



¡Adorada sea la Santa Faz de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo!

**IGLESIA CRISTIANA PALMARIANA
DE LOS CARMELITAS DE LA SANTA FAZ**

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One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Palmarian Church



SACRED DECREE ON CANONIZATIONS

We, Peter III, Sovereign Pontiff, Vicar of Christ, Successor of Saint Peter, Servant of the servants of God, Patriarch of Palmar de Troya, *de Glória Ecclesiæ*, Herald of the Lord God of Hosts, Good Shepherd of souls, Aflame with the Zeal of Elias and Defender of the Rights of God and of the Church.

We, as Universal Doctor of the Church, by virtue of Our Apostolic Authority:

On the 30th of September in the year 2017, 120th anniversary of the death of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, in the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Crowned Mother of Palmar, We proceeded to the Canonization of the following six Nuns, raising them to the Glory of the Altars:

Mother Agnes of Jesus (in the world, Marie Pauline Martin). Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017.

Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart (in the world, Marie Louise Martin). Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017.

Sister Frances Teresa (in the world, Marie Leonie Martin). Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017.

Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face (in the world, Marie Celine Martin). Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017.

Sister Mary of the Eucharist (in the world, Marie Guerin). Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017.

Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa (in the world, Clare Marie Radegundes Bertrand). Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017.

With great jubilation, we communicate to all the faithful of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic and Palmarian Church the happiest event of the elevation to the Glory of the Altars of these six Saints, so that you imitate their heroic virtues and invoke them in your needs:

Saint Agnes of Jesus, pray for us!

Saint Mary of the Sacred Heart, pray for us!

Saint Frances Teresa, pray for us!

Saint Genevieve of the Holy Face, pray for us!

Saint Mary of the Eucharist, pray for us!

Saint Genevieve of Saint Teresa, pray for us!

We now give a brief biographical sketch:

1.- Saint Agnes of Jesus (Marie Pauline Martin)

On the 7th of September 1861, Marie Pauline Martin came into this world at the home of her parents Saint Louis Joseph Martin and Saint Celia Martin née Guerin, in Alençon, Normandy, France. At the birth of each of her children, Celia prayed: "Lord, give this child the Grace to be consecrated to Thee, and that nothing

harm the purity of her soul. If she were to be lost, I would prefer that you take her home to Thysel without delay.” Little Marie Pauline was very like her mother, both in personality as well as in appearance. She was the second daughter of Louis and Celia. Her baptism took place the following day when Marie Pauline was taken in her mother’s arms to Saint Peter’s Cathedral.

Marie Pauline’s mother used to go to Mass every day. Before attending Mass she would first pray reverently before the image of Our Lady. Modest at heart, Celia entreated Our Lady that each of the children God had granted to herself and her husband might become saints in the future. She also asked Our Lady that her children might be more reverent towards God than she was herself.

From very young, Marie Pauline had the same poor health as her elder sister Marie Louise. Though Marie Pauline fell seriously ill with whooping cough, by many prayers and with her family at her side, the illness soon disappeared. Marie Pauline was ever very affectionate towards her family and accompanied her affection with a gentle angelical voice. Just through instinct she constantly gave many kisses to her family, and even sent kisses to the images of Jesus and Our Lady.



Louis and Celia took special interest in the upbringing of each of their children. From the first moments of Marie Pauline’s life, her parents corrected whatever she did wrong. They never allowed Marie Pauline to get off scot-free if she did something wrong, even when she was very small. Her mother already punished her at two years of age whenever she was stubborn, which happened frequently, until the child overcame this.

Before Marie Louise and Marie Pauline went to bed, their parents would read them the Lives of the Saints, promoting, instilling and fostering in them the spirit of Faith, showing them that the things which the world offered were quite simply vain. At times Celia took Marie Louise and Marie Pauline to the Cathedral to pray before the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Louis and Celia ever taught them the importance of “obeying through love, always trying to make Jesus happy and, most important of all, making little sacrifices for Him.” A small example of the way Marie Pauline made sacrifices: when her sisters wanted to use something of hers, Celia told her to let them, so as to gain another pearl for her crown, and lovingly Marie Pauline would obey.

Marie Pauline’s education began at home until the time came for a formal education. Her mother began to make preparations so that she and Marie Louise might attend the boarding school of the Visitation in Le Mans. That was the perfect place for the Martin daughters since Sister Mary Dositea, Celia’s sister, was there to watch over them. Marie Pauline wrote years later: “If I had not had Marie Louise with me, I truly believe that I would have died of sorrow, so dearly did I love my parents. But I did not cry on saying goodbye, because Marie Louise cried enough for the two of us! I said to myself: enough for one to cry, mama and papa would be sad if I cried as well.”

On the 2nd of January 1873, Marie Louise and Marie Pauline were at home on holidays and their mother gave birth to a daughter. On the following day they were able to see her: Marie Frances Thérèse, though they just called her Thérèse.

Marie Pauline continued working hard to learn, studying her catechism with fervour, preparing for First Holy Communion. She wanted to make every effort, full of meaning, for the time when she was to consecrate herself to God. On the 2nd of July 1874, at the Visitation in Le Mans, with a beautiful white dress and white veil, Marie Pauline went up to the Altar to receive her First Communion. Her family prayed for her in the Chapel. Later she wrote: “I think I made my First Communion very well: I was already thinking of becoming a Nun.” And watching one of her schoolmistresses making a retreat prior to her religious profession, she thought: “O how beautiful it is to become a Nun! When shall I make my retreat and at last become a Spouse of Jesus?” She thought of entering a Visitation convent.

Her mother wanted Marie Pauline to preserve her virginity. When smaller, her mother would sit her on her knees and narrate to her the lives of the saints. One day she told her: “Only virgins can follow the way of the spotless Lamb, Jesus, and they will be crowned with white roses while singing a song that others will not be able to hear.” Marie Pauline declared to her mother that she never wanted to marry and would always be a

virgin for Jesus. Louis and Celia wanted each of their children to consecrate themselves to God in the religious life. Marie Pauline was the first of their daughters to show an interest in becoming a nun; and Celia, seeing her daughter's aspirations, began slowly to cultivate in her soul the desire of achieving them.

Marie Pauline learnt to sew and embroider, and had a passion for painting, using the attic as a studio; she painted several watercolours which her father framed, and little miniatures as well. Like her mother she showed great energy, and succeeded in doing much in a short time.

Soon, in October 1876, things began to go badly. It was Marie Pauline's last year as a pupil at the Visitation boarding school. By December it was known that her aunt, Sister Marie Dositea, who had contracted tuberculosis, was very ill. It was a heart-rending experience for Marie Pauline to see her "substitute mother" suffer so much from this illness, at that time fatal. Moreover, Marie Pauline learnt that her mother had cancer. In January 1877, Celia went to see her sister for the last time, and also to console Marie Pauline. She told her: "Be of good heart, my dear Marie Pauline, whatever God sends us, we should accept. If I lose my dear sister, I will not cry for her but for myself. She will be happy; it will be we who will suffer. But this suffering will be softened by her happiness." On the 24th of February 1877, Marie Pauline's venerable aunt, Sister Mary Dositea, passed away.

After finishing her schooling, Marie Pauline spent her time with her mother, grievously ill with cancer, trying to alleviate her sufferings. Her mother told her with a loving look: "Poor little soul! What a holiday for



you! And I was so happy to have you back at home for good! O my Marie Pauline, you are my treasure. I know well that one day you will be a Nun." Celia's physical pain from the cancer spread through her whole body. The pain became unbearable, so that it was impossible for her to move an inch without sobbing. As Marie Pauline sat beside her, the mother took her hand, kissed it and with it pointed towards her sisters. Celia did this to show that she was passing her whole motherly responsibility over to her. Celia's painful exit from this world took place close to midnight on the 28th of August 1877. On the 29th of August, the family accompanied their mother's body to the Cathedral and then to Our Lady's cemetery in Alençon.

Family life returned to normal after moving to their new home in Lisieux. Every morning Louis, Marie Louise and Marie Pauline attended Mass at the Cathedral. Marie Pauline prepared her sister Thérèse for school. Years later, Thérèse told her: "I often asked myself how you were able to bring me up with so much loving kindness without spoiling me. You never allowed a single fault of mine to slip by without a reprimand, and every complaint was truly deserved." Thérèse reached the age for her first Confession. To prepare her, Marie Pauline had her examine her conscience every day to see if she had committed some sin or not. Marie Pauline asked her to confess her sins to the Priest as though she were speaking to God.

Marie Pauline continued painting her miniatures and portraits, admired by the family for their great detail. She was also a good seamstress and made an alb with finely embroidered lace.

After five years at *Les Buissonnets* in Lisieux, it was time for Marie Pauline to respond to her calling to the religious life. In February 1882, while praying before the image of the Virgin of Mount Carmel in the Church of Saint James, Marie Pauline received the clear inspiration that she should become a Carmelite Nun and not a nun of the Visitation as she had thought. Following this revelation, Marie Pauline began frequently to visit the convent of the Carmelites in Lisieux, where she spoke to the Prioress about entering the Order. Marie Pauline then had the difficult task of telling her father of her intentions. Worried about how he would react, she told him when he had just finished praying. To her surprise, he took the news quite calmly. Her father's one worry was for his daughter's health, given the austerity of the Carmelite Order. Though later that day, he went up to her and said: "My Marie Pauline, I give you my permission to enter Carmel for your own happiness, but do not think that it will be no sacrifice for me, for I love you dearly."

On the 2nd of October 1882, Marie Pauline entered the Carmelite convent as a postulant. On the 6th of April 1883, Marie Pauline officially became a novice and received the new name of Sister Agnes of Jesus. In her pretty bride's dress of white satin and lace veil covering her head, accompanied by her father she went up to the altar; the family sat close by in the Chapel. During her time in the noviciate, Sister Agnes of Jesus learnt the devotion to the Holy Face of the Lord under the direction of the saintly Mother Genevieve of Saint

Teresa, considered as the convent's foundress. In the Carmelite convent of Tours, a Nun, Saint Mary Saint Peter of the Holy Family, had received revelations on the mysteries of the Holy Face. After studying these revelations, Mother Genevieve introduced the practice of this devotion into her own convent, a devotion which Sister Agnes of Jesus faithfully followed. Later, when her sisters entered, she introduced this devotion to them. Afterwards Saint Thérèse said: "It was Mother Agnes of Jesus who unveiled to me the depths of the treasures hidden in the Saviour's Holy Face."

Sister Agnes of Jesus took prayer as the pivot of her search to please God, allowing Him to reform her heart. She did not use prayer for what she herself wanted but for what God wanted of her. As an act of devotion to God, Sister Agnes of Jesus did many penances to save numerous souls. Her youthful talents for painting miniatures continued in convent life. She painted religious figures in quantity and images on cards and letters. She wrote admirable poetry advocating unconditional love for God in order to stay faithful to Him.



On the 8th of May 1884, Sister Agnes of Jesus made her religious profession. Wearing the novice's white veil and bearing a crown of roses on her head, she entered the chapter room, knelt before the Prioress, Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa, and took her vows, with her Carmelite sisters as witnesses. Later, her father told Sister Agnes of Jesus how very proud of her he was and how thankful to God for having given her so lofty a vocation. On the 16th of July 1884, the Martin family went to the Carmelite Chapel to see the final ceremony of taking the habit. Marie Pauline's white veil was changed for a black one. A crown of roses was set upon the black veil. Marie Pauline had taken the final steps to give her whole life to God. The Martin family's eldest daughter, her sister Marie Louise, entered the same convent on the 15th of October 1886. The two

sisters, previously inseparable when at boarding school, were together again.

Saint Thérèse entered the convent on the 9th of April 1888. She was continually humiliated before the other nuns by the Prioress, Mother Mary of Gonzaga, during her time in the noviciate, without there being any reason to justify this. It hurt Sister Agnes of Jesus to see her sister treated unfairly, and she went up to the prioress to speak to her of this. At all events, the prioress did not completely agree and replied to Sister Agnes of Jesus saying: "Well, that is one of the disadvantages of having sisters... she has more pride than you think and needs frequent humiliation." Saint Thérèse as well encouraged Sister Agnes of Jesus to use each humiliation and physical suffering as a means for saving souls.

In January 1889, Sister Agnes of Jesus fell seriously ill. She often had severe headaches which made it difficult for her to carry on with her duties, and made her feel sick. This greatly worried her sisters, who endeavoured to watch over her closely, including when in retreat. Her sisters sent her little notes encouraging her to bear her suffering for love of Jesus. Thérèse wrote to her: "The little lamb entreates you not to leave for Heaven. If your place there is already prepared, please wait for me so that we can go home together. I am praying so that you stay longer here on earth, in exile."

Sister Agnes of Jesus repeated to her sister the need to concentrate exclusively and solely on Jesus. Sister Thérèse replied and told her how grateful she felt towards her "substitute mother", for it was she who had taught her to love Jesus and seek Him alone. Sister Agnes of Jesus also taught Sister Thérèse to be always hidden and not set herself up as a light for others. We should seek Jesus for Him to be our sole source of Light, and that He not allow us to say a word to get others to think better of us.

Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa saw Sister Agnes of Jesus' qualities of leadership. On her deathbed she prophesied to her sister Carmelites that Sister Agnes' public life as future prioress of the Carmel would soon begin. On the 5th of December 1891, Mother Genevieve's soul went to Heaven.

Just as the foundress had foreseen, in February 1893, Mother Agnes of Jesus was elected Prioress of the convent. But she was never known as "Mother Agnes" by her sister Carmelites; rather she was called "my dear mother" or "little mother", since Mother Agnes of Jesus was very slight and small of stature in comparison with the rest of the Carmelite sisters. The previous prioress, Mother Mary of Gonzaga, made life difficult for the new Prioress, but Mother Agnes of Jesus displayed the same calm towards her as towards the rest of the Carmelite sisters. In each of these acts of humility, Saint Thérèse saw the opportunity for Mother Agnes of Jesus to gain pearls for her crown in Heaven. In December 1893, Mother Agnes of Jesus again fell

ill. She used her suffering as the occasion for saving more souls. She soon recovered and went back to her obligations as Prioress.

Louis Martin's soul was closer to Heaven. Early in the morning of the 28th of July 1894, Louis passed away. Marie Celine Martin, who had cared for him with great abnegation, then entered the Carmel of Lisieux on the 14th of September 1894. Her sisters were very happy to receive her. She was given the name of Sister Mary of the Holy Face, later changed to that of Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face.



Perhaps the most important of Mother Agnes of Jesus' three years as Prioress was the order she gave to Sister Thérèse in December 1894 to write down her childhood memories for her sisters. She obeyed in simplicity and handed over notebooks filled with inspired pages to the Mother Prioress as a gift for her Saint's day in January 1896. But Mother Agnes did not read them until two months later, and was moved at the treasure she had in her hands. All Mother Agnes of Jesus' teachings to Saint Thérèse were reflected in the manuscript. Later she obtained permission from the following Mother Prioress that Saint Thérèse complete the account of her religious life, which resulted in chapters IX and X of the "Story of a Soul". At the prospect of the immense good that the publication of this work would do, making God's Merciful Love better known, Mother Agnes confided her plan to Saint Thérèse, then moribund, who expressly told her: "You should revise everything I have written. If you see anything that needs to be added or removed, it will be as though I myself had done so. Remember this

afterwards, and have no scruples about it."

The spiritual union between Mother Agnes of Jesus and Saint Thérèse was very intimate. Without having to say a word, everything was revealed to their souls. One day when Mother Agnes of Jesus entered the infirmary, Saint Thérèse told her how strong their union was: "Little Mother is my telephone, I only have to prick up my ears when she comes, and I know everything."

Mother Agnes of Jesus began to write down her conversations with Saint Thérèse in a yellow notebook, published in 1925 under the title of "Novíssima Verba" or "Last conversations". On attending her one day, the moribund told Mother Agnes: "You have always acted that way with me... I can't express my gratitude." And drying her eyes: "I am crying because I am so moved at everything you have done for me from childhood. How very much I owe you! But when I am in Heaven I will tell the truth, I will tell the saints: it was my little mother who gave me everything that pleases you in me." And on other days: "You are always here to console me... you fill my days with sweetness"; "you don't know how much I love you, and I will show it to you"; "you are my light"; "it was you who sowed the seed of confidence in my soul"; "I would like to have you with me always, you are my sun"; "if you only knew all that you mean to me! only in Heaven will you know what you are to me. You are a lyre, a song, even when you are silent"; and on the day of her death: "The consolations you have given me are so great!" Mother Agnes of Jesus told her: "I will be your herald; I will proclaim your heroic feats, I will try to get the world to love and serve God through all the lights He has given you, lights which will never fade away." The holy death of Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face took place on the 30th of September 1897.

Mother Agnes of Jesus convinced the Prioress at that time, Mother Mary of Gonzaga, to allow Saint Thérèse's manuscripts to be published. On the following 30th of September, first anniversary of her death, an edition of two thousand copies was printed; the first were sent to the Carmelite convents, according to custom following the death of a religious. But the spark thus struck soon became a flame, and requests for the book came from all parts, and a wave of devotion spread throughout the whole world.

Devotion to Saint Thérèse and interest in her life grew, and with the passing years it became impossible for Mother Agnes, again Prioress as from April 1902, to answer all the letters she received, sometimes hundreds each day. With her great capacity she had energy enough to comply with the immense task of her sister's beatification and at the same time be a good prioress. One of her sister Carmelites wrote a letter to her saying: "I find you so full of mercy that it seems to me that God could not add any more, oh how much I love you!" At first sight her sisters saw the daily difficulties which Mother Agnes of Jesus faced both inside and outside the convent. She had the twofold task of covering the needs of her sister Carmelites and those of the numerous visitors. To deal with everything she always asked God for His help at each task, practising

humility and simplicity. In a letter to Sister Frances Teresa, her sister, she told her: "I don't know why my sisters love me so. Ever since becoming prioress I haven't needed to repeat anything." And it was wholly for love of God that she bore the heavy yoke of this work. Her prodigious activity covered everything with impressive ease: the editions of publications related to Saint Thérèse; numerous interviews with members of the hierarchy; correspondence with many prelates in Rome, including Popes; countless letters from all parts of the world. Then came the successive fruits: the declaration of heroic virtue (14th of August 1921), beatification (29th of April 1923), and canonization (17th of May 1925). She wrote to Sister Frances Teresa (Marie Leonie) towards the end of 1924: "The canonization will be on the 17th of May. What great things we are seeing! But as for me, however greater they are, the more I love littleness, the more I repeat Jesus' words to myself: 'Learn from Me, who am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.' O what a sublime truth! We will never have any true deep joy without humility!"

A Priest writer went to visit Sister Frances Teresa at her Visitation convent in Caen, and asked her about the sanctity of Mother Agnes of Jesus: "Do you believe that Mother Agnes of Jesus is a Saint?" Without doubting for a moment, she backed up his opinion regarding her sanctity affirming: "I do not think that there is any superioress so highly esteemed." The Priest wrote: "Saint Thérèse owes much of her sanctity to her holy parents, and to Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart and Mother Agnes of Jesus, her holy sisters. I would not be surprised if the Church were to declare them Saints."

Pope Saint Pius XI honoured her by naming her life-long prioress on the 31st of May 1923. Though Mother Agnes of Jesus at first felt overcome by the honour and responsibility, she accepted saying: "Let it be as the Holy Father wishes, I am a Carmelite Nun and will obey."

On many occasions the Holy See entrusted grievous and apparently lost cases to the prayers of the Lisieux Carmel for the intercession of Saint Thérèse. And Mother Agnes of Jesus' zeal sought out solutions which were received in Rome with great pleasure. Thus she won the esteem of Pope Saint Pius XI and also of Pope Saint Pius XII, who almost always answered her in his own writing.

During the Second World War, Lisieux was occupied by the Nazis, and in June 1944 was bombarded by the allied forces. This military action destroyed Lisieux's two main churches besides two monasteries. The area around the Carmelite convent was set on fire and the life of the Community was in danger. Mother Agnes had to abandon the building, and together with her community sought refuge in the Basilica. After two days of bombardment, and more than 700 dead, all the Carmelite nuns returned to the convent alive. On seeing the world again in 1944, Mother Agnes and her sister beheld with pain that the modest dresses of times previous to their entry into the convent were no longer worn, and that there was no dignity in the way people dressed.

As sisters, relations between Mother Agnes of Jesus and Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face were very close. Following the death of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart and of Sister Francis Teresa, Saint Thérèse's legacy was in their hands. They went on working fervently on books and illustrations, and depended ever more on one another.

When 1949 came, Mother Agnes of Jesus contracted a lung infection. She realized that she was no longer the strong woman of other times. She was 87 years of age and depended on others for many manual tasks. Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face, always at her side, helped her in such a way that Mother Agnes of Jesus became totally dependant on her. Mother Agnes of Jesus accepted this as God's will and sought in Him her inspiration and peace. Even in the midst of her sufferings, she was still so very sweet and serene, completely abandoned in God.

Towards the middle of July 1951, at almost ninety years of age, it became evident that only a few days remained to her on earth. She lapsed into a coma and received Extreme Unction every day. On the 28th of July 1951, moments before her death, she recovered consciousness, and with a look embraced all her sister religious, who were praying invocations, ending with: "Saint Thérèse, help me, come and take me". At that moment the soul of Mother Agnes of Jesus flew to her Creator.

Among the thousands of letters and telegrams received in the Lisieux Carmel, was the following letter, signed by the Pope himself: "Having heard with pain the news of the death of our dearest daughter, Agnes of Jesus, we commend the soul of your venerated Prioress to Divine Mercy, through the intercession of the Saint of whom she was both sister and mother, and We grant to Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face and to all the Nuns, our Apostolic Blessing. Pius PP XII."

Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017 and canonized on the 30th of September 2017 by His Holiness Pope Peter III.

2.- Saint Mary of the Sacred Heart (Marie Louise Martin)

Marie Louise Martin was born in Alençon, Lower Normandy, France, on the 22nd of February 1860. Marie Louise was the first of the nine children born to Saint Louis Joseph Martin and Saint Celia Martin née Guerin. They named their daughter Marie in honour of Our Lady. Four of the nine children died at an early age, five daughters surviving: Marie Louise, Marie Pauline, Marie Leonie, Marie Celine and Marie Frances Thérèse. Marie Louise was baptized in February 1860. Her spirit was strong and valorous, but Marie Louise's temperament was direct and frank. Her family gave her the nickname "the gipsy", thus praising her grace and her art in winning others to her cause; though years later her father referred to her as his dear "Diamond". Marie Pauline, the second daughter, was born on the 7th of September 1861.

Louis and Celia took a special interest in the upbringing of each of their children. The saintly mother taught Marie Louise and Marie Pauline how to pray to God. Every morning and every night, their mother knelt with them beside their beds, and together they said their prayers to God. Before Marie Louise and



Marie Pauline went to bed, their parents read them Lives of the Saints. Saint Celia and Saint Louis promoted, instilled and fostered their spirit of Faith, showing them that the things which the world offered them were quite simply empty. At times, Celia took Marie Louise and Marie Pauline to the Cathedral to pray before the Most Blessed Sacrament. Louis and Celia always taught them the importance of obeying through love, that they should always try to make Jesus happy, and most important, make little sacrifices for Him.

In October 1868, Marie Louise entered the boarding school of the Visitation in Le Mans (France) at the age of eight. Her beloved aunt, Sister Mary Dositea (Saint Celia's sister) taught at the boarding school, and it was she who gave her spiritual and moral advice during her life as pupil at the boarding school, and on falling sick, Marie Louise prayed constantly to Saint Joseph to intercede in her aunt's cure, and did not resign herself by thinking that her death would be God's will, rather sought to change it. On the 2nd of July 1869, Marie Louise's prayers were heard, and Sister Mary Dositea, who lived seven more years, was witness to her First Communion. This was one of the happiest days in Marie Louise's life, who at that time was already living in intimate union with Jesus Christ. When the day was over, she began to lament that everything had happened so quickly. Marie Louise's mother wrote to Sister Mary Dositea: "Marie Louise seems timid and reserved, but beneath her timidity there is a heart of gold." In 1869, Marie Louise received Confirmation, adopting the name of Josephine in thanksgiving to Saint Joseph for her aunt's cure. Marie Louise and her sister Marie Pauline sang in the Church, and she always stood out in her family for her beautiful voice.

In the year 1873, Marie Louise contracted typhus, and was sent home from the Visitation boarding school. The illness was long, with several relapses. On the 5th of May 1873, after almost three weeks of pain, her father Saint Louis went almost thirty kilometres on foot in pilgrimage to a church, praying and fasting for her cure, in a valorous effort to save her life. Her parents watched over her throughout her grievous illness. During the time of her illness, her mother told her: "It may be that one day you shall have to take charge of your little sisters and of the house, after my death."

Marie Louise's mother, Saint Celia, decided to speak to her on the possibility of entering into marriage, which displeased her greatly. Marie Louise told her mother that she would never marry, and entreated her to speak no more of the matter.

Marie Louise and two other sisters went together with their mother on a last pilgrimage to visit Our Lady of Lourdes, to ask for the cure of Celia's breast cancer. But the cancer was not to be cured. Marie Louise promised her mother that she would take care of her sisters. Her mother told her: "Keep on dedicating yourself increasingly to your sisters. I think that on observing you, they will have a good model to imitate." Marie Louise was 17 years old when her mother died, on the 28th of August 1877. Celia's body was watched by family and friends, and on several occasions Marie Louise felt the need to be beside her mother, and said: "I don't get tired of looking at her. She seems twenty years old. I thought that she was beautiful. I had a

supernatural feeling when beside her. I felt that she had not really died, but that she was more alive than ever.”

Following Celia’s death, the family moved to Lisieux, in November 1878, to be closer to their mother’s relations, the Guerin family. The whole family continued to take part in acts of charity towards the needy, now of Lisieux. Beggars went up to their home to ask for food, clothing and money; and the family continued offering help not only to those who came to their home, but visited those who could not get about. Marie Louise made the following reflection: “How I want to save souls! But to do so, I have to become a saint, since only the saints master their own hearts.”



Just as Marie Louise promised her mother, she took charge of household duties, and helped her aunt with the business accounts, while her younger sisters went to school. During this time, Marie Louise accompanied her father on several journeys to Paris, to close Celia’s lace business, as also to attend Mass during Holy Week. Marie Louise and her family went on different pilgrimages to sacred places in France during her childhood.

Marie Louise supervised her sisters’ upbringing, giving them a good example to follow, concerning herself with them in a constant and loving way. Marie Louise asked the Lord that her sisters might serve Him alone. Years later, Saint Thérèse said: “I felt that Marie Pauline and Marie Louise were the most tender and sacrificed of mothers.” Marie Louise constantly trusted in her holy mother’s intercession in Heaven in order to care for her sisters, as she wrote to her father: “I trust more in my holy mother’s protection than in my own poor efforts, in order to complete properly the formation of my poor sisters.” She used examples from everyday life to enlighten her sisters regarding the virtues for leading a life in Christ.

Thus Marie Louise would say: “Look at shopkeepers, all the problems they have to earn their living, while we can amass treasures for Heaven without all those problems; we just need to gather up diamonds with a rake.” Marie Louise would sit Marie Celine and Thérèse on her knees and read them spiritual books and give them instructions, especially trying to infuse into their souls the happiness of living in God’s love. She taught them how to obtain sanctity by being faithful in the littlest things. Saint Thérèse described Marie Louise and her teachings thus: “I believe that her great and generous spirit has passed on to mine. As old warriors taught their sons the art of battle, she taught me life’s combats, awakening my enthusiasm and directing me to the glorious palm. Marie Louise also spoke of the immortal riches we can so easily amass every day, also on the misfortune of treading them underfoot when all we have to do is bend down to collect them. I lamented at being the only one to hear her profound teachings, I was convinced that even the greatest sinners would be converted if they were able to hear her, and that on abandoning their perishable riches, they would seek only those of Heaven.” Marie Louise taught them self-dominion and the supernatural spirit of sacrifice. Marie Louise also told stories to interest her sisters in saving souls. She had a “mother’s heart”, as her sisters felt; she explained that the way to become holy is by being faithful in little things. Marie Louise had a presentiment that God would care for her sisters as little children, instead of leading them by the way of suffering.

As Marie Pauline entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux in October of the year 1882, one of Marie Louise’s tasks was to prepare her sister Thérèse for her First Communion, so that she constantly helped her to understand the Catechism. Marie Louise wanted to serve God by becoming a Nun, but she had reserves about enclosure. She hoped for a sign from Heaven before entering the convent, despite everyone telling her that she would receive no such sign. When twenty-two years of age, Marie Louise met Father Almiro Pichon, after he had celebrated Mass. She confided to him her desire to become a Nun and of her doubts regarding total commitment. He asked her to write out a list with all her opinions regarding the religious life and why she did not feel ready to serve Him as a Nun. Marie Louise wrote eight pages with her thoughts and went through them with Father Pichon for an hour, following which she felt as though “trapped in the nets of divine mercy”, and took the decision to serve God as a Nun. This was the sign she had sought for, and said: “Jesus has looked upon me with special love.” On the 25th of March 1885, Marie Louise took a private vow of chastity. Marie Louise soon confessed to her father Saint Louis that she wanted to enter Carmel, which at first deeply saddened him. After embracing her, he said: “God could not have asked a greater sacrifice of me.

I believed that you would never forsake me.” Marie Louise prepared Marie Celine to take charge of the home and of her little sister.

On the 15th of October 1886, Marie Louise entered the Carmelite convent of Lisieux at 26 years of age. There she received the name of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart. In February 1887, before her profession, she received a letter from Saint Thérèse: “Dear sister, you cannot image how much I love you and how much happiness I desire for you here on Earth. You are dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose beloved spouse you will soon become.” On the 19th of March 1887, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart received the habit. Thérèse as well entered the same Carmelite convent on the 9th of April 1888.

On the 22nd of May 1888 she made her profession, and Saint Thérèse placed a crown of roses on her head. Her final profession meant “a confirmation of the eternal crown awaiting her in Heaven”. Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart thanked her father for the gifts he had made to the Carmelite convent, promising him that she



would not defraud him: “O you, the best of fathers, who give to God all the hope of your old age without counting the cost. Yours is the glory, imperishable glory. Yes, beloved father, we shall glorify you, as you deserve to be glorified, by becoming Saints. You deserve no less than that.”

In December 1894, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart proposed to Mother Agnes of Jesus that she ask Saint Thérèse, their sister, to write down her childhood memoirs. Saint Thérèse began her manuscript in January 1895, and gave it to the Mother Superior one year later. In 1895, Saint Thérèse approached Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart and asked her if she wanted to become a “victim of God’s Merciful Love”. Her first instinct was to reject this request, telling her: “Of course not, since if I offer myself as victim, God will take me at my word, and I greatly fear suffering. Besides, far from inspiring me, I have always felt rejection at the word victim.” But shortly after Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart had turned down the petition, Saint Thérèse explained to her that when one offers oneself as victim of God’s love, it is different from surrendering to His Justice: “It does not

always mean an increase in suffering but gives you the capability of loving God more.” Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart was convinced and made the “Offering to God’s Merciful Love”, and found her vocation, which was Love. In the coming years, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart dedicated herself to the widespread group of friends and benefactors of the Carmel. She showed herself to be one of the most ardent apostles of the Act of Offering. Every time she could, she recommended the “Offering of Love” to all those to whom she wrote.

Between the 8th and the 17th of September 1896, she asked Saint Thérèse to write another manuscript on her “closeness to God”. Saint Thérèse accompanied her manuscript with a letter in which she expressed the influence of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart in her life: “This child, whom you offered to Our Lord, and who addresses you this evening, is one who loves you as a child loves her mother... O dear sister, you want to know the secrets which Jesus confided to your little sister; nonetheless, I realize that He confides in you, for you taught me to gather up the divine instructions.” She also wrote: “How happy we are to understand Jesus’ secrets! If you were to write down all that you know of them for me, what wonderful pages we would read. But I know that you prefer to keep the King’s secrets to yourself. You told me that it is “honourable to confess and reveal God’s works”, yet I believe you are right to keep silent, since it is impossible to express Heaven’s secrets in words of this earth.”

Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart filled different posts in the convent: assistant nurse, gardener, in charge of the refectory, procurator, treasurers, from 1894 to 1933. She also had the task of initiating the new postulants into the Carmelite life. Despite the four sisters being in the Carmelite convent they had very little time to be together, dedicated as they were to the needs of the other nuns.

In 1915, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart wrote to Sister Frances Teresa (Marie Leonie) in Caen: “I suppose that when we are in Heaven and think of earthly life, it will all seem to us like a dream, a bad night in a bad hostel. Yes, that is our life here below, and like you I feel full of courage to climb the mountain of perfection, as I well know that Jesus will take me into His arms, if I place all my trust in Him.”

Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart had rheumatoid arthritis, and from April in the year 1923, her arthritis attacked the muscles and greatly restricted her ability to lead a normal life. As her illness worsened in the course of the year, she was confined to a bed in the infirmary, having to be moved about in a wheelchair. Her inability to move about was the worst penance for her, as she did not want to give work to others and was very independent. She had that illness for 26 years.

Towards the end of 1924, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart fell seriously ill with pneumonia, to the point that her sisters thought that she would die. She knew that she would not die, but thought that her life from then on would be much more difficult. On the 25th of January 1929, she was definitively transferred from her cell to the infirmary; her legs and feet permanently swollen and plagued with ulcers for eleven years.

In her last years, when she could no longer bear the suffering, she would say: "Praying is the state of my soul. I entreat God night and day: My God, help me! come swiftly and help me!" And to urge Him further, would add: "Thou, who art my tender Spouse, have mercy upon me." She always bore the salvation of souls in mind, saying: "I am like someone chained up. I am chained and tied up; my arms hurt me. But I offer it all up to the good God, so that some poor soul may not be enchained and lost for all eternity."



On the 8th of March 1937, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart received the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. She knew that her time on earth was ending and struggled with valour to offer up her suffering to save souls. In June 1939, she wrote her last letter to Sister Frances Teresa (Marie Leonie) in Caen: "We shall go together to Heaven, and the way is so long that we will feel the effects of the journey. Who will be the first of the two to enter? It will surely be me, the most ill. But I do not want to ask God for that because now more than ever we have the opportunity to go on saving souls. That is what gives value to pain, to carry on in the world a few years more, if that be His Will."

In 1939, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart caught a cold with a bad cough, which ended up in pneumonia. She made her last Confession in the second week of January 1940. On the 18th of January 1940, sick, she seemed to be in a trance, speaking very little but set on God and using her suffering to save souls.

She passed away on the 19th of January 1940. Her last words were: "I love Thee", while kissing her Crucifix. At 2,30 in the morning, while she renewed her Offering to Merciful Love, reciting the Our Father and the Hail Mary, she fixed her eyes on Our Lady of the Smile, the image that had smiled on her sister Saint Thérèse, inclined her head and died. She was 79 years old.

Once the Community had left the infirmary, her sisters prepared the body for burial. Mother Agnes of Jesus found the letter she had written to her. While sobbing beside Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart's body, Mother Agnes of Jesus opened the letter and read it out loud. It said that she would spend her eternity making God known by many, "eternity is not long enough for us to comprehend God's infinite goodness, His infinite power and His infinite mercy, His infinite love for us. These are our eternal delights, of which we shall never tire. Our heart is made to understand them and be nourished by them. My one desire is to lose myself in Him."

On the 23rd of January 1940, the remains of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart were laid in the tomb. She had lived in the convent for 53 years, attaining great sanctity. She never saw the outside world again after entering the convent. Her death, like her life, was very simple and very holy. She exchanged her love of freedom for love of service: "I have found Jesus inside these four walls, and finding Him, I have found Heaven." Worn out, left without strength by rheumatism and restricted by pain, up till the end she retained her exceptional courage together with her ingenious originality, without pretences, and her passion for souls. She died happy, having spent her life deeply in love.

Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017 and canonized on the 30th of September 2017 by His Holiness Pope Peter III.

3.- Saint Frances Teresa (Marie Leonie Martin)

Marie Leonie was the third daughter born to Saint Louis Joseph Martin and Saint Celia Martin née Guerin, and came into this world on the 3rd of June 1863. Her proud parents called her Marie Leonie, giving her first

name, as with all their children, in honour of Our Lady. They also gave the name “Joseph” to their sons in honour of Saint Joseph.

The Martins’ family home at that time was in the Pont-Neuf street of Alençon, in Normandy, France. Louis, the father, was a watchmaker and Celia, the mother, made lace. In that same month of June, the Martin family took their newborn daughter to the Cathedral to be baptized.

From the start of her life, Marie Leonie had bad health. At nine months of age, she had whooping cough. After surviving this illness, she had measles which caused severe convulsions owing to the high fever. Her parents were very worried fearing that the girl might not survive her first birthday. Celia then wrote to Sister Mary Dositea, her sister, who was a nun at the Visitation convent in Le Mans. Sister Mary Dositea wrote suggesting the possibility of a novena to the then Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. Celia prayed the novena, saying: “If Marie Leonie is going to be a saint one day, then cure her.” Louis, Marie Leonie’s father, began a pilgrimage to Our Lady of the Seas, entreating the cure of his daughter. After the novena, Marie Leonie was cured and never had any other serious illness during her childhood.



During her childhood, Marie Leonie had serious behavioural difficulties when preparing for school. Her parents worked tirelessly to control her strong character and rebellious nature, helping her to concentrate on her studies. When Marie Leonie was old enough to go to school, Celia wanted to send her as a boarder to the Visitation school in Le Mans, where her two elder sisters were already studying. After attempting this on two occasions without any success owing to the Mother Superior’s refusal, Celia decided to ask for help from Sister Mary Dositea, her sister, by whose intercession the Mother Superior admitted Marie Leonie on trial, in so far as she was able to adapt herself to boarding school discipline. Sister Mary Dositea gave special attention to Marie Leonie while at the Visitation boarding school, helping her in her studies. Nonetheless, she had no success in the case of mathematics, the most difficult subject for Marie Leonie. Despite her good nature, Marie Leonie resisted every

attempt made to teach her, reaching the extreme of having to be sent back home.

In January 1874, Celia once more tried to send her back with the object that she learn Catechism and be able to receive her First Communion, trusting her expressly to the care of her sister. Sister Mary Dositea, using her strong character, tried to control Marie Leonie, but without success, and, on seeing the poor results, changed her tactic, appealing to Marie Leonie’s good heart. This second strategy gave results only for two weeks. Marie Leonie’s stay in the Visitation lasted only three further months because it was impossible for her to control her sudden outbursts of character when she was with other pupils, so that she was incapable of concentrating on learning. When Celia went to collect Marie Leonie, Sister Mary Dositea confessed that in spite of the difficulties in teaching the girl, she had the presentiment that one day Marie Leonie would be called to become a nun at the Visitation. On returning home, Celia decided to educate her own daughter herself, teaching her Catechism for her First Communion.

Marie Leonie was very receptive to her mother’s teachings, so that Celia took her on pilgrimage to the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Sées, in preparation for her First Communion, which was on the 23rd of May 1875. Later Marie Leonie remembered that day saying: “My First Communion was not the happiest day of my life owing to the sufferings I underwent in my childhood due to the trials the Lord sent me.” After her Communion, Marie Leonie went to Lisieux to spend some time with her uncle and aunt. At that time, Marie Leonie was still somewhat rebellious, resisting her parents’ authority; nonetheless, her love for them was quite strong and intense. She was delighted to entertain and care for her little sister Thérèse, singing lullabies to her until she fell asleep. Marie Leonie, however, spent much time alone in her room or with the maid, and her conduct suddenly changed, from peaceful to unruly.

In autumn 1876, Celia told her family that she had breast cancer. Marie Leonie took the news of her mother’s illness badly. In January 1877, Celia visited her sister for the last time, asking her, when she reached Heaven, to ask Our Lady to correct Marie Leonie’s conduct. At the imminent death of her aunt, Marie Leonie asked her sister Marie Louise for help to write a letter to Sister Mary Dositea saying: “My dear aunt, when you reach Heaven, can you ask the good God, that if it be His Will, He grant me the grace to be converted and also give me the vocation to be transformed into a true nun? because I think about that every

day.” The following day, revising the letter before sending it, Marie Louise could not understand the meaning of being converted into “... a true nun...”, so that she asked Marie Leonie what it meant. Marie Leonie answered saying: “A true nun is one who becomes holy and I want to become holy.”

On the 24th of February 1877, Sister Mary Dositea died from tuberculosis amid great suffering. The Martin family went to Le Mans to attend her funeral and pay their last respects to the sister of Celia, who continued to trust that through Sister Mary Dositea’s intercession from Heaven, Marie Leonie’s conduct would change. A couple of weeks later, the change in Marie Leonie became evident and her character improved, and a new relationship was established between mother and daughter. Celia described this situation to her brother Isidore in a letter: “... I cannot do less than think that this transformation is due to the intercession of our Sister Mary Dositea from Heaven, since everything changed two or three weeks after her death. It is thanks to her that I received the grace to understand how to act with Marie Leonie, winning her affection, and I hope that God will allow me to end my task, which is far from finished....”



Celia’s health began to decline. Celia not only cared for the household, but also managed her lace factory, besides having to educate Marie Leonie. Thanks to God, Marie Leonie was by then a gentle well-disposed soul who allowed her mother to teach her to change for the better. Their relations began to bear fruit and they became inseparable. Marie Leonie helped her mother with the lace and she taught Marie Leonie regarding amiability, generosity, sacrifice and the resolve above all things to please the good Jesus. Marie Leonie stayed at her mother’s side until the end.

Celia died on the 28th of August 1877, and Louis kept the promise he had made her, sold their home and moved with his family to “*Les Buissonnets*” (the copses), situated in the locality of Lisieux, to be close to Isidore Guerin, Celia’s brother, his wife Eloise Marie Celine and their family. After her mother’s death, Marie Leonie continued to change for the better, developing great affection for her family and others. This change was noted by all, especially by her sister Marie Louise, who felt that it was her mother from Heaven who was helping Marie Leonie. Her father, whenever he mentioned her, called her “my good Leonie”.

One of her teachers was greatly surprised observing the delicacy of her sentiments expressed in compositions for class work. Marie Leonie strove to express her love towards others, making small sacrifices for neighbour. She ended her schooling on the 1st of October 1881. Later she was to go back and visit her teachers on many occasions.

At that time, helps for the needy were very scarce, so that the family took pains to attend the poor at their home *Les Buissonnets*, giving them food, clothing and money, and had no problems showing their love to the most needy. Marie Leonie followed the example of the family, and in the case of an abandoned old lady, without family or friends, she personally took charge of caring for her in her last hours and of preparing her body when she died. Marie Leonie also performed loving acts towards her family, attending to her little sisters in small things, like giving them her own dolls to play with. Her relations with them were very good.

In October 1886, Marie Luise also decided to enter the Carmelite convent in Lisieux, where Marie Pauline had entered in 1882. At this same time, Marie Leonie went to visit the convent of the Poor Clares in Alençon, spoke with the Mother Superior and, to her family’s amazement, at once entered the convent. This was the first time she attempted religious life. The rule of the Poor Clares was very hard for her, so that she had to abandon the convent after eight weeks. Sister Agnes of Jesus consoled their father saying that one day Marie Leonie would become a nun.

In the first weeks of July 1887, Marie Leonie wished to follow in the steps of her dear aunt Sister Mary Dositea, and entered the convent of the Order of the Visitation in the city of Caen. Sadly, this attempt was doomed to failure owing to her bad health, so that she had to renounce her endeavour and returned home broken-hearted on the 6th of January 1888. That same year, the youngest sister, Marie Frances Thérèse, entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux.

Towards the end of 1888 and beginning of 1889, Louis’ health worsened. He had previously had a couple of small brain haemorrhages, so that he began to become disorientated and sometimes become lost when alone. On the 12th of February 1889, the decision was taken to send Louis to the psychiatric hospital Bon-Sauveur. Once a week, Marie Celine and Marie Leonie would travel to Caen to see their father and the nuns

of the Visitation convent where Marie Leonie still hoped to become a nun. After three years, when Saint Louis Joseph became paralytic, he returned to Lisieux to be cared for by the two daughters.

On the 23rd of June 1893, Marie Leonie travelled to Caen to attend a retreat at the convent of the Visitation in Caen, where she approached the Mother Superior to request admittance into the convent. The Mother Superior gave her consent, as her uncle Isidore had done, so that Marie Leonie could return to the convent, this being her third attempt at religious life. All her sisters rejoiced with Marie Leonie, as they knew she had the great virtue of humility. On the 6th of April 1894, Marie Leonie received the habit and her name as a nun, which was then Sister Teresa Dositea. Marie Celine attended the ceremony together with her cousins. But at the beginning of Spring 1895, a new Mother Superior was elected at the Visitation convent in Caen, who understood the Rule in a different way from her predecessor, so that she hardened the observance of the Rule. Marie Leonie's worst fears were realized when she was asked to leave the convent, together with other novices, being unable to follow the rule in its most strict observance. Meanwhile, her father Saint Louis Joseph had died in holiness on the 29th of July 1894 in the presence of his daughter Marie Celine. And Marie Celine had entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux on the 14 of September that same year. At Marie Leonie's return to Lisieux, she was received by her uncle Isidore and aunt Eloise Marie Celine into their home.

From her convent, Saint Thérèse kept in touch with her sister Marie Leonie on the way to become more perfect, and counselled her on how to act. This relationship was not new, since Saint Thérèse, before becoming a Carmelite nun, had helped her and had taught her how to keep one's distance from material things, something difficult for everyone. Marie Leonie accepted Saint Thérèse's authority over her and followed her counsel. Saint Thérèse told her: "Little sacrifices are not lacking to you, dear Marie Leonie, isn't your life made up of them? I like to see that great treasure before you, especially when I realize that you know how to profit from them, not for you alone, but for all other souls."



The 2nd of July 1897 was the last time that Marie Leonie saw Saint Thérèse in this life, as she was soon to be transferred to the infirmary as her illness progressed. Everything that Saint Thérèse said was written down and sent to Marie Leonie. Saint Thérèse wrote her last letter to her on the 17th of July saying: "If you want to be a saint, it will be easy because in the depths of your heart the world means nothing to you... I mean to say that, while you devoutly employ yourself in exterior tasks, you have one sole objective, namely to please Jesus and become more intimately united to Him." Marie Leonie continued with the desire of her childhood to become holy. She asked her

sister Saint Thérèse, from Heaven, to intercede before God to help her to become a saint.

The book "Story of a soul" was published in 1898. Its reading gave Marie Leonie new hope regarding her own religious vocation, so that she entered as a nun for the fourth time, this time once and for all, in the Visitation convent in Caen on the 28th of January 1899. This time she received the name of Sister Frances Teresa, and on the 2nd of July 1900 made her religious profession as a visitandine nun in the Nuns of the Visitation or Salesas, the Order founded in 1610 by Bishop Saint Francis of Sales and Saint Joan Frances Chantal née Frémyot, for the instruction of feminine youth and different works of charity.

The process of Saint Thérèse's canonization progressed rapidly, and in April 1915 the second examination of virtue, required by the apostolic process, took place. The examination was held in the Carmelite convent of Lisieux. To her great joy, Sister Frances Teresa and her Mother Superior travelled over to the convent there. Sister Frances Teresa had not seen her sisters for seventeen years. They were eight days of great happiness for her, given the blessing it meant to her in seeing her dear sisters and where Saint Thérèse had lived and worked. Sister Frances Teresa said: "While we were seated on the steps of the Carmel, it was as though nothing had changed, as though we were together again in *Les Buissonnets*." When the time came to leave the Carmelite convent, Sister Frances Teresa had to bid farewell to her sisters again, this time for ever, until they were to see each other again in Heaven. The Carmelite sisters prepared a farewell song, a very moving gift for her. Sister Frances Teresa was a fervent discipless of Saint Thérèse.

Towards the end of her life, Sister Frances Teresa's health gave way, and she wrote to Mother Agnes of Jesus saying how she felt at being unable to continue with her obligations in the convent, one of which was to

sing in the choir. Mother Agnes of Jesus answered her: “Oh, do not give way to despondency, Sister Frances Teresa, my dear sister. All is well if your heart is there singing away without cease to God. Ever remember that you saw the hand of Thérèse on your breviary and consider that, if this closes, it is to open your heart the more.” Towards the end of May, she began to improve. The Mother Superior made use of this opportunity to celebrate Sister Frances Teresa’s birthday as well as the 40th anniversary of her profession, all of which was celebrated on the 3rd of June 1941. One of her gifts was a message from Pope Saint Pius XII: “The occasion of the 40th anniversary of religious profession of our dear sister in Jesus Christ, Frances Teresa of the Visitation of Caen, is a blessing for all, and by the intercession of her blessed sister Saint Thérèse, We implore for her the grace of the loftiest sanctification in the most fervent humility.” When the celebration had ended, Sister Frances Teresa had to return to the infirmary. The sisters filled the convent passages with the verse: “By thy sweet manner, Thérèse, guide us we pray, to Heaven, to Heaven, to Heaven.” Sister Frances Teresa was full of joy and happiness at the celebration.

On the 12th of June 1941, Sister Frances Teresa had a hemiplegia and was found unconscious on the floor. On the 16th of the same month she died a holy death at the age of 71 years. And despite the German occupation, many people came to the funeral.

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4. Saint Genevieve of the Holy Face (Marie Celine Martin)

On the 28th of April 1869, Marie Celine Martin was born in Alençon, Normandy, France, in the family home of her parents Saint Louis Joseph Martin and his wife Saint Celia Martin née Guerin. She was privately baptized at home that same day and subsequently in a local church. At the birth of each of their children, their mother prayed thus: “Lord, give this child the Grace to be consecrated to Thee, and that nothing harm the purity of her soul. If one day she were to be lost, I would prefer that You take her to Yourself without delay.” Marie Celine was the seventh of the nine children born to her parents.

Each morning, Celia used to rise early to attend Mass. Humble of heart, Celia petitioned Our Lady for the children God had given her, praying that they might become saints one day.

In a letter dated April 1874, Celia wrote about Marie Celine’s progress at five years of age: “She is naturally vivacious and learns quickly.” Celia taught her to make little sacrifices to strengthen her character: “Marie Celine is inclined to virtue, it is in every fibre of her being. She is the soul of candour and has an instinctive horror of evil”, her mother said, seeing in Marie Celine a great consolation given her worries at having to bring up children who showed no great virtue or piety. Marie Celine was the answer to her prayers. Marie Celine was very attentive to her mother’s wishes, and accepted them at once without resistance or hesitation, obeying her out of love.

Marie Celine and Thérèse, inseparable, joined their mother at morning prayers as also at night prayers. Years later, Marie Celine wrote: “I consider it the greatest grace of my life to have had Christian parents and to have received from them a thorough upbringing which allowed no room for little vanities. In our home there was nothing dedicated to the material world. The one altar was that of God alone, and if the sacrifices sometimes appeared austere, with time I always enjoyed their marvellous perfume.” The whole family suffered very greatly when their holy mother died of cancer on the 28th of August 1877.

After a long preparation, she made her First Communion on the 13th of May 1880, and said: “With unspeakable joy I received my Beloved. I had awaited Him for so long. I asked Him to be compassionate towards me, ever protect me, and never allow me to offend Him; then I gave Him my heart forever and promised that I would be entirely His. I felt sure that He had deigned to accept me as His little spouse and that He would be my Protector; I felt that Jesus had taken me under His protection and that He would always preserve me from every evil.” With complete commitment, Marie Celine consecrated herself to Mary Most Holy as well: “O what happiness of mine to say those words in everyone’s presence to give myself up irrevocably to my Mother in Heaven whom I loved with incomparable tenderness. It seems to me that on accepting the consecration of this little orphan kneeling at Her feet, She adopted me as Her own daughter.

The eldest sister, Marie Louise, taught her how to count her acts or practices of virtue. Marie Celine, valiant as she was in her studies, was outstanding in this as well, and there were days when she counted up to twenty-seven “acts of virtue”. On Sundays, the family went to High Mass. During the week, they attended the early Mass, without taking the weather into account. The two eldest sisters entered the Carmelite convent of Lisieux, Marie Pauline on the 2nd of October 1882, and Marie Louise on the 15th of October 1886.

At that time frequent Communion was not widely practised, but Marie Celine obtained permission to communicate every day, thus to satisfy her desires to give her heart over to Jesus and Mary. Marie Celine’s ambition to become a nun was firm even from an early age; it was her destiny, according to her. Even her sister Thérèse, four years younger than herself, observed in Marie Celine an intensification in the attraction she felt for the religious life. In her conversations with Thérèse on the religious life, she soon realized that Thérèse too wanted to become a Nun and enter the convent as soon as possible. Her entry into Carmel was for them both a way of showing God their desires of uniting with Him. As Marie Celine already had the double responsibility of caring both for their father and for the house, she generously yielded to Thérèse’s



desires to enter first. Marie Celine said: “Love for God was so intense in my heart, that without being able to find anything which might give me the slightest relief to the need I felt to give, I was happy to sacrifice everything I held dearest in this world... Like Abraham, I busied myself preparing the holocaust, and helped my sister in all the steps she took to gain permission to enter the Carmel.” When the day arrived, the 9th of April 1888, it was very difficult for her to say goodbye, and wrote: “I had to lean trembling against the wall, but did not cry. I wanted to give her to Jesus with all my heart; and He, in turn, vested me with His strength. O how I needed that divine strength!”

Marie Celine and her sister Marie Leonie attended and lent a hand at the parties held by the Guerin family. It was an opportunity to get out and meet people, and also to attend dances. Without Thérèse’s direct influence any longer, owing to her entry into Carmel, a marriage proposal arose for Marie Celine, without her ever having previously thought of marrying. She thought that this proposal, which came just after Thérèse’s entry, might be an indication of God’s will for her. At the quandary, she prayed hard, without receiving any sign from Heaven

as to what she should do. But with the prayers of her sister Saint Thérèse and the counselling of a Priest, Marie Celine rejected the proposal and kept on along the way to religious life.

During these trials, Marie Celine had progressed in her artistic skills. Her father offered to send her to an academy to improve her talents. But she at once rejected this, fearing that the world’s temptations might suffocate her religious vocation. This was the opportunity to tell her father that she too wanted to become a nun. When Louis realized that her daughter’s wish was in every way serious, he saw in this the will of God for her as for each of his daughters. So then, after their conversation, Louis and Marie Celine went to the Most Blessed Sacrament to thank God for the grace that He had conferred upon his family, that all his daughters might become nuns. And now Louis did not want to be a burden to them, keeping them at home by his side. But Marie Celine stayed with him up to the end.

Isidore Guerin engaged a good artist to help Marie Celine to improve her painting. For her father she painted a picture of the Most Holy Virgin which inspired great devotion. Just when Marie Celine had finished a novena to Saint Joseph to obtain the conversion of one of the maids, the woman came and confessed: “I am a miserable wretch; for many years I have lived away from God, I have committed sacrileges, but I want to change. It is only now, on looking at the picture of Mary Most Holy, that my heart melted like wax.”

At this time Marie Celine found herself so overwhelmed seeing her father’s humiliations, he mortally ill, and also taking charge of the home, besides the worry over her future vocation, that she felt unable to bear the burden; it was then that the Most Holy Virgin appeared to her smiling, and thus infused her with fortitude.

On the 29th of July 1894, Saint Louis Martin died as the result of a cardiac crisis, attended by Marie Celine. The loss of the immediate presence of her father was felt by Marie Celine in many ways. She no longer had his protection in the face of worldly pleasures. Living with the Guerin family, Marie Celine was

tried more than once. Though there were no longer marriage proposals, there were other temptations when the Guerins held their parties. And when Marie Celine felt herself in danger from temptation, she left the celebration and withdrew to her room. There she fell prostrate before the image of Our Lady to ask for Her protection. Marie Celine counselled her cousin Marie Guerin in her doubts and difficulties, and encouraged her to overcome the obstacles to her desire to become a nun, which later bore fruit when Marie Guerin entered the same Lisieux Carmel on the 15th of August 1895. Marie Guerin received the religious name of Sister Mary of the Eucharist.

It was now time for Marie Celine to fulfil her destiny and join her three sister nuns in the Carmel, though first she would have to face some opposition, as she described in a letter to Thérèse from Caen, where she spent several days with the Guerin family at the home of their cousins La Néele: “Joan and Francis are tooth and nail against me and use the bitterest language. They reproach me for a whole lot of things, and when Marie silences them they find something else to reproach me for. The first thing they say is that I have no vocation, that my destiny is to become mother of a family, that I should have spoken up long before about my inclination to the religious life, that I am a madcap to make up my mind in such a hurry, that if I am offered a good match, I should take the opportunity, that I am entering a convent through being pig-headed and desperate, and so on. Then they start up against you: that you keep to yourselves and that you and I have lost many points in their esteem, and so forth. Then, that I am ungrateful, to go off so quickly after papa’s death! That I should finish the mourning in the world, and there let my vocation mature, and dedicate at least one year to my uncle and aunt out of gratitude, and so on and so forth. There is no end to it..., and I can’t say how



upset they are. I never thought that my vocation, so hardly tried, might come up against such violent opposition. I am twenty-five years old, I know what I am doing, and never gave any sign of being inclined to marriage. They should have surmised that, following our dear father’s death, at once my first concern would be to decide my future, instead of them reproaching me. Well, it had to be! But how unfeeling they are towards souls who consecrate themselves to God! It is as though for them all suffering and all scorn were little. Thus Joan would rather see me in Jerusalem rather than in Lisieux.” In August 1894, Saint Thérèse answered her: “The storm raging in Caen doesn’t surprise me. F. and J. have chosen a path so different to ours, they cannot understand the sublimity of our vocation. But he who laughs last laughs longest. After this life of one day, they will understand who the most privileged were, whether us or them.” At last, on the 14th of September 1894, Marie Celine entered. Saint Thérèse, then Mistress of novices, as first instruction to her sister, gave one on humility: to kiss the floor every time she entered her cell. “What this exercise of humility

produces in the soul only years of practice shall give the proof that our Carmel has all the secrets of perfection.” The majority of new vocations who have lived longer in the world bring the “scars” which the world produces. At twenty-five, Marie Celine had none. But she had to overcome other difficulties: often she was unable to sleep because of the uncomfortable bed, at other times she was told off for falling asleep during the prayers, and it took her almost a year to get used to the food. Before entering, she went to Communion daily, and now to her sorrow Carmelite Nuns at that time could only receive Communion three or four times a week.

On the 5th of February 1895, Marie Celine took the habit and became a novice. She remembers the ceremony in these words: “I received the special grace of intimate union with my Beloved; I saw nothing of what happened about me. The presence of the Bishop, the many clerics, the numbers of visitors, everything disappeared before my eyes, I was alone with Jesus... when of a sudden my interior silence was broken by the chant of Compline, which was lively and full of spirit. The choir intoned a psalm and I understood its meaning; each world sank into my soul as a token of the sacred promise made by me to He Whom I had united my life.”

As a nun, Marie Celine received the name of Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face, and as a blessing they gave her relics of the foundress of the Lisieux Carmel, the revered Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa.

At the beginning of her religious life, Sister Genevieve had as guide only what she had learned outside the Carmel. But inside the walls of Carmel, difficulties are faced in a completely different way. Sister Thérèse

told Sister Genevieve: “to lean on what the world has taught you is like leaning on red-hot iron! It leaves its mark! One must yield blindly to God in everything.”

On the 3rd of February 1895, Sister Genevieve consecrated herself fully to the “Lady of the House”, the Virgin Mary. It was an easy step for her, given her deep devotion to the Virgin Mary. She also petitioned the protection of Saint Michael, Saint Elias and Saint John the Baptist.

Saint Thérèse’s development of her “Little Way” had reached a culminating point: On the 9th of June 1895, after Mass, Sisters Thérèse and Genevieve went up to the Prioress, Mother Agnes of Jesus, and asked for permission to offer themselves as “victims of Merciful Love”. Mother Agnes gave her permission without fully understanding just what they were asking of her. Saint Thérèse understood clearly that Jesus longs ardently to be loved, and led Sister Genevieve to make “the Act of offering to Merciful Love” together with her. In the celebration of Sister Genevieve’s profession on the 24th of February 1896, Sister Thérèse composed a contract of espousal between her sister and Jesus, with the motto “forget oneself so as to find God”. Shortly after her profession came the day for taking the veil, on the 17th of March 1896.

The news of Sister Thérèse’s illness was a hard blow for Sister Genevieve. She knew that only a miracle of God could cure her. Sister Thérèse was her intimate companion and confidante, and she turned to her in every difficulty. Sister Thérèse tenderly called Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face, her Marie Celine, “the sweet echo of my soul”. September 1897 came, Saint Thérèse’s last month on earth, and Sister Genevieve commented to her: “People will never be able to understand how we have loved each other so much.” And Saint Thérèse replied: “There is no need for people to believe it, the important thing is that it be so.” Days later, Saint Thérèse assured her that she would always protect her. On her deathbed, on pronouncing her last words, she turned towards Sister Genevieve and gave her last look to her, the blessing she had so desired. Later in life, Sister Genevieve commented: “The remembrance of that last look, so desired,... sustains me always, and is an inexpressible fount of strength for me.”

Sister Genevieve held the post of sacristan, caring for everything related to the Chapel. It was work very dear to her heart and she took great pains to carry it out well.



From the year 1899, Sister Genevieve underwent many temptations against chastity. No matter how many prayers she made, the temptations continued, but she kept firm and held on to God. She centred her efforts on saving souls, since saving just one meant more to her than undergoing temptations. As she said: “the desire to save souls was like an obsession to me... That was the hope that kept me going.” The attacks lasted for more than two years.

The photo of the Holy Shroud taken in 1898 enthralled Sister Genevieve; she studied it at great length, and in 1904 painted a reproduction of the Holy Face, penetrating in depth into His sufferings and insistently praying for the help of the Most Holy Virgin and of Saint Joseph. On finishing the portrait, she offered it up to Mary Most Holy, and commented: “With how much love I painted the Holy Face!” Pope Saint Pius X rejoiced when he saw it and sent her a commemorating medal. The picture was awarded first prize in the international exposition of religious art in 1909.

In 1910, when the diocesan proceedings were started, Saint Thérèse’s sisters had to testify to her life. Sister Genevieve spoke continually of the “Little Way”, something unknown until then. The Promoter of the Faith asked her not to use that term as it could prejudice the cause, which he feared might thus close brusquely. But Sister Genevieve insisted on using it, saying: “If it is rejected, rejected it will be; but since I have sworn to tell the truth, I should give testimony to what I have seen and heard, whatever happens. Sister Thérèse practised the simple and hidden virtues, and we should get used to that.” In August 1921, Pope Saint Benedict XV addressed all the faithful recommending “the Little Way of Spiritual Childhood” and Sister Thérèse’s virtues. Sister Genevieve said: “I have never felt so great and so deep a joy. Not even the beatification and canonization caused me such happiness.”

With interest in the life of Saint Thérèse ever on the increase, the Bishop of Bayeux, after reading her autobiography, asked Sister Genevieve to write a booklet on her sister. In it she describes the life of Thérèse

before entering Carmel and the virtues she practised. The last part describes how she bore her illness and how she died. Then, together with Mother Agnes of Jesus, other booklets followed: the “Little Catechism of the Act of Oblation”, “The Little Way”, “Life in pictures” with photos of Saint Thérèse’s life. Sister Genevieve took charge of cataloguing everything there was on Saint Thérèse ever since her life as a child up to the process of canonization. The information she gathered and organized ended up in a book entitled: “The Spirit of Blessed Thérèse of the Child Jesus”, in which her love for God was expressed. Sister Genevieve worked intensely on acquiring the houses occupied by the Martin family, organizing them so that they might reflect the life of Thérèse and opening them up to the pilgrims. From their family homes to the imposing task of the Basilica of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, she attended to each detail, examining everything before going ahead. In 1929, the first stone of the Basilica was set in place. Pope Saint Pius XI sent Cardinal Pacelli to Lisieux for the solemn blessing of the Basilica on the 11th of July 1937. On the following day, the Cardinal went to visit the three sisters in the Carmel. He had a conversation with Sister Genevieve, in which he echoed the words “Spiritual Childhood and the Little Way”, on the mission of Saint Thérèse. It was a blessing in this way to hear the words which Marie Celine had ever assimilated from the beginning. She asked Cardinal Pacelli to pose for a portrait, and told him that she had a presentiment that he would be the next Pope, to which the Cardinal replied: “Rather pray that I have the grace of a happy death; that for me is more precious. May the Good God receive me with mercy and loving-kindness at that supreme moment.” Two years later the prophecy was fulfilled, when he was elected Pope and took the name of Pius XII.

Sister Genevieve again took up her work as a writer, and also as an artist, painting more portraits of Saint Thérèse. In all her work she always started by investigating in depth, tirelessly searching through the archives. Sister Genevieve never ceased to learn. In her writings, she calls herself “the Queen of the imperfect”. “My reign is far and wide spreading, and I have myriads of subjects, but do as they will, they can



never surpass their queen...” Imperfection! She also meditated on Saint Thérèse’s words: “It is sufficient to humble oneself, and bear graciously with one’s own imperfections. That is our true sanctity.” The virtue which Sister Genevieve most valued was humility, and insistently prayed to God for this virtue. She said: “I have but one desire, namely that God have mercy upon me; and that is only possible when one is sunk in misery.” Several times vacancies occurred in important posts in the convent, but they always passed her over. All in all it was a lesson in humility. Sister Genevieve said: “If our Mother Prioress does not consider me, that is because I have faults I do not see. I should submit without understanding.” “Whoever loses, wins” was the motto she lived by.

In October 1935, Sister Genevieve described her union with Mary Most Holy: “I felt myself ineffably united to my Heavenly Mother, I experienced an indefinable feeling of Her presence that I dare not express. It seemed to me that the Most Holy Mother is here with us, that She is my Sister, my Friend, that there is familiarity between us like that in a family. O how pleasing to think that! It is the third time in my life that my Heavenly Mother visits me on the eve of Her feast of the Divine Motherhood.”

When Mother Agnes of Jesus fell ill, Sister Genevieve was left in charge of the apostolate related to Saint Thérèse. Relations between Mother Agnes of Jesus and Sister Genevieve were very intimate. She said: “I love my Marie Celine more than anything else on earth, and what would become of me if I did not have you.” On the 28th of July 1951, Mother Agnes of Jesus died in holiness with Sister Genevieve and the Community at her side.

Though Sister Genevieve was already in her eighties and had suffered many illnesses such as rheumatism, sciatica and gout, she still went struggling on, setting out her holy sister’s “Spiritual Childhood”, and interpreting and defining the meaning of the “Act of Offering to Merciful Love”. And she continued to struggle against many authors who wrote books which watered down or deviated from the purity of Saint Thérèse’s message to the devotees. Spiritual Childhood was the pivot of Sister Genevieve’s life and she lived

it every day: “Since God is Merciful love, misery draws Him down and generates a sea of graces. It is enough for us to acknowledge it, accept it, love it, and let us not cease to offer up to the Lord our ineffectual efforts, which He will crown in His time, with an absolute Faith in Infinite Love.”

She expressed her Faith in her union with God thus: “He is Father to me, and I love Him madly, passionately... My one desire is to know Him better and better, to arrive at the uttermost limits of this knowledge on Earth, and afterwards in Heaven..., and to do so, I feel the need to reach the farthest limits of humility, which is why I keep on asking for it so insistently. That is the summary of my poor soul.”

On the 24th of February 1956, Sister Genevieve’s sixty years of profession were celebrated. She would have preferred to avoid it for all the commotion it entailed. On speaking, she chose the subject of the religious vocation: “Despite the trials which have marked my way, often very hard ones, at the end I find that Our Lord has not failed in His promise, and that in leaving all things I have not only found a hundred for one, but more still, up to a thousand for one in interior joy and peace.” She continued explaining, giving as examples of true joy Saint Thérèse and Mother Agnes of Jesus: “In their greatest difficulties, the peace of Heaven flooded their souls and fortified them; true happiness was their lot in this life as it is for all fervent souls. And there are many in our cloister.”

During her last agony, she grasped her crucifix with one hand and the rosary with the other. She did not let go of them for one moment. She prayed constantly each minute, bringing her crucifix up to kiss it. They could hear her saying: “O my Jesus, I would wish to love Thee with all my heart, even to madness, with all my strength; yes, with all my strength, even to madness...” By the morning of the 25th of February 1959, when two months short of her ninetieth birthday, Sister Genevieve awoke with complications to her illness. The Prioress told her: “It will be today, for sure”, to which she replied: “Today!” The last word she uttered, and continually repeated, was “Jesus!” At 9 in the morning the Prioress and the Community began to pray the Act of Offering to Merciful Love, and Sister Genevieve, without speaking, indicated that she was following them. She was seen to be in a state of ecstasy which lasted some ten minutes; and at 9.25 gave up her soul to God.

For three days, Sister Genevieve’s body was placed in the choir, where several thousand people came to pay their last respects, including many foreigners, wanting to see the Nun so beloved of her sisters, especially Saint Thérèse.

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5. Saint Mary of the Eucharist (Marie Guerin)

Marie Guerin was born in August 1870 to her parents Isidore Guerin, Saint Celia Martin née Guerin’s brother, and his wife Eloise Marie Celine. Three years older than Saint Thérèse, she had a spirited soul in a sickly body, and the temperament of an artist, for she was an excellent pianist and sang like a nightingale. She appeared by turns to be languid and full of humour, according to her different moods and the vagaries of her health. Her whole life was marked by the heavy cross of scruples. She was intelligent and outstanding at school in her studies. She was prepared with great care by her own mother for First Communion, which she received on the 2nd of June 1881, and later wrote: “No one better than myself to say that on this day, the most beautiful of my life, Jesus called me to the religious life and we promised each other fidelity.”



Saint Thérèse, at nine years of age, was a pupil at the abbey, and got on well with Marie Guerin, as she relates: “Another thing I also liked was to be alone with my cousin Marie, which only happened by chance: she let me choose the game, and I chose a completely new one. Marie and Thérèse became hermits, who had no more than a poor cabin, a tiny wheat field and a few vegetables to grow. Their life went by in

continuous contemplation; that is, one of the hermits replaced the other in prayer when she had to take up the active life. Everything was done with such harmony, in such silence and in such a religious style, that it was all perfect. When our uncle came to look for us to go for a walk, we continued the game as well in the street.

The two hermits prayed the Rosary together, using their fingers so as not make a show of their devotion before an indiscreet public.”

Yet the fulfilment of her vocation was full of difficulties, because of the fears which troubled her conscience, the great sensibility which made her impulsive, her doubts and her indecision, all of which required time to sort out. When Saint Thérèse took the veil in 1890, Marie at last decided for the Carmelite Order. She wrote to Saint Thérèse saying that she felt unworthy, to which the Saint replied: “Marie, if you are nothing, you should not forget that Jesus is All, so that you should lose your nothingness in His infinite All and only think exclusively of this lovable All... Neither should you desire to see the fruit of your efforts, since Jesus is pleased to keep those trifles for His sole consolation.”

In May 1889, when Marie confessed to Saint Thérèse that she had not received Communion owing to her scruples, that she had such a muddle in her head which she was unable to unravel, and that her poor heart was empty and full of sorrow, Saint Thérèse answered her: “When the devil succeeds in keeping a soul away from Holy Communion, he has won everything. And Jesus weeps...! My dear! Think then that Jesus is there in the Tabernacle expressly for you, and for you alone, and that He burns with desire to enter your heart... Off with you! don’t listen to the devil, make a fool of him and go up without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love...! No, it is impossible that a heart “which solely finds rest in gazing at a Tabernacle” might offend Jesus to the point of being unable to receive. What offends Jesus, what wounds His Heart, is lack of trust...! Your heart is made to love Jesus, to love Him passionately. Pray to Him that the most beautiful years of your life may not be spent in imaginary fears. We have no more than these brief instants of our life for loving Jesus. The devil knows this very well, and so tries to have them spent in useless pains... Dear little sister, communicate with frequency, with great frequency... That is the only remedy if you want to be cured. Not in vain has Jesus put those desires into your soul. Do not fear to love the Most Holy Virgin overmuch, you will never love Her enough; and Jesus will be quite happy, for the Virgin is His Mother.” This letter won the admiration of Pope Saint Pius X, and made him speed up the canonization process of Saint Thérèse, as he recognized in it the sublime teaching on frequent Communion.



The broadmindedness of the Prioress, Mother Mary of Gonzaga, allowed Marie Guérin to enter the Carmel where her four cousins from the Martin family were already living. Saint Thérèse composed her poem “Canticle of a soul who has found her place of rest”, for Marie Guérin on her entry into the Carmel on the 15th of August 1895, in which allusion is made to Marie Guérin’s deep aspiration to die young and her strong attraction to the Eucharist:

“Today, Jesus, You break my bonds! In the Order of Mary I shall be able to find all true goods. If I abandon my beloved family, you will know how to lavish Your heavenly favours upon them. And to me You will grant pardon for poor sinners.

“In Carmel, Jesus, I should live, for Your love has called me to this oasis. It is here I wish to follow You, love You and soon die. Here, my Jesus, here!

“On this day, O Lord, you have fulfilled all my desires. From now on, beside the Eucharist, I shall be able to immolate myself day and night, immolate myself in silence, and in peace and calm await Your coming to go to Heaven. Opening myself up to the rays of the Immaculate Host, in this furnace of love I shall soon be consumed, and like a seraph of Heaven, Lord, shall I love you.

“When my days here on earth come to an end, Lord, which shall be soon, to the eternal shores will I follow You. To live in Heaven forever! To love you and never die! Forever! Forever!”

She received the religious name of Sister Mary of the Eucharist, and had as mistress of novices her cousin Saint Thérèse. On the 17th of March 1896, she received the habit, and on the 25th of March 1897 made her profession. Sister Mary of the Eucharist took the veil on the 2nd of June 1897, the last family celebration for Saint Thérèse.

Saint Thérèse dedicated two more poems to her cousin, the first “Only Jesus”, on the 15th of August 1896: Love for Jesus alone is the programme it proposes to the generosity of Sister Mary of the Eucharist, halfway between the “rest” of the first canticle she composed for her and the violent combat of the poem “My arms”

she composed for her profession on the 25th of March 1897. Sister Mary of the Eucharist is at once “little angel”, “resolute woman”, “little child” and “valiant warrior”, and the poem ends thus: “I will die on the battlefield, arms in hand!”

At first Sister Mary of the Eucharist entered with great zest into the religious life according as she had imagined it. Nonetheless, displaying certain frivolity, she did not adapt herself spontaneously to a serious life. Saint Thérèse scolded her, sought to guide a heart too sensitive, correct unpredictable behaviour, instil abnegation, zeal for souls, and humility in the little conflicts of the common life. But the Sister is enchanting, sincere, smiling, and hadn't Saint Thérèse called her one day “a jubilation to make the stones laugh”? It is moving to see the firmness with which the dying novice mistress addresses the novice on the 11th of September 1897: “You will have to be very kind, very kind: never harsh, harsh... So yesterday you hurt Sister X... Moments later another Sister did the same. What happened? She wept... Two reproaches so close together plunged her into sadness, while if you had been kind, nothing would have happened.” Saint Thérèse, from Heaven, continued her mission with Sister Mary of the Eucharist, who recognized it on writing to her mother in 1899: “... and my Little Angel is leading me by the way of love. You do not need lofty thoughts to reach Heaven, you need love, and my whole retreat is based on that one word. My Little Sister is teaching me a lot about that.”

Her parents gradually became accustomed to their daughter's vocation, and recognized the honour which the vocation of a son or daughter brings to parents. Mr. Guerin wrote: “Now I can die, as I leave behind me a bright lamp which will never cease to burn before the Divine Eucharist.” And Mrs. Guerin: “How good is God for having opened my eyes and made me understand the religious vocation!”



On the 13th of February 1900, Eloise Marie Celine Guerin died at the age of 53 years. Her daughter feels the pain, as they were very close. Three years later, the young Carmelite became affected by tuberculosis, and had to accept dispensation from the rigour of the Rule, though not without difficulty. During the twenty-one months of purification by the illness, her suffering produced the fruit of abandonment to God's Will that prepared her for Heaven. For Mother Agnes it was as though history was repeating itself. Dr. La Néele and Isidore Guerin were unable to impede the advance of the illness; neither science nor the petitions of the community through the intercession of Saint Thérèse prevented her death.

Sister Mary of the Eucharist died on the 14th of April 1905. She was 34 years and seven months old. “I am not afraid to die. O what peace! There should be no fear of suffering, He always gives the strength...” She died after exclaiming: “My Jesús, I love Thee.” Of Saint Thérèse's five novices, she was the first to join her in Heaven. Under her influence, she had entered into the

legion of little souls, victims of Merciful Love, and her prayer helped her to face death. One of the Nuns present at her death commented: “After having seen Sister Mary of the Eucharist die, we could no longer have any fear of death.”

In a dream, a Sister heard Saint Thérèse tell her: “If you hear my voice after Sister Mary of the Eucharist dies, you will know that she is in Heaven with me.” At the same time that Sister Mary of the Eucharist died, this Sister heard the voice of Saint Thérèse.

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6.- Saint Genevieve of Saint Teresa (Clare Marie Bertrand)

Saint Genevieve of Saint Teresa, in the world Clare Marie Radegundes Bertrand, was born on the 5th of July 1805 in Poitiers, France.

Through the friendship which bound them together, Mother Genevieve confided to Saint Thérèse some memories of her youth:

“When I was small – I was then about three years old – Father Beauregard often came, and one day, on leaving, he told me that it seemed to him that from that very moment ‘God had rested His hand upon my head’. And he was not mistaken. Pray for me when I find myself before Him who judges with all justice.”

From childhood she knew how to practise virtue and bear her cross. One day when Clare Marie Bertrand was at the home of her schoolmistress, she wanted to look out of a high window. As she was too small to reach the sill, she climbed up as best she could. But she did not know that the teacher’s cat was on the outside, sleeping on a pillow. So then, on climbing up, she knocked it and the cat fell down with its bed. It came to no harm, but some fellow pupils, badly intentioned, happy to have something to tell the teacher, ran down to get the cat and told her that Clare had deliberately broken the cat’s foot throwing her out of the window. The teacher then imposed on the girl the most severe punishment in the boarding school, which consisted in covering the head with a penitential hat. Clare bore this punishment with the patience of an angel; she said nothing to excuse herself; and just said: “My poor little heart was very pained, but I said absolutely nothing.”

Another day she climbed up into a large cupboard looking for something for her dolls. Hardly had Clare Marie climbed down again and stepped to one side, when the enormous cupboard broke into pieces with a great crash. Her mother arrived quite frightened, thinking she would find one of the girls crushed, but her daughter was completely unhurt, without even a scratch. Clare could do no less than say that, without some kind of extraordinary help, the cupboard should have fallen on her and killed her.

She liked to teach catechism to the children of the village. She began with a few, but soon the news spread among them, and she had a large group of children around her. She prepared them for their First Communion, teaching them the practice of virtue. The mother of one girl said to her: “Ah, Miss, how can I thank you? My daughter is unrecognizable; before she did not want to do anything, but now looks for the chance to be useful; she is no longer the same; I don’t know how you have done it.”

She delighted in listening to the Carmelite Nuns singing. She often attended Vespers there with her little brother. When Father Beauregard was named Bishop, she had to choose a new confessor. The Chaplain of the Carmel, Father Rochemontoux, was the confessor she was inclined to take; but he was young, and Clare, who already felt a vocation, said to herself: “I had better not choose him as confessor, for my elderly cousin



Teresa will say: “Those young Priests are only good for filling girls with enthusiasm and sending them into a convent.” My cousin had to confess to an old Canon of the Cathedral; nonetheless I went to see her and told her: “Dear cousin, I want to ask you a favour: that you choose a Confessor for me. – No, no, choose the one you want, you are old enough, and besides free. – Dear cousin, I will take the one you tell me.” I was sure that my cousin would direct me to some aged Cathedral Canon. However, as she did nothing without first taking counsel, she heard speak of the Carmelites’ chaplain as a young saint, and what was my surprise when she announced to me that her choice had fallen on Father Rochemontoux. I concealed my satisfaction and simply gave her my thanks. Now, I thought, she cannot reproach me when she knows about my vocation.”

Clare went to the Carmel for the first time at the age of seventeen, though not then to seek admission. She would have been about twenty years old when she decided to enter; in the parlour she did not let her emotion be seen, but when back in her room she shed a torrent of tears.

In 1830, at 24 years of age, she entered the Carmel at Poitiers. “The day for my entry into the Carmel had been fixed, and I had to be free at 6 in the evening. As I had settled all my affairs, my confessor told me that if I wanted, I could wait until the following day. But I replied: ‘Father, since I am free this evening at 6, I will enter at 6.’ Tell me, daughter, if that was not a good inspiration: on the day following my entry, I received a letter from the residence where my younger brother was boarding. It said that he was ill and that, with my care and the country air, he would not take long to get well. So that, if I had not entered that evening on the day I was free, very likely I would have lost my vocation: the obstacles which arise one after another would have put the date back and perhaps ended by preventing me from entering Carmel.”

“On the day of my profession, in the morning, I felt so disturbed that I asked permission to speak with my confessor, and only by his order did I take holy vows.” This occurrence was a consolation for Saint Thérèse, as the same thing happened to her on the day before she made her religious profession: “A storm rose up in my soul, the greatest I had known in my whole life. Never until then had a single doubt about my vocation crossed my mind. But I had to pass through this trial. At night, and making the Way of the Cross after reciting Matins, I was convinced that my vocation was a dream, a fantasy. The life of Carmel seemed to me quite beautiful, but the devil breathed into me the conviction that it was not made for me, that I was deceiving the superiors insisting on following a path to which I was not called. My darkness was so great that I did not see or understand but one thing: that I had no vocation! How to describe the anguish of my soul? It seemed to me (ridiculous thought, which showed quite clearly that the temptation came from the devil) that if I told the novice mistress about my fears, she would not let me take my vows. Yet I preferred to fulfil God’s will and go back to the world rather than stay in the Carmel doing mine. Thus I obliged the novice mistress to leave the choir and, full of confusion, I explained the state of my soul. Thanks be to God, she saw more clearly than I and calmed me down completely. As for the rest, the act of humility I had made finally put the devil to flight, who perhaps thought that I would not dare to confess that temptation. As soon as I had finished speaking, all doubt disappeared. Nonetheless, to complete my act of humility, I wanted to disclose my strange temptation to our Mother, who did no more than burst out laughing.”

“Shortly before taking the habit, the good Sister seamstress called me and told me: ‘Sister Genevieve, I am going to treat you as *privileged*: see the cape I am going to give you.’ And she drew the cape mentioned out of the cupboard. It was a cape which had belonged to a nun who had died very elderly. As this Sister had been seated continuously in an armchair for the last years of her life, no one had realized that the cape was extraordinarily short (I believe it had shrunk as the result of washing) and that it was completely yellow. On seeing it, my heart sank..., I who had nursed so many illusions about having a beautiful white cape...! I wanted to cry, however I gave thanks to the seamstress, without telling her of my disappointment. Several days later, a novice who had just taken the habit, finding out that I did not have a new cape, burst into tears saying: ‘And I, who so wanted to have an old cape! What fortune for Sister Genevieve!’ Ah, I said to myself, *how imperfect I must be!* My companion cries because she does not have an old cape, and I am crying because I have one!” (The Mother Prioress did not allow Sister Genevieve to wear that cape, which did not even reach her knees, though she was short of stature.)

In the convent, she soon learnt to do her work solely to please God: “I had the post of seamstress, together with a young nun, and we had a good elderly nun as head seamstress. One day, we had a basket full of tunics for urgent mending. My companion and I worked so well that when night came the basket was completely empty. We had great illusions thinking of the surprise we were going to give to our head seamstress. But when the good old nun arrived, she settled down to work as usual, without saying a word to us. We looked at each other blankly, but my young companion was not long in taking up the word: ‘ – Sister, are you not happy? See how well we have worked... – Forgive me, little sisters, I did not know that you did all that work for me; I believed you were working for God, so I did not give you thanks; but now that I know, I am very grateful... Thanks..., thanks, dear little sisters.’ You can imagine, daughter, the impression those words made on us; so much so that we were tempted to start over again.”

“In Poitiers it was the custom for the nun last professed to be the third nurse; so that straight after professing they gave me that post. But I was so clumsy that I couldn’t touch anything without letting it fall. One day they put a plate of cherries in my hands, commending me to be careful with them; but I had hardly taken three steps when, of a sudden the plate and the cherries ended up on the floor. On the days I broke something, Mother Prioress, as punishment, did not let me receive Communion. One morning, before Mass, I broke something. I was very tempted not to tell her until after Mass, but I thought I should not do that, as I knew that our Mother would forbid me Communion if she found out. So I went to tell her: – Mother, I have just broken something. – Take your cape off, Sister Genevieve.”

“There was a sick nun in the infirmary who had a large number of cords (twenty-four I think they were) for closing the sleeves of her tunic. One day, she asked me to change the cords, which were quite worn out by then. I went at once to look for the head nurse to ask her for cords; she told me where they were, and I did the work, which took a long time. When I finished, I went to take my work to the sick nun, who was very pleased. However, the nurse was not long in looking for me: ‘But, Sister Genevieve, what have you done? You have put new cords on the tunic. You should have turned round the ones she had. – Thanks, Sister, for

telling me; I will go and unstitch the ones I sewed on and put back the old ones.' I went back in all haste to the sick nun, asking her to give me back the tunic. – Poor thing, she said to me, how much work I give you. – Don't worry, Sister, I will bring it back soon. And I started my work over again, as I was very afraid of committing a fault against holy poverty."

In 1838, Mother Genevieve was sent to Lisieux with other nuns to found a convent; she was the sub-prioress and mistress of novices and Mother Isabel of Saint Louis was the Prioress. Mother Isabel died a few years later and Mother Genevieve succeeded her as Prioress. The nuns, who loved her dearly, chose her as Prioress every time the Rules allowed, no more than two successive terms, until her health prevented her. She was considered as the foundress.

In 1890, Mother Genevieve said to Saint Thérèse: "Well then, my daughter, I shall confide a little secret to you. One day, being in my cell, I had made a novena to our blessed Father Saint John of the Cross. And I heard a voice which, among great consolations, told me these words: 'To be spouse of God Himself', and the voice halted as though to allow me better to savour the sweetness of those words. And then the voice went on: 'What a title!', and the voice again halted; and continued: 'What a privilege!' Daughter, I didn't know where I was, but surely I savoured the joy of the ecstasy, and when everything was over I found myself completely bathed in tears, but very sweet tears. This was now a long while ago; I was your age then, seventeen or eighteen. But the memory stayed so deeply impressed on me, that whenever at the taking of the veil I heard the *Amo Christum*, I believed, daughter that my heart would leave my breast. I understood the grace of our vocation!" "Little daughter, you can say that God has performed miracles with you, on bringing you here as though by the hand. And your father was there, at your taking the habit! But if God now tries you with suffering, it is because He has a very beautiful place reserved for you in Heaven."

When Marie Pauline Martin entered on the 2nd of October 1882, Mother Mary of Gonzaga was Prioress. On the 31st of January 1883, Mother Genevieve was re-elected, but towards the end of 1884 she became an



invalid, and because of her illness and advanced age, in the elections of the 3rd of February 1886, Mother Gonzaga returned, and was Prioress when Marie Louise Martin entered in 1886 and Saint Thérèse in April 1888. Nonetheless, strong spiritual bonds remained between Mother Genevieve and the Martin sisters, above all with Thérèse and Marie Pauline, whom she called "our angelic novice", and foretold that she would become prioress.

During the noviciate of Mother Agnes of Jesus, she learnt devotion to the Holy Face of the Lord under the direction of holy Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa. A nun from the Carmelite convent of Tours, Saint Mary Saint Peter of the Holy Family, had received revelations on the mysteries of the Holy Face. After studying these revelations, Mother Genevieve introduced the practice of this devotion into her own

convent. Sister Agnes of Jesus faithfully followed the devotion to the Holy Face and introduced it to her sisters when they joined her later. Saint Thérèse wrote that it was the Mother Agnes of Jesus who revealed to her the depths of the treasures hidden in the Holy Face of the Saviour.

Mother Genevieve saw Sister Agnes of Jesus' leadership qualities, and prophesied on her deathbed to her sister Carmelites that the public life of Sister Agnes of Jesus would begin soon as future Prioress of the Carmel. On the day when Mother Agnes of Jesus was elected prioress, the Chaplain told her: "When you heard your name spoken, you replied only with tears. And I understand your fears: you are young, without much experience. But be of good heart, dear daughter, God makes use at times of instruments which are the weakest in appearance to carry out His plans and work for His glory. Besides, you have an upright and simple soul. Your saintly Mother Genevieve will help you; take pains to imitate the precious examples she has left you. I can say, without being indiscreet, that if the majority of your sisters have thought of you in giving their votes, it is because they have observed that you try to imitate the virtues you saw her practise. She will be your stay; and besides, in your difficulties, you can turn to the Mother you love so dearly, and she

will counsel you and guide you; and in her you will always find assistance... and you will always have at your side the worthy Mother whom you would have been so happy to see continue in the office of prioress.”

Saint Genevieve backed up Saint Thérèse in her efforts to enter the Carmel at a young age. The supervising Priest of the Lisieux Carmel, canon John the Baptist Delatroette, vigorously opposed Thérèse’s entry. When he visited Mother Genevieve, she valiantly asked him to consent to Thérèse’s admittance, though in vain. On the morning of the 9th of April 1888, when Saint Thérèse entered, Father Delatroette made the following admonishment to the community, in the presence of Mr. Martin, while the door of the cloister was still open: “Well, Reverend Mothers, you can sing a Te Deum! As delegate of the Reverend Bishop, I present you with this girl of fifteen years, whose entry you have wished. I trust that she will not defraud your hopes; but I remind you that, if otherwise, only you yourselves will be to blame.” The whole community was taken aback at these words. Referring to her entry; Saint Thérèse relates: “As with all postulants, straight after my entry, they took me to the choir. It was dimly lit, as the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and the first thing that drew my attention were the eyes of our holy Mother Genevieve, which were fixed on me. I stayed for a moment kneeling at her feet, giving thanks to God for the gift He granted me of knowing a Saint.”

Saint Thérèse and her sisters considered the foundress of the Lisieux Carmel as a saint. On writing her life, Thérèse mentions Mother Genevieve several times. She speaks of “the good fortune to have known our holy Mother Genevieve. It has been an inestimable grace. For God, who had already given me so many, wanted me to live with a saint, not one of those inimitable ones, but a saint who sanctified herself by way of hidden and ordinary virtues... My admiration rose to the point of verifying to what an eminent degree Jesus lived in her and made her speak and act. Yes, that sanctity appears to me the most authentic, the most holy, and is that which I desire for myself, for there is no room for illusion. On the day of my profession, I received another great joy on knowing from Mother Genevieve’s lips that she too had passed through the same trial as myself before taking her vows. Do you remember, dear Mother, the consolation we found at her side in the moments of our great sufferings? In a word, the memory that Mother Genevieve left in my heart is a memory steeped in fragrance.”

In her autobiography, Saint Thérèse, addressing Mother Agnes of Jesus, says: “You already know, dear Mother, our affliction in the month of June and, above all that of the 24th of the year 1888. Those memories are too deeply engraved in our hearts for it to be necessary to write them down. How we suffered, dear



Mother! And that was no more than the beginning of our ordeal!” That day her father, who already suffered from dementia, disappeared from the house. Marie Celine and her uncle Isidore searched for him all over Lisieux, and the Carmelites prayed for his return. Amid their grief, they found consolation and strength in Mother Genevieve, for she foretold that their father would return home. Effectively, after three days they learnt that Louis was in the port of Le Havre, 60 kilometres from Lisieux, and they brought him back.

The death of Mother Genevieve occurred at the beginning of a hard winter. She received Extreme Unction on the 25th of November, last day of the triduum celebrated to commemorate the third centenary of Saint John of the Cross, who died on the 14th of December 1591. Mother Agnes wrote to Marie Celine: “Mother Genevieve was worse at the

beginning of the week; now she is better, and in spite of all, expects to die on Friday. She seems convinced of this. How happy our holy Mother is! I see her countenance flooded with heavenly peace; one can feel that she has not far to go to reach harbour.”

In the early morning of Saturday the 5th of December 1891, the Divine Spouse came for the foundress, 86 years of age. Saint Thérèse, who was then 18, said: “On the day of her departure for Heaven I experienced a very special emotion. It was the first time I had been present at a death, and the spectacle was really captivating. I was stationed precisely at the foot of the bed of the holy moribund and perfectly saw her least

movements... At the very moment our holy Mother Genevieve was born to Heaven... I felt inflamed with an inexplicable joy and fervour. It was as though Mother Genevieve had given me a share in the happiness which she already enjoyed, as I am quite convinced that she went straight to Heaven. When she was still alive, I once told her: 'You, Mother, will not go to Purgatory.' – 'That is what I hope', she replied sweetly. And surely God did not disappoint a hope so full of humility. The proof is in all the favours we have received from her."

A tear, the last of all that she shed, did not fall, and Saint Thérèse, taking a fine cloth, wiped up this last tear of a saint as a relic, and from then on placed it always in a little sachet where she kept her vows, until she gave it to Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face, her sister, on the day of her profession on the 24th of February 1896, with this note: "To you, my dear daughter, I offer you as a wedding gift the *last tear* I shed in this land of exile. Keep it over your heart and remember that for a Sister Genevieve, the way to reach sanctity is by suffering. It will not be hard for you to love Jesus' cross and tears if you frequently think of these words: 'He loved me and gave Himself up for me!' – Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa."

One night, following the death of Mother Genevieve, Saint Thérèse had a wonderful dream: "I dreamt that the Mother was making out her Will, and that she left something of her belongings to each one of the sisters. When my turn came, I thought that I would receive nothing, as by then there was nothing left. But sitting up, she told me three times with a penetrating accent: 'To you I leave my heart.'"

Mother Genevieve was so venerated by the community and in the town, that her body stayed in the funeral chapel of the choir for a whole week. It was not possible to bury her straight away, as the authorities would not allow her to be buried inside the convent. In the end, the town council did so allow, and she was buried in the sanctuary of the Carmel Chapel on the 23rd of December 1891. Mother Genevieve was the grain of wheat of which Jesus said: "...if it dies, it yields much fruit." This fruit was to appear several years later.

Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa was considered the Mother of the Carmels of Lisieux, Caen, Coutances, and Saigon, besides all the Carmels of the Far East.

Declared Venerable Servant of God on the 29th of September 2017 and canonized on the 30th of September 2017 by His Holiness Pope Peter III.

We exhort all the faithful of the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Palmarian Church to turn in all their needs to the special intercession of these six Saints, raised to the honour of the Altars for the glory of the Church and of our Order.

Given in El Palmar de Troya, Apostolic See, on the 30th of September, Feast of Mary Queen, in the Year of Our Lord Jesus Christ MMXVII and second of Our Pontificate.



With Our Apostolic Blessing
Petrus III, P.P.
Póntifex Máximus

Petrus III P.P.