

THE LITTLE WAY

“It is the way of spiritual childhood, the way of trust and absolute self-surrender”.

When we visit our dentist, we enter from the street through a front door into a porch and then through an inner door to the reception area and waiting room. Both doors have a spring mechanism which causes them to close automatically behind all who come and go. Unfortunately, they both close with a loud bang unless you hold the handles and physically close them gently which is what I always try to do. The majority of people allow them to slam. Perhaps, because I wear hearing aids, I am more sensitive to the sudden loud noise. I'm afraid I wince every time. When entering Saint Winefride's church, the outer doors are very old and are on latches and the inner doors also tend to close noisily. Again, I try to close them as gently and as silently as I can so that it may not disturb those who are inside in silent prayer.

I had a sister, Therese, who with her twin sister Philomena were nine years older than me. After our evacuation to Ireland during the war, when we returned home again, the twins were at an age to start working. Therese found a job in a nursery in Freshfield which cared for babies and children up to the age of five. It was run by a Belgian congregation of nuns, an order which had been founded in 1901 and had been working in the Liverpool diocese since 1937. Therese loved working with the “Sisters of the Little Ones” and soon felt drawn to the religious life. She served her noviciate in the mother house in Antwerp and made her final vows just a few months before my dad's fatal accident. She came back to Freshfield and was still there when she died at the early age of forty-nine. Therese had a great devotion to her patron saint, Saint Therese of Lisieux, the “Little Flower” as she was often referred to then. My sister taught me about the saint's “Little Way”. I read Saint Therese's auto-biography and have had a devotion to her ever since.

“The story of a soul” is the autobiography of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus. She had great ambitions to Join the Carmelite order at a very young age but was told she was too young. She even appealed to the Pope for permission but was told she would have to wait until she was a little older. When she finally joined the convent, she wanted to become a missionary but her poor health prevented it. She was only 26 when she died. Shortly before her death, the Mother Superior asked her to write her autobiography which described her little way. I will not attempt to describe it myself for I know I could not do it justice, but I still have the little booklet my sister gave me all those years ago and I have recently downloaded the book onto my Kindle.

In my own little way, I try to follow her way. When anything disturbs me, I try to accept and offer it as a sacrifice. When anything irritates me such as banging doors or when anybody says or does anything that upsets me. I try to offer it up and say a prayer for that person. I try to be considerate and put others first. I know I cannot compare myself to Saint Therese but I will keep trying hard to follow her example.

Should my roses be gathered from amid thorns, I will sing notwithstanding, and the longer and sharper the thorns, the sweeter will be my song. St. Therese of the child Jesus.