèse was super emotional, very spoiled and pampered and probably neurotic. In fact, there's an author named Ida Göerres who wrote on church history and hagiography, which is the... Its writings on the Saints. She wrote a psychological analysis of Thérèse's character. And she cited several authors who suggested that she had a very strongly neurotic aspect to her personality for most of her life. And of course, she only lived to 24. So that's not shocking, to be perfectly honest. But one of the people that she cited in her book said "Her temperament was not formed for compromise or moderation. Hers was a life spent not in taming, but in directing her appetite and her will, a life perhaps shortened by the force of her desire and her ambition". So Thérèse had a huge desire and a huge ambition, and she had no idea what to do with

it because she was so out of control, partly.

0:21:57.3 SC: But the other part was that she sincerely desired to be a nun in a cloistered convent. Cloistered just means separated, where they don't have access at all to the outside world. And so those two ambitions were in direct conflict with one another. And poor little Thérèse nor her father, nor her sister Celine, had any idea what to do with her [laughter] And on Christmas day in 1886, Thérèse was 14 and she hurried home from church. And in France, little kids left their shoes by the hearth at Christmas, and then the parents would fill them with gifts. And of course, at 14, most of them outgrew that. But her sister, Celine didn't want Thérèse to grow up. She liked to baby her [laughter] and so they kept leaving presents in Thérèse's shoes even at this point when she was 14.

0:22:56.5 SC: And when they started to go up the stairs after church to take their hats off, their father, he said this comment kind of in this spirit of exasperation, probably tired, probably wishing that he didn't... They all didn't have to continually placate little Thérèse's emotional outbursts. But he made the comment downstairs, standing over the shoes, he said, "Thérèse is far too old for this now. And thank goodness this is the last time we have to do this." Something like that. I'm paraphrasing just a little bit, but that was the gist. And she heard it, and Celine knew that she was gonna start bawling. And she did sort of tear up and started to cry. And Celine told her, "Don't go downstairs yet." And Thérèse offered it up.

[music]

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0:25:26.5 SC: It is Christmas day, they've just come home from mass. Thérèse has overheard her father say something kind of snippy. And what happened in that moment, she wrote later, Jesus had come into her heart and done for her what she could not do for herself. He made her more sensitive to her father's feelings than her own. So she sucked it up and she walked downstairs and she exclaimed over all the gifts in the shoes like she had never heard a thing her father had said. And the following year, she entered the convent. And in her autobiography, she referred to that day, that Christmas, as her conversion, the little victory, the little victory that Jesus worked in her that she was unable to work for herself. And right after that she went to her dad and told her that she wanted to celebrate the anniversary of her conversion.

0:26:15.6 SC: It was a year later she wanted to enter Carmel, the convent, before Christmas. And

they both cried because he was losing another daughter. And Louis got up and he picked this little white flower out of the yard with the roots still attached to it and he gave it to her. And he talked about how God had brought it into being, and he had preserved it until that very day. And Thérèse wrote later, "I listened. While I listened, I believed I was hearing my own story". And so to her, that flower seemed to be a symbol of herself. And she wrote that she was destined to live in another soil, meaning not with her father and Celine in Lisieux, but in the convent. So instead of just talking about it, she really started working on it. She tried to enter the Carmelite convent, but the priest who was the superior of the monastery wouldn't allow it because she was so young.

0:27:08.3 SC: And of course that just about broke her heart. But the little flower had a big wheel. She had a wheel of steel, which I love about her. And so when they refused to take her because she was so young, she went straight to the bishop. And when the bishop said no, she decided to go over his head too. So she was a spunky little thing. Her dad and her sister took her on a pilgrimage to Rome, and one author wrote that they were trying to get her mind off the idea 'cause she was so young, but it was a month-long pilgrimage. And they went to Rome and Thérèse absolutely loved it. And they actually had an audience with the Pope, and they weren't supposed to speak to him, but Thérèse was determined. So as soon as she got near him, she begged him to let her enter the Carmelite convent.

0:27:54.5 SC: And he told her that she was just gonna have to ask them [laughter] But she begged so much that she was carried out by two of the guards. The Pope had told her to submit to God's will through her father and also the Carmelite convent. And eventually she was finally admitted to the convent that her sisters Pauline and Marie had already joined. Her other sister Léonie, she became a member of the Poor Clares. So Thérèse did become a Carmelite nun. And pretty quickly her father started to suffer a bunch of strokes. And he was not affected physically as much as mentally, but he started to hallucinate. And at one time, he grabbed a gun like he was going into battle, and they admitted him to an insane asylum because people thought he was crazy. And when Thérèse learned of it, she was very disturbed by it because people were gossiping and pitying him, people that she had previously called friends.

0:28:53.5 SC: And this, of course, was her father, and she couldn't visit him, and neither could her sisters because they were all cloistered. So, of course, this was another type of suffering, one that she had chosen, but still it involved her father. And this was a time which she was experiencing a whole bunch of dryness in prayer. And she even wrote that "Jesus isn't doing much to keep the conversation going". And she became, through this dryness and the suffering that she experienced surrounding her father and his predicament, she started to really worry over her vocation. She wasn't sure if she should make the final promises. She wasn't sure if she should stay, although she wanted to. And of course she had these grandiose ambitions. She wanted to be sort of everything. She wanted to be a priest and she wanted to be a martyr. And so she fell asleep a lot of times crying in prayer.

0:29:43.4 SC: And she just consoled herself through the scriptures that spoke about how God is like a mother that gathers the fledglings in and lets the babies lie asleep in their arms. And so when she would fall asleep in prayer, she would comfort herself with that idea. I mentioned earlier that she was bullied in school, but she was also... She started to be bullied in the convent. And y'all ladies, you know how women are. And in the convent, most of the women were old and immature still and not very spiritual. And so they bullied her. They made fun of her height, which wasn't very tall. She was only 5'4 but she was taller than most of them. And she wasn't very good at handcrafts

or manual work. And one of the nuns who was a lace maker, oddly enough, called her the big nanny goat. [laughter]

0:30:37.4 SC: So she was bullied in the convent. And that sort of added to this suffering that she was feeling regarding her father and the worries over her vocation. And she knew just by observing her own sensitivity and her over emotionalism, that she was never gonna be able to perform these great deeds that she saw the great Saints performing. One of the things that struck me while I was reading about her biography was when they went to Rome, she was exposed to a whole bunch of priests. She hadn't really been exposed to a lot of men or priests. And what she came away with was this understanding that although they were very high in standing by virtue of their ordination, they were just men and they failed and they were weak. And so it propelled her into this deep concern for priests.

0:31:34.6 SC: And so she spent her time and her energy praying for priests. And so she knew that she wasn't gonna be able to do anything in the great big purpose or this great big call on her life. And so she sort of steadied herself and comforted herself in praying for priests. And also she started to kind of meditate on the fact that love proves itself by deeds. And so she said, "Love proves itself by deeds so how am I to show my love? Great deeds are forbidden me. The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers." And these little flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and doing the least of all the actions for love. And so she took every chance to sacrifice no matter how small it seemed, she would smile at the sisters she didn't like.

0:32:25.4 SC: She ate everything she was given without complaining. And she was often given the worst leftovers because she didn't complain. And she was accused one time of breaking a vase and it wasn't even her fault, she hadn't done it. But instead of arguing, she begged for forgiveness. And so these little sacrifices, she could feel that they were costing her more even than the bigger ones because they went unrecognized. No one saw how great she was. No one saw all the little things that she was doing. No one told her how great she was for all these little humiliations and the deeds that she was doing. So they required the sacrifice of her will in a way that was very similar to her Christmas conversion. And they grew her holiness very beautifully. Now I read that her sister, her oldest sister, Pauline, was elected the prioress of the convent.

0:33:16.4 SC: And that she asked Thérèse to sacrifice the novitiate to remain a novice and not take the final vows. But I also read that she chose this on her own, that she chose to remain a novice in the convent rather than being promoted because she didn't want to receive some sort of position of superiority, even nominally. And as a novitiate, you have to ask your superiors for everything. You don't get to really make decisions for yourself. So I read that her sister asked her to do it, but I also read that she chose it on her own. But either way, she spent eight months longer in the novitiate than she really should have or would have if she'd been the normal nun. And somewhere in that time is when Celine came into the Carmelite convent with her three other sisters. Now, Thérèse was the youngest.

0:34:14.5 SC: Celine was older than Thérèse, but Celine was the last of the sisters to come into the convent. And they were all, the four of the sisters, were together again. And Thérèse, she was still worrying about how she was gonna achieve this ambition in the spiritual life that she really wanted. She didn't wanna just be good, she wanted to be a saint. And she thought about people who live hidden little lives like hers. And she wrote, "I've always wanted to become a saint. Unfortunately, when I have compared myself with the saints, I have always found that there is the same difference

between the saints and me as there is between a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds and a humble grain of sand trodden under foot by passersby. Instead of being discouraged, I told myself that God would not make me wish for something that was impossible.

0:35:01.6 SC: And so, in spite of my littleness, I can aim at being a saint. It is impossible for me to grow bigger. So I put up with myself as I am with all my countless faults, but I look for some means of going to heaven by a little way, which is very short and very straight, a little way that is quite new". Now, in her writing, she really only used that phrase "the little way" two or three times. And the "spiritual childhood" phrase is actually Pauline's, it's attributed to little Thérèse, but it was Pauline's addition. But little Thérèse is the one who said "the little way". She's the one who coined that. She only used it a few times, but it is definitely her phrase.

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0:36:21.5 SC: One of the things that I love about Thérèse of Lisieux, especially when we're looking at this little way that she was trying to hammer out in her own heart and her own mind. And she always turned to scripture over books about the saints, because the saints seemed so unreachable. She wrote, "Sometimes when I read spiritual treatises in which perfection is shown with 1000 obstacles surrounded by a crowd of illusions, my poor little mind quickly tires. I close the learned book, which is breaking my head and drying up my heart, and I take up holy scripture then all seems luminous to me. A single word uncovers for my soul infinite horizons, perfection seems simple. I see that it is enough to recognize one's nothingness and to abandon oneself like a child into God's arms, leaving to great souls, to great minds, the beautiful books I cannot understand. I rejoice to be little because only children and those who are like them will be admitted to the heavenly banquet". I share that so deeply. I have questions about things and I'll do my research and I'll start looking for counsel and what does so-and-so person say and what does that person say? But ultimately, I always come back to this principle.

0:37:40.0 SC: I always go back to the scriptures. I always say, "Lord, what do you say? It doesn't matter what so-and-so man says, he's still just a man. I wanna know what you say about it. What does your word say about it? And what do you want me to know about it?" And I love that she does that. She always goes back to the scriptures to hear from God himself because it nourishes her soul in a way that the words of men cannot do. She says, "In speaking of this little way," she says, "We live in an age of inventions. We no longer need to climb laboriously up flights of stairs, in well-to-do houses there are lifts," or elevators, "And I was determined to find a lift to carry me to Jesus for I was far too small to climb the steep stairs of perfection.

0:38:25.4 SC: So I looked in holy scripture for some idea of this life that I wanted and what it would be like. And I read these words, 'Whosoever is a little one come to me.' It is your arms, Jesus, that are the lift," or the elevator, "To carry me to heaven. And so there is no need for me to grow up. I must stay little and become less and less." Now, if you're in our John study, you hear this in the words, in the mouth of John the Baptist. "He must increase and I must decrease." And yet she was still worried about her vocation. She said, "I feel in me the vocation of a priest. I have the vocation of the apostle. Martyrdom was the dream of my youth and this dream has grown with me.

Considering the mystical body of the church, I desired to see myself in them all. Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that the church had a heart and that this heart was burning with love. I understood that love comprised all vocations. That love was everything, that it embraced all times and all places in a word that it was eternal. And then in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out, 'Oh Jesus, my love, my vocation at last I have found it.' My vocation is love."

0:39:42.5 SC: I absolutely love that because that's the whole basis of my masterclass. That's the whole basis of what Jesus told us we need. Love is it. Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Who's your neighbor? Your inner child first. And then those outside of you. And I promise we'll get to that. But there was a woman who later was elected the prioress of her convent and there were political suspicions in the convent that the Martin sisters were gonna take over because now there were four of them. Marie, Pauline, Thérèse and Celine.

0:40:22.0 SC: And the convent was so small that now they made up a fifth 1/5 of the whole population of the convent. Despite that, in part because her sister Pauline was in a position of authority, Thérèse was put into a position of teaching other novices. But in 1896, she started coughing up blood and she kept working. And she didn't tell anybody until she became so sick over the next year that everybody knew it. And she lost her joy, and she lost her confidence, and she knew that she was gonna die young without leaving anything behind. And so Pauline had already started having her write down her memories for a journal. And she wanted her to continue so that they would have something to circulate after she died 'cause she was young and of course her sisters knew her better than anybody.

0:41:09.6 SC: And her pain, she said, was so great that if she had not had faith, she would've taken her own life without any hesitation whatsoever. But she was so determined to remain little that she smiled, she was cheerful and she succeeded so well that the rest of the nuns thought she was pretending. They accused her of pretending to be sick. Can you imagine? So in this sickness, in this tuberculosis, she started to think about her... We'll call it a legacy. And her one dream was what she wanted to do after her death and that was to help people on earth. And she wrote, "Upon my death, I will let fall a shower of roses. I wish to spend my heaven in doing good upon the earth". And she died on September 30th, at the age of 24 years old.

0:42:00.0 SC: And she herself said that she felt like that was exactly the right age to die, because she felt that she had a vocation to be a priest and that God had let her die at the age that she would've been ordained if she had been a man. So I think that that is so... It's so precious and so beautiful. She didn't get caught up in the futility of the fact that she was female and couldn't be a priest. She gave that desire for something undoable. She gave that desire to God and look what he did with it. So here, I think, is the gist of what she's calling us to in this little way. And in the healing of the inner child. It doesn't mean squashing all of this ambition and this desire to do the great thing for God. What it entails is giving that desire and that ambition and that desire for a big purpose, a big dream.

0:43:00.1 SC: The "dream big" that she gave me. That desire you give to God, oh my gosh I just got something. I just got something from her. You give that big desire to God and watch what he does with it. Give it to Him and remain little. Just do what you're supposed to do around where you are and give the big desire to Him and watch what He does with it. And the other part of her little way is how to live it. "What does it look like for me? How do I do something big in my menial

life?" Well, she gives us really good practical stuff to do. And we will look at that throughout the series in what is the little way exactly? In a practical way. And how do we live it and how do we bring the child to bear on the big dream or the big purpose or the big call that we either believe we have or know we have from God.

0:43:54.8 SC: And Thérèse shows us exactly what that ultimately means. So one of the verses that she was very drawn to was out of Matthew 18 [chuckle] And it's about the little children. "He called a child whom he put among them and said, 'Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'" And so we could say that this little spoiled child with all the emotional outburst, with all the excess emotion from the trauma of losing her mother and her older sisters, and then her father's declining health when she entered the convent, all of the things that was going on with that, the trauma, then she has this huge desire to be all kinds of things that she literally cannot be in the church.

0:44:49.5 SC: An apostle, a priest. She's female, she's very, very young, and they wouldn't even let her in the convent. And she just kept pursuing it until God fulfilled that desire. And not only did he fulfill it in letting her enter the convent, but he fulfilled it in a way that was beyond anything she could have ever imagined in these vocational desires of being the priest and being the apostle and being the martyr. I mean, look at her. Her ministry at this point is... It is likely the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And it's because of these reasons. She is little. She understands what it means to be great. She understands what it means to be a child, not childish, but childlike. And she let those little things in her life, little sacrifices, little duties, little gifts to Jesus in her everyday living, to be the formation crucible in which she would become the great saint that she is.

0:45:55.5 SC: And so she teaches us about that little way. And she teaches us how to bring the child in us to Jesus and put that child in His... In the center and let Him embrace that child and heal that child just like He did for her. He healed her. He healed her. How do we know? Because she ended as a great saint. And her life now is about showering us with these roses, these flowers, the little flower showers us in flowers in the little way. And so we can be confident that she will lead us on this healing journey in the little way in healing that inner child. So Matthew 18, when there's a dispute over who is the greatest in the heavens, Jesus brings the child forward and He talks about the child. And then He starts to talk about offenses and offenders.

0:46:54.1 SC: He talks about how to go after that little lost sheep. He talks about how to deal with those who offend us. He talks about how to forgive and to escape this sort of demonic torment that comes with unforgiveness. He talks about marriage and then He ends by blessing the little children. So that's what we're gonna do. We're gonna stand in the midst of Jesus's embrace with little Thérèse. We're going to listen to Him teach us about boundaries and healing that inner child. And then we're gonna have Him... We're gonna ask for His blessing on that child in the part of us that is still hurt and wounded and traumatized by the things that we've lived through. So, that is the trajectory of the series. I can't wait until next week. I'm Sonja Corbitt your Catholic Evangelista.

[music]

0:47:50.1 Speaker 3: Thank you for listening to the Sacred Healing 12:30 Podcast. Find out more at biblestudyevangelista.com because love heals.