

Little Way Week Assembly Notes



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

TEACHER'S NOTES

Welcome to your **Little Way Week** Assembly. This resource is based on the life of St Thérèse of Lisieux and her philosophy of doing great things for God through small acts of love.

This presentation lasts up to 20 minutes. **Though we'd recommend you deliver the whole assembly, please use the material as circumstances allow.**

Little Way Week is an initiative started by Clare Ward following the visit of the relics of St Thérèse to England and Wales in 2009.

This assembly has been prepared by **Missio**, Pope Francis' official charity for overseas mission.



START OF PRESENTATION

SLIDE TWO

This week we are thinking about St Thérèse of Lisieux, who died in France just over 100 years ago at the age of 24 and whose feast day falls on the **1st October**.

Question - Does anyone recognise St Thérèse or can tell us anything about her?

Thérèse is one of the best-loved-saints internationally. Her statue can be found in churches across the world. She is also the patron saint of overseas missionaries.

Question - Can anyone explain what a missionary does?

Answer - Missionaries are **sent** to make God's love known to everyone.

God calls all of us to be missionaries - making his love known in our own communities - but some individuals travel overseas to do this, providing practical relief and spiritual support in areas of poverty and conflict.



But Thérèse never travelled far from her home country of France and for the last nine years of her life she lived as an enclosed nun.

Question - Can anyone explain what an enclosed nun is?

Answer - An enclosed nun separates herself from the outside world so as to dedicate her life to God and prayer. They live with other enclosed nuns in a convent and, apart from emergencies, they never venture beyond the convent walls.

[Click to reveal photo of enclosed Carmelite nuns @Missio\TLouapre](#)

There are still women around the world who live as enclosed nuns, like these sisters who are supported by Missio.

But how can someone who never sets foot outside their convent be a missionary and how did ordinary Thérèse become the patroness of overseas missionaries?

SLIDE THREE

From the time she was a young girl, Thérèse longed to be a missionary. She had been a member of the children's branch of Missio* and regularly prayed for missionaries and sent her pocketmoney in support of their work.

Thérèse imagined herself travelling to foreign lands, providing practical relief and spiritual support in impoverished and isolated places.

However, her childhood dreams of becoming a missionary faded as life handed Thérèse a series of blows:

- From birth Thérèse's was a very sickly baby and her health remained poor throughout her life.
- When she was just four, Thérèse's mother died. This had a massive impact on little Thérèse.
- Following her mother's death Thérèse would often become anxious and sad. These feelings worsened during her time at school as she was bullied there for being shy and studious.

But in spite of these challenges, Thérèse's faith stayed strong. She trusted in God and was resilient, praying for the strength to cope and determined to make the world a better place.



* Thérèse was a supporter of Holy Childhood, now known in the England and Wales as **Mission Together**.

SLIDE FOUR

From being a child, prayer was important to Thérèse.

Through prayer and reading the Gospel, she came to know Jesus as a friend.

Thérèse's friendship with Jesus deepened her desire to spread his message of mercy and love, especially to those in need.

When she was 14, Thérèse realised that her poor health meant that her dream of becoming an overseas missionary would never be realised. Yet she was still determined to share God's love with others and decided to do this as an enclosed nun.

Thérèse firmly believed in the power of prayer: that our prayers, combined with God's grace, change situations for the better.

If Thérèse could not travel and work alongside missionaries, she would support them and their work through prayer.

Like her, we cannot all go overseas to share God's love but, like Thérèse, we can pray for the work of missionaries and for those they support and serve.



SLIDE FIVE

Question - How does a life spent praying in a convent sound? Easy or hard?

Answer - It was hard.

The very early mornings, starting at 5.30am, followed by long hours spent in prayer required perseverance.

Everyday menial chores, such as scrubbing the floor or handwashing the laundry, can be tiring and very boring. This could have worn Thérèse down and made her resentful. But she saw it differently.

Thérèse had dreamed as a child that she would perform heroic acts to reveal God's love to the whole world. But as she grew in years and in knowledge of Jesus, she understood that just as important if not more so, were small acts of kindness. These, she learned, really change the world.

Thérèse decided that everything she did each day – especially the small tasks – she would do with **great** love. She called this her '**Little Way**'.

Question - Can you think of any chores that you have to do at home? Wash the dishes? Help bring out the rubbish? Wash your clothes?

Question - Could you change your attitude so that you do it willingly and cheerfully?



This is hard to do all the time, which is why it is so important to pray to Jesus for help.

SLIDE SIX

By praying for the grace to share God's love, Thérèse managed to follow her **Little Way** for the rest of her life. But she did it so humbly that the other nuns never noticed.

One of the nuns who lived alongside Thérèse said, *'I cannot understand why people speak of Sister Thérèse as if she were a saint. She never does anything notable.'*

But that is just why Thérèse became a saint; not by seeking to be great and much-loved, but by seeking to love much through her littleness.

Sadly, Thérèse died aged just 24. Following her death the nuns couldn't think of anything special to say about her. She had seemed quiet and ordinary. Then they remembered that she had kept a diary, and it was on reading this that they realised how extraordinary she had been.

The nuns decided to share her ideas with others and soon Thérèse's Little Way became known throughout the world.

Millions of people chose to follow it – most famously Mother Teresa of Kolkata (Calcutta), who changed her name to Teresa in honour of little Thérèse.

Because of Thérèse's influence, a few years after her death, the Pope made ordinary Thérèse the extraordinary St Thérèse of Lisieux.



SLIDE SEVEN

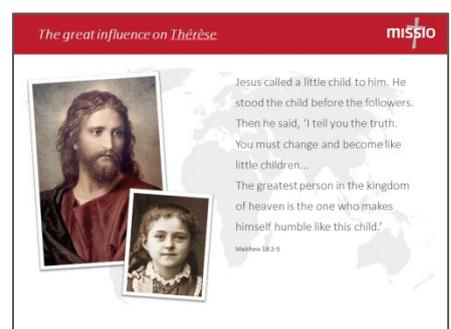
By reading the the words and actions of Jesus in the Gospels Thérèse developed her love and understanding of God.

We can do this too, and just as Jesus' words guided Thérèse, they can guide us too.

Listen carefully to what God might be saying to you through these words from the Gospel of St Matthew.

Jesus called a little child to him. He stood the child before the followers. Then he said, 'I tell you the truth. You must change and become like little children... The greatest person in the kingdom of heaven is the one who makes himself humble like this child.'

(Matthew 18:2-5)



SLIDE EIGHT

Just two years after being made a saint, the Pope made Thérèse Patron Saint of Missionaries, because of her lifelong commitment to missionaries and their work.

You can follow her example:

- By praying and fundraising for Missio, Pope Francis' charity for overseas mission. In this way you can help today's missionaries provide practical relief and spiritual support to those living in conflict and poverty overseas.
- By following Thérèse's Little Way, missing no opportunity however small to be missionaries of God's love to everyone.
- By getting to know Jesus yourself, through spending time with God and reflecting on the Gospel. Who knows what plans God has for you?



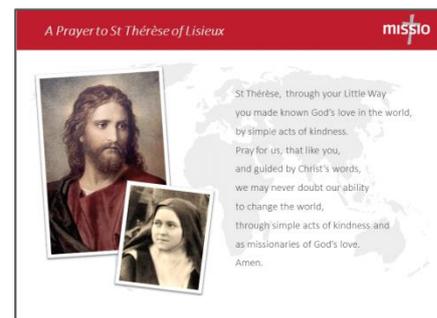
SLIDE NINE

As St Thérèse dedicated so much of her life to prayer, it is apt that we conclude this assembly with prayer too.

Let us ask for St Thérèse's help as we say the following prayer together.

St Thérèse, through your Little Way
you made known God's love in the world
by simple acts of kindness.
Pray for us, that like you,
and guided by Christ's words,
we may never doubt our ability
to change the world
through simple acts of kindness and
as missionaries of God's love.

Amen.



HOLDING SLIDE

