

INTERNATIONAL FATIMA ROSARY CRUSADE

Newsletter

HELPING OUR LADY REACH OUT TO
MILLIONS OF FAITHFUL SOULS

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The Little Way to Heaven

St. Thérèse of Lisieux's short life was not distinguished by great worldly accomplishments. Rather, she led a hidden life, one in which her simplicity hid the fact that she had reached – by means of her “little way” – the heights of sanctity.

What is this “little way” that St. Thérèse devised? It is the way Our Lord prescribed in the Gospel when He said: “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matt. 18:4)

The “little way” is a simplifying of our spiritual life in an assured union with God. Remember, he who humbles himself will be exalted. The little way consists in

love, perseverance and childlike trust. Neither fear nor discouragement can daunt a simple child of God who lives this way, who depends on God and acknowledges his own smallness.

In her autobiography St. Thérèse explained her “little way.” First, picture yourself as a small child. Then, “by the practice of all the virtues, raise your little foot in an attempt to mount the stairway of sanctity, but do not imagine that you will be able to go up even the first step. God only asks for your good intentions. At the top of the stairway, He watches you lovingly. Soon, His love will be conquered by your vain efforts and He will come down Himself to carry you up in His arms ... ‘Remaining little’ means that we recognize our own nothingness, that we await everything from the goodness of God, as a little child expects everything from his father, that we are not solicitous about anything, and that we do not think about amassing spiritual riches.

“Even amongst the poor, a child receives what is necessary while he is still small; once he is grown up, his father will no longer keep him, but tells him to work and support himself. It was to avoid hearing this that I have never wished to grow up, for I feel incapable of earning my livelihood, which is eternal life. That is why I have remained little; my only care has been to gather flowers of love and sacrifice and offer them to God for His good pleasure.”

She further explained: “To be little means that we do not attribute to ourselves the virtues we practice, as if we were



ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

capable of any good; we recognize that God has placed this treasure in the hand of His little child and that the treasure is always His ... To be little means that we are never discouraged at our faults, for, although children often fall, they are too

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Little Things

from *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart, Volume II*

The steepest path is not the most difficult of ascent in life's journey, for God never brings us trials, without giving us corresponding strength to lift ourselves above them. Trustful as the child in its mother's arms that no harm can come to us, we have but to look and some shrub or branch presents itself, by which we may not only gain a safe footing, but may in sweet tranquility enjoy the beautiful landscape which God's all-bountiful love has placed before our enraptured gaze.

The vision lasts only a moment, yet the vision gives renewed courage and vigor; so we, resting securely on the branch that God's mercy has held out to us, are blessed by perception beforehand of the joys that await us in Heaven. Great trials, if we accept them patiently, bring great consolations, but nature so holds her own in man's ungrateful heart that it too frequently requires some

overwhelming sorrow, to recognize at all times God's omnipotence, to understand that God's blows are never dealt at random.

He places no barrier in our way, but we slip and fall back most often at little things, when in the distance we can see the straight smooth road so easy to follow, and no temptation on either side to distract us, or deter us from living up to our good intentions.

Oh, the little falls that come upon us unawares! We wake in the morning with hearts all fervor, our prayers are said devoutly, we make our meditation and hear Mass with so many earnest resolutions to *do better*. The day wears on apace – we have made great progress – no failures dishearten us; take care! – we are leaning on ourselves, a broken reed! And at the eleventh hour a little

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small to hurt themselves seriously."

How do we display our childlike love for God through St. Thérèse's "little way"? Small, everyday sacrifices are the greatest proofs of our devotion: they are how we "win" God. In the "little way," one does not have to perform austere penances and sacrifices. It is the little things that are most valuable: for example, refraining from making a negative or scornful comment, patiently bearing annoyances and others' faults, cheerfully doing even the most lowly tasks, accepting humiliations with joy, treating all people, even the most unpleasant, as you would treat Christ. God sends us a great many opportunities to advance along the path of the "little way" each day. As St. Thérèse asked, "why be foolish enough to refuse treasures offered so generously?"

Once, when St. Thérèse was engaged in doing laundry, another Carmelite Sister kept unknowingly splashing her with dirty water. Though Thérèse was tempted to make a point of wiping away the water so that the Sister could see that she was splashing Thérèse, the saint offered this little mortification to God. "I took care to hide my exasperation," she said. "I tried hard to enjoy being splashed with dirty water, and by the end of half an hour I had acquired a real taste for this novel form of aspersion. How fortunate to find this spot where such treasures were being given away! I would come back as often as I could."

Do not be deceived: overcoming ourselves through the seemingly small, perpetual mortifications of daily life are

very often more difficult for our fallen nature, which is so inclined to impatience. It is a struggle in which we are fighting our self-will over and over again. The small everyday sacrifices are not trivial, but are in fact "treasures" that we offer to God on the "little way" to Heaven.

Recognizing the efficacy of her "little way" and her supernatural wisdom, in 1997 Pope John Paul II declared St. Thérèse a Doctor of the Church, stating that "the insights of faith expressed in her writings are so vast and profound that they deserve a place among the great spiritual masters."

The "little way" of St. Thérèse should encourage us in our daily fight to attain salvation, for it does not overwhelm us but inspires us with confidence and perseverance. As St. Thérèse said, "Sanctity does not consist in the practice of certain exercises of piety, but in a disposition of the heart which makes us humble and little in the arms of God, conscious of our weakness, but confiding – unhesitatingly – in His Fatherly Goodness."

The little way is also valuable in helping other souls gain eternal life. Recall that Our Lady of Fatima pleaded with us: "Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell because they have no one to make sacrifices and pray for them." So many souls can benefit if we offer our little sacrifices and mortifications for them. Therefore, let us strive to humble ourselves as little children of God, and through little sacrifices and mortifications express our tender love for our Father, so that He will bring us and many others to Heaven. †

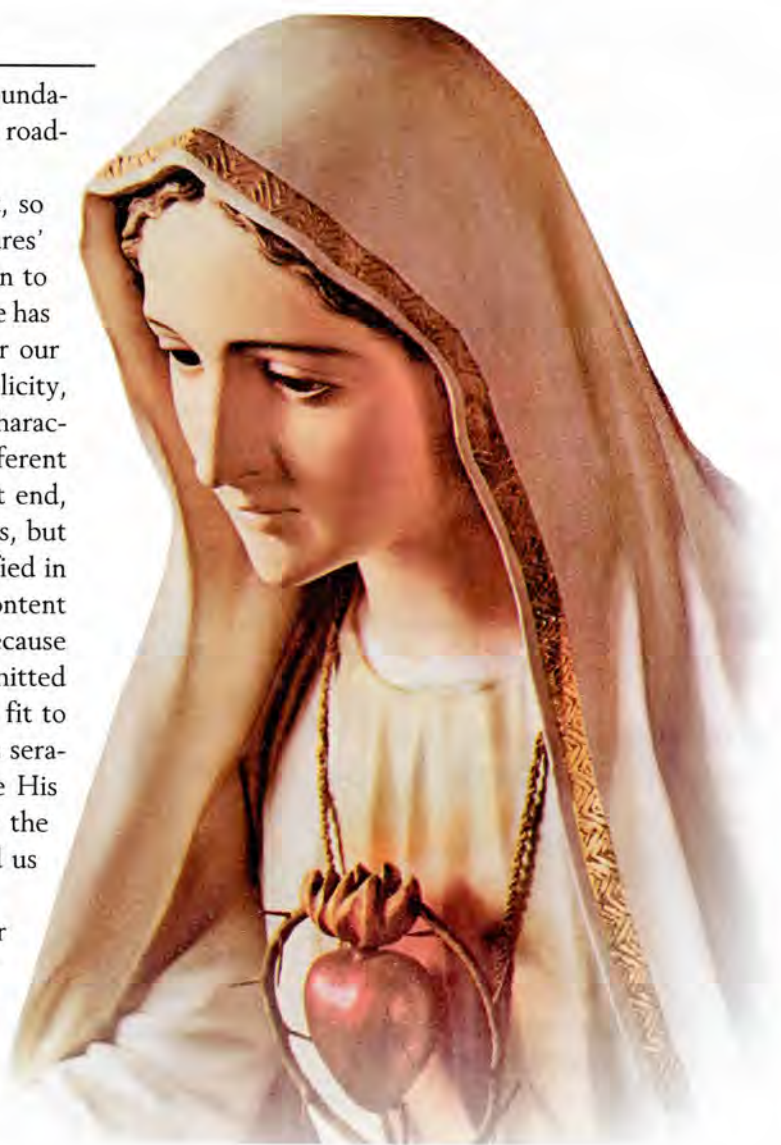
word or look has shaken us from our miserable foundation of satisfied self; the staff lies forgotten on the roadside – we slip and fall!

As one remedy will not cure every complaint, so God in His own perfect way has for His creatures' need a separate specific remedy. As He has given to each a different nature, according to the duties He has preordained they should fulfill, so He places for our benefit little trials of sacrifice, submission, simplicity, and all the virtues that go to form the Christian character. He has made us for a purpose, and in our different stations in life we may each aspire to attain that end, which is perfection. From nothing He created us, but He made us for Himself! How can we rest satisfied in following our will and pleasure? How can we content ourselves with being ordinarily good, and think because we have neither defrauded the poor, nor committed any grievous offense against society, that we are fit to enter God's presence, when the brightest of His seraphims cover themselves with their wings before His majestic beauty? How can we help but aim for the highest, and live so that no sudden call may find us unprepared!

It is not required that we have great minds – or be gifted, or talented. The beggar that asks for alms from door to door may become a saint, as the king in his palace. The lowly and simple-minded in their cottage may receive a crown of victory, as the man of letters or of science. St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that St. Benedict left knowledge and trod it under foot, for, though so young, the eye of faith had been opened. St. Bonaventure says: "The knowledge that is despised for the sake of virtue, is afterward acquired by virtue itself."

No, God is no partial God. He gives to each one of us all that he needs, but the foundation for every devout soul is humility. Humility that sets the soul free, restoring to her the liberty of her movements, towards the good, the true, and the beautiful.

The rock on which we build must be faith, its stepping stone love, its portal prayer. Yet think not that the work is more than begun when what is strictly essential is accomplished, for it is the little things in our daily life that are the hardest to fit into their places. God abundantly supplies the material, and puts in our hands the tools wherewith we are to work; such as numberless acts of charity, kind words of sympathy, voiceless deeds of unselfishness; so many little things that are utterly



indispensable.

God speaks to each heart, and we know within ourselves our great necessities. He does not tell us to mold the virtues dexterously, but industriously with perseverance.

Over and over again we must try, and the little things being hardest – because they seem easiest and therefore within human compass without need of exertion – so we must be ever on the alert to build carefully, which cannot be accomplished without prayer. We must have little stations on the way, where our souls must be lifted to God, to thank Him for His infinite goodness toward us, and He will breathe His own strength into us, to persevere. Prayer is the beacon that will show us how to avoid the perils of the world; it will be like the faithful storm bird, that in the midst of the ocean warns the mariner of danger, and pre-

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INTERNATIONAL FATIMA ROSARY CRUSADE

Mail



Dear Father Gruner,

I have received your letters in regards to your latest Fatima crusade. I of course am very concerned and want you to know that I take this seriously. I am praying for you and your cause. We must keep our Catholic Faith alive, and I personally am involved in the fight. I will continue to keep you in my thoughts and daily prayers. Please keep me in yours.

God bless you,

RC, MI

Dear Father Gruner,

I want to thank you for the book you sent, *Fatima in Twilight*. It sat waiting until I had a chance to start it, and then I couldn't put it down. It is excellent! As I read how so many in the Church hierarchy have fought against the Fatima Message, I was reminded of St. Malachy's prophecies. I am enclosing a gift for your work.

JB, ID

Dear Father Gruner,

Just a little note to tell you that I thank you with all my heart for all that you do for Jesus and Mother Mary. I am always behind you. You are a very kind and holy and devout priest.

Thank you, Father.

SN, PQ

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pares him for its coming.

We must have confidence that every one of our little acts is a part of the whole, without which the work is incomplete, and also that God will impart to us the power to execute them generously.

Above all we must trust; not to trust is to grieve Our Lord deeply. We must have unlimited faith that God brings good from evil, and that failures in little things are lessons in humility, and as such we must accept them with most earnest endeavor to persevere until God in His own best time shall lift the veil Himself, and we enter His kingdom. †

Apostolate News

Two Fatima Center representatives recently returned from a trip to the Apostolate's office in the Philippines. These two ladies had many interesting things to say about their experience. They were very impressed by the faith of the Filipino people. Approximately 80% of the people there are Catholic.

Despite extreme poverty – many of the people are homeless, or live in cardboard shacks – they are joyful and have a deep abiding faith.

They have a great devotion to Our Lady, whom many of them call "Mama Mary." Many Filipinos belong to Marian-centered prayer groups. There are pictures of the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart on the facades of many buildings, and there are numerous statues (often of Our Lady of Fatima) in public places. Even vehicles that are used for public transport carry religious pictures.

The Filipino people are a very good example of those who have a childlike faith and trust in God.

Unlike the West, where so many separate their faith and the rest of their lives, and do not allow any signs of their faith to be detected by the public (for example, by saying grace before a meal in public), in their simplicity most Filipinos display their faith in every aspect of their lives.

The Fatima Center workers who traveled to the Apostolate's Filipino office were very edified by their experiences in the Philippines.

Please pray that this country perseveres in the Faith, and that Our Lady's Fatima Message spreads throughout the country. †

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