

Assembly – St Thérèse of Lisieux

(Visual stimuli - Bible, flowers in a vase or if a projector is available, pictures of St Thérèse of Lisieux and flowers. If possible, have some wild flowers, e.g. daisies, lilies and roses)

Teacher: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.



Reader 1 : Today we are going to reflect on what we can learn from St Thérèse of Lisieux. St Thérèse lived just over 100 years ago. She led a very simple life and didn't really do anything amazing yet she has been called 'the greatest saint of modern times' and the story of her life has been told all over the world. So what was so special about St Thérèse?

Reader 2 : St Thérèse loved nature, and she used what she saw in nature to explain how much God loves each and everyone of us and how God is with us in the happy and sad times of our lives.

Teacher: Look at these little flowers (use pictures or examples of small wild flowers e.g. daisies. Do the children know what they are? Where have they seen them?). On their own they are something quite beautiful to look at and yet in a garden they would hardly be noticed because of all the bigger and more colourful flowers. St Thérèse saw herself as 'the Little Flower of Jesus' because she was just like the simple wild flowers in forests and fields, unnoticed by so many people, yet growing and giving glory to God. St Thérèse did not see herself as a brilliant rose or a beautiful lily, but simply as a small wild flower. This is how she understood herself before the Lord - simple and hidden, but blooming where God had planted her. She realised that she didn't have to do anything amazing or become famous to be a follower of Jesus. She knew that God was calling her just to be herself and to carry out everything she did with love. This became known as her 'little way'.

Teacher: (Hold up a rose - do the children know what it is? What can they tell you about roses e.g. that they have thorns, they have many petals, different colours, where they might be found) Look at this rose. St Thérèse saw beauty in all creation and she especially loved flowers. The rose is a beautiful flower but it has thorns on its stem. Life can be like a rose, there are moments of joy and there are moments of sadness; the flower is like the joy and the thorns are like the sadness. St Thérèse knew both joy and sadness in her life. Her mother died when she was only four and she herself was very ill when she was only 23. But St Thérèse found great joy in serving Jesus by helping others in small ways. Just like the thorns and the flowers make up the rose, so joy and suffering are both part of life and they help us to become the person God has created us to be.

Listen to this poem by Meg Harrison:

With Rose In Hand

Prayer is worth more than a rose
in my hand where love grows
for God and all he knows.
The rose has a thorn
which Jesus felt on the crown He had worn.
the rose is red as the blood from His head
when He was crucified before we were born.

Reader 3: St Thérèse said all flowers are beautiful in the eyes of God; He loves them all equally. In the same way God loves all people equally. St Paul tells us that God does not have favourites. St Thérèse tried hard to show love to everyone, even the people who annoyed her because she understood that everyone is loved by God. Like St Thérèse we are called to show love to everyone, even those people we don't get on with.

Reader 4: (hold up the Bible) St Thérèse read the Bible and tried to follow Jesus' teachings. Listen to this reading from Matthew's Gospel:

Reader 5: ...the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them, and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Gospel Reading: Matthew 18:1-4

Reader 6: St Therese followed this teaching by living her 'little way' - by simply serving everyone around her with great love and kindness.

Teacher: So, what can we learn from the life of St Thérèse of Lisieux?

(invite children's responses then summarise to the following)

- We do not have to do anything amazing to be followers of Jesus. God wants us just to be the best we can be at all times so that in little ways, we can give glory to Him;
- Joy and suffering are both part of life and God is with us in the both the happy and sad times (reminder of the rose flower and thorns);
- God loves everyone the same - He has no favourites. We must try to show love and kindness to everyone.

HYMN: Seek ye first the kingdom of God / All that I am / I, the Lord of Sea and Sky / I give my hands to do your will (explain your choice to the children relating it to the assembly)

Teacher: Let us ask St Thérèse to help us know Jesus more. The response to each prayer is 'pray for us'.

Saint Thérèse, who wanted to be like Jesus ... *pray for us.*
Saint Thérèse, who wanted people who suffer to know the kindness of Jesus ...
Saint Thérèse, who forgot herself to make others happy ...
Saint Thérèse, who wanted to love others as Jesus loves them ...
Saint Thérèse, who praised and thanked God for the beauty of creation ...
Saint Thérèse, who tells us of the gentleness of Jesus ...
Saint Thérèse, faithful in the littlest things ...
Saint Thérèse, full of joy and laughter ...
Saint Thérèse, patient and courageous ...
Saint Thérèse, who loved to read the Word of God ...
Saint Thérèse, who loved to receive Holy Communion ...
Saint Thérèse, who came before God with empty hands ...
Saint Thérèse, who when in great pain asked Jesus to help her ...
Saint Thérèse, everyone's sister ...
Saint Thérèse, close to those who are afraid ...
Saint Thérèse of Lisieux ...

Let us be still and think about something special that we would like God to do for us. It could be to make someone who is sad happy; it could make to make someone who is poorly well again. St Thérèse will help us to make a better prayer to God. When God answered St Thérèse's prayers it was as if God had picked a rose from heaven and given it to her. It was something beautiful, let's ask her to help us in our prayers today:

O Little Thérèse of the Child Jesus,
please pick for me a rose from the heavenly garden
and send it to me as a message of love.

O Little Flower of Jesus, ask God, today, to grant
the favours I now place with confidence in your hands...
(Mention in your mind and heart the specific request)

St. Thérèse, help me to always believe, as you did, in God's great love for me,
so that I might imitate your "Little Way" each day. **Amen.**

Teacher: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
All: **Amen.**

Some other Rose poems that could be used in the assembly or in follow-up work:

A Rose by Nuku Desmond

A rose to rise
A rose to fall
A rose to conquer all
Thorns that hurt
Thorns that protect
Thorns to start what cannot be stopped
One rose to say one word
One rose to say many words
Several roses to say nothing at all

From rise to fall
From hurt to protect
A rose is a rose
That can mean many things
But all depends on you
Your interpretation
Your perspective
Your own heart
With its own rose
Its own thorns

The Rose by Christina Rossetti

The lily has a smooth stalk,
Will never hurt your hand;
But the rose upon her brier
Is lady of the land.

There's sweetness in an apple tree,
And profit in the corn;
But lady of all beauty
Is a rose upon a thorn.

When with moss and honey
She tips her bending brier,
And half unfolds her glowing heart,
She sets the world on fire.