

## Wisdom of a Little Girl

When my sister's two girls were very young they often asked me to play either one-of-two play-acting games with them: Either they wanted to play "School Teacher," or "Restaurant." I find little girls delightful because of their cuteness, and in the unique ways they interact with one another. However, I never did too well participating in their games: It wasn't in me to "act" the parts required of their make-believe, and I always ended up sabotaging the game by being silly. And, while they never seemed to begrudge me for my silliness, they probably would have preferred I play along.

I'm reminded of these moments now that I am re-reading St. Therese' *"Story of a Soul."* This famous spiritual work of the young Carmelite, Therese' of the Child Jesus, (Aka, Therese' of Liseux), is not an easy read for a guy. It is very "little-girlish" in its expression. Little Therese' comes off as overly emotional, interested in pieces of ribbon, picking flowers, and singing songs. It really is an effort for me, a grown man, to see through the little-girl-ness of the text to distill out its wisdom. It is, I think, a very enriching and worthwhile effort. The following quotes are some results of that distillation:

*"This is the mystery of my vocation, my whole life, and especially the mystery of the privileges Jesus showered on my soul. He does not call those who are worthy but those whom he pleases. . . "*

*"And so it is in the world of souls, Jesus' garden. He willed to create great souls comparable to lilies and roses, but He has created smaller ones and these must be content to be daisies or violets destined to give joy to God's glances when He looks down at his feet. Perfection consists in doing His will, in being what He wills us to be."*

*"It seems to me that if a little flower could speak, it would tell simply what God has done for it without trying to hide its blessings."*

*"I understood that to become a saint one had to suffer much, seek out always the most perfect thing to do, and forget self."*

*"My God, I choose all! . . . I fear only one thing: to keep my own will; so take it, for I choose all that You will!"*

*"A soul in a state of grace has nothing to fear from demons who are cowards, capable of fleeing before the gaze of a little child!"*

*"Earth. . . seemed a sad place of exile and I could dream only of heaven."*

*". . . In heaven God will grant His Elect as much glory as they can take, the last having nothing to envy in the first."*

*"All of a sudden the Blessed Virgin appeared beautiful to me, so beautiful that never had I seen anything so attractive; her face was suffused with an ineffable benevolence and tenderness, but what penetrated to the very depths of my soul was the ravishing smile of the Blessed Virgin."*

*"God made me understand my own glory would not be evident to the eyes of mortals, it would consist in becoming a great saint! . . . I don't count on my merits since I have none, but I trust in Him who is Virtue and Holiness. God alone, content with my weak efforts, will raise me to Himself, and make me a saint, clothing me with His infinite merits."*



*[First Holy Communion] "Ah! How sweet was that first kiss of Jesus! It was a kiss of love; I felt that I was loved and I said 'I love You, and I give myself to You forever!' . . . for a long time now Jesus and poor little Therese looked at and understood each other. That day, it was no longer simply a look, it was a fusion; they were no longer two, Therese' had vanished as a drop of water is lost in the immensity of the ocean. Jesus alone remained."*