

# Therese — 'Saint Of The Little Way'

Installation IX  
THE 'CHRISTMAS GRACE'

When Therese was thirteen years old, she left the Abbey, and a new order of things began. She went, several times a week, to the home of an accomplished woman, Mlle. Papineau, who directed her studies expertly. Schoolically, she progressed even more rapidly than she had ever done before. But her lessons were by no means confined to text-books; they included, both through precept and by example, considerable instruction in the social graces.

She was installed in the family parlor, charmingly furnished with valuable antiques, in which her teacher's mother, a lady of the old school, was accustomed to receive her visitors. A bright fire burned on a well-garnished hearth, suitable refreshments were served during the course of the afternoon, and Therese's recitations were made to the accompaniment of elegant conversation.

Distracting as this occasionally proved, it was not without its beneficial side. The atmosphere, though formal, was distinctly friendly, and Therese, who was as sensitive to kindness as she was to criticism, glowed with secret pleasure when the callers' comments took a personal turn which was complimentary to her.

Cheered, instead of depressed by the milieu in which she found herself, she began to expand like a flower. When she returned to the Abbey to take up her membership in the children of Mary and to follow special courses in domestic science she did so with fresh color in her cheeks and invulnerable peace of mind. The prostrating migraine the incessant scruples—the depression and worry of other days had been relegated to the limbo of past things.

She had reached the age when it was suitable for her to go out a little in the evening and though she at Les Buissonnets continued to be very quiet it was gayer at the Guerin's. Their pleasant little home on the corner of the Place Saint Pierre and the Grande Rue was a center of attraction for

him universal acclaim as an orator. But neither was there any indication that the fair-haired little girl who "assisted" so unobtrusively at these gatherings would be reversed in every corner of Christendom. It is by no means the first or only time that a scene which a more sophisticated group would have regarded with a slight condescension has been the setting for statesmen and saints whose memory has been venerated long after the sophistries have passed into utter oblivion.

**CHRISTMAS**  
At Les Buissonnets, the feast of Christmas continued to remain, as it always had been, the supreme festival of the year. The carols and the crèche, the midnight Mass and the shepherd's story, spread their age-old splendor over the quiet family assembled there. The yule log was still lighted, too, and small shoes-square and stubby no longer but neat and narrow instead were still placed beside it, ready to receive "surprises." But something spontaneous, something jubilant, had passed forever from the hour when gifts were opened up. Marie as well as Pauline was at Carmel. Therese herself was an adolescent. Her father continued to treat her like a child, but subconsciously he had begun to resent the traits of temperament which indicated such treatment.

His disposition was so equable and his affection for his youngest daughter so strong, that it was a long time before this resentment came to the surface. But at last he gave tongue, unexpectedly, to his inner feelings. "For a big girl like Therese," he said in a voice of annoyance "surprises of this sort are a little childish. I hope it is the last year for them!"

The utterance had been made almost involuntarily, to Céline, as the family came in from mid night Mass. Therese, who was on her way upstairs to remove

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her wings as she heard it. In stantly, her eyes filled with tears which frequently overflowed on such slight provocations and sometimes, so far as anyone could judge, for none at all. Céline, quietly guessing what must have happened, slipped upstairs in her turn and whispered to her sister.

"Don't come down right away. If you did, you would cry too hard in front of Papa while you were looking at the surprise. Wait a few minutes."

**'CHRISTMAS GRACE'**  
She returned to her father so swiftly that he had not noticed her absence. A few minutes later, Therese, wreathed in smiles, rejoined them. Lifting her pretty shoes from the hearth, she began to draw her presents from them with exclamations of pleasure. Louis-Joseph, his moment of exasperation over, watched her fondly and indulgently. He had no idea that she knew of his transitory annoyance; nor was it until long afterwards that he was aware how self-sacrificingly she had spent the interval between her return from church and her arrival at the fireside or how great a transformation had been wrought in her temperament in that brief period of "Christmas Grace."

Never again would she need to say of herself, ashamedly, "I tried, and when I was reproached, I cried again because I had done so before." As Monseigneur Lavelle, her most reliable and distinguished biographer, stated: "She had captured, for once and for all, that strength of character, that serenity of soul, which she had forfeited when she was four years old." With swift clairvoyance, she had seen, as she knelt alone in her room, seeking the certain solace and the sure assurance of prayer, that the time had come when she must put away childish things. Up to that time, she had indeed spoken as a child, understood as a child, thought as a child, but that was past.

She was on the brink of womanhood now; she must accept its burdens, its responsibilities, its cares, in a womanly way. And if she were to do all this worthily, she must also do it smilingly. She must not permit her feelings to overwhelm her or her sensitivity to submerge her. Self-control assumed its proper proportions as a major virtue, and she recognized that tears were the attribute of a weakness, while hers was a heritage of strength. Her father, who was also her hero, had been justified in his chagrin. She was descended from a long line of soldiers; courage had been their armor; nobility their shield.

Nor was it only the men among her forbears who had been valiant, the fortitude of her mother had been steadfast against every storm and every danger, and it had a shining quality also. The glory of it, undimmed by a decade of sep-

By FRANCES PARKINSON KEYES

with bark and growth, still no hope went away hungry.

**'JOY OF THE FAMILY'**  
"The spirit of loving kindness filled my heart, together with my knowledge of the need of self-forgetfulness," she wrote of this experience afterwards. "From that hour onward, I was happy." And in very truth, this resurgence of self-command, this revival of the mood of the moment, it marked the beginning of a second period when Therese was, in very truth, "the joy of the entire family." Louis-Joseph, the expression, word for word, which their mother had used to describe Therese ten years earlier. "The servants came to love her very much also," the elder sister adds, "because as she was always about the house at this time, the kindness, the tranquility, and the thoughtfulness of her character were all revealed in her person. She forgot herself completely in order to give pleasure to others. The evenness of her disposition was so unaffected and seemed to come so naturally to her, that no one would have guessed that she made constant self-sacrifice to achieve it."

She had become acutely conscious of the drudgery of domestic service, unrelieved in France, even today, of those burdensome and ugly aspects which have been so largely altered elsewhere. Like poverty and the suffering of little children, it had touched her tender heart. "I was very sorry for persons in service," she said later on. "I am glad that in heaven everyone will be ranked by merit, not by riches. What compensations the poor and powerless will have then!"

For the first time, she began to take over certain household duties herself, thus lightening the labors of the hard-worked general maid; and the bestowal of alms, like the teaching of poor children, became a regular part of her routine. It was understood throughout Lisieux that the needy had only to present themselves at Les Buissonnets to receive rations; and if Tom, the faithful spaniel, who still survived, regarded these mendicants with a less lenient eye than his little mistress and signified his distrust of beggars

all in the garden to watch the sunset. A profound sense of peace descended on him at the twilight light of dusk. Therese's face was lit up with the joy of the moment. From the throat of a bird singing in the thicket beside him, there came a note that he was no longer alone. His daughter Therese had come across the lawn so quietly that he had not heard her light footsteps; now she was seated beside him, with a strange expression on her lovely face.

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**Housing Problem**  
An old, old problem for Christ Our Lord. It began the day He was born... "no room in the inn"... and it has continued to exist ever since. Right now this housing problem disturbs the people of the village of Hajar in Syria. The 2,000 villagers are all Christians. There is a very prosperous little non-Catholic mission in town. There is no Catholic Church. Bishop Rabbanin, in whose territory the village lies, would like to give Christ a home in Hajar, and the people of Hajar a little chapel. We'd like to help solve this housing problem... and we need \$1,000 to do it.

**WHITE TIE**  
Always correct dress for one banquet... the Eucharistic Banquet of First Holy Communion. Many youngsters out in the missions will soon be making their First Holy Communion. We want them to be correctly dressed for this great banquet. You can dress one of these children for \$10.

**UNIVERSITY OF CANVAS**  
That could well be the collective title of many of the schools attended by refugee children in Palestine. Their only schoolhouse is often only a poorly patched tent. Monseigneur McMahon is working eagerly to transfer these school children into more suitable quarters. Aid to the schools is more than an aid to education. It is an aid to living for these youngsters. \$1 monthly makes you a member of the BASILIANS, our mission school club. If you care to give more there's a real use for your charity.

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Pretty soon you'll be sitting down to write that note or pick that gift for Mother's Day. Our GIFT CARD solves both problems at once. It's an attractive card telling of your love and the enduring expressing of that love in a gift made to the missions in tribute to Mother. Write for further information. It can all be done without getting up from your desk.

**WELCOME STRANGER**  
The Disciples walking the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus asked the Stranger who joined them to take supper with them. And they recognized their Divine Guest in the "breaking of the bread." You can make Christ your guest by providing food for needy strangers. Father Dussky and his little flock of refugees from behind the Iron Curtain depend upon us for food packages. \$10 buys a food package... and makes Christ your Guest in His needy shoes you help.

**A FOOL THERE WAS**  
...and his name was Paul. But a special sort of fool, a "fool for Christ's sake." His folly made him the great Apostle of the Gentiles. We have another Paul who wants to be the same sort of fool, a "fool for Christ's sake." He's to the seminary studying to be a missionary priest. He needs the \$200 for his tuition. Here's April Folly that's Divine Folly... to provide another priest for Christ.

**BARGAIN BASEMENT**  
A couple of items so reasonable we can't afford not to buy them. Bishop Tutuill has two little schools in the town of Maloula "badly in need of repair." He says "about \$200 should be enough to do the job." Archbishop Nabaa of Beirut has a children's centre run by the Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, where the poor youngsters of the town get some play, some religious instruction and something to eat. He asks for "some modest help, even a few dollars to get the bread for the poor youngsters." That shouldn't be too difficult. We'd like to send him \$100 for an Easter gift.

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