

This
My First Communion Journal
In Imitation of St. Therese,
The Little Flower
belongs to:

Date of First Holy Communion:

Place of First Holy Communion:

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General Instructions

(Note: If this journal is being used in conjunction with *Communion with the Saints, A Family Preparation Program for First Communion and Beyond in the Spirit of St. Therese*, be sure to read pages vi through viii in the “General Instructions” of that resource.)

This journal has been constructed in imitation of the “copybooks” used by Celine and Therese Martin as they prepared for their First Holy Communion in 1880 and 1884. These journals were lovingly made by Sr. Agnes of Jesus, the older sister of Celine and Therese Martin, who was at the time a Carmelite nun in the monastery at Lisieux, France. The homemade journals were described in a letter from Sr. Agnes to Therese as copybooks or “little books of preparation” where, under the symbols of flowers, the girls could record their sacrifices and pious thoughts. St. Therese’s journal had a cover of blue velvet with her initials embroidered in large white letters. Inside was “. . . one page for each day. Each page was decorated with a border, rays in each of the corners, the date in Gothic illumination, the name of a flower and a short aspiration which the scent of the flower symbolized; it was all done in black and red ink. . . . Prayers to the Child Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the guardian angel preface each of the. . . months.”

During her preparation period, Therese was encouraged to turn her heart often to Jesus by reciting the prayers and aspirations in the copybook and to take every opportunity to humble her pride and make sacrifices for the good Jesus. Throughout her sixty-nine day preparation period, she recorded each day the number of times she recited the prayers and, by use of her “sacrifice beads” (a small chaplet of moveable beads—

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for which directions are provided at the end of this book), she counted each time she overcame her own desires in order to please Jesus.

Therese, in her letter to Sr. Agnes thanking her for the copybook, tells us the importance she placed in this preparation for Holy Communion: “Every day, I try to perform as many practices as I can, and I do all in my power not to let a single occasion pass by. I am saying at the bottom of my heart the little prayers as often as I can.”

At the end of her preparation period, Therese recorded that she had recited the aspirations a total of 2,773 times (an average of about 40 each day) and had performed 1,949 “practices” or little acts of mortification and sacrifice, for an average of 28 each day.

This journal is not an exact replica of the “copybook” used by Therese but it does contain many of the same prayers and aspirations she used, the same idea of flowers inspiring virtue, and the same method of recording prayers recited and sacrifices made. It is up to you to imitate St. Therese in decorating and completing your journal, recording each day the number of times you imitate her heroic efforts by raising your heart to Jesus, and humbling your pride by making small sacrifices at every available opportunity.

I pray that this modern-day “copybook” will bring about the same results that the “little book of preparation” produced in the soul of little Therese so many years ago: the desire to become not a great saint but a little saint by performing each action of daily life with great love and humility and by becoming a little flower in our Lord’s bouquet of beloved saints.

Janet P. McKenzie, OCDS
November 1, 2011
Feast of All Saints

Prayers and Aspirations

(“For me, *prayer* is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven.” – St. Therese)

TO THE CHILD JESUS: (from St. Therese’s copybook)

- † “Little Jesus, I love You,”
- † “Little Jesus, don’t let me be proud anymore.”
- † “Little Jesus, may I always be simple and docile.”
- † “My whole heart is Yours, Jesus.”
- † “Little Jesus, I kiss You.”

TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN:

- † “Holy Mary, help me, like you, to hold Jesus close to my heart.”
- † Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.
- † “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us!”

TO ST. JOSEPH:

- † “Dear St. Joseph, teach me to love Jesus as you did.”
- † “St. Joseph, foster-father of Jesus, pray for us.”

TO MY GUARDIAN ANGEL:

- † “Angel dear, guard and guide me.”

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St. Therese, the Little Flower

ST. THERESE RECALLS HER FATHER'S SYMBOLIC ACTION AFTER HE GAVE HIS PERMISSION TO ALLOW HER TO ENTER THE CARMELITE MONASTERY:

“Going up to a low wall, he pointed to some *little white flowers*, like lilies in miniature, and plucking one of them, he gave it to me explaining the care with which God brought it into being and preserved it to that very day. While I listened, I believed I was hearing my own story, so great was the resemblance between what Jesus had done for the *little white flower* and *little Therese*. I accepted it as a relic and noticed that, in gathering it, Papa had pulled all its *roots* out without breaking them. It seemed destined to live on in another soil more fertile than the tender moss where it had spent its first days. I placed the little white flower in my copy of the *Imitation [of Christ]* at the chapter entitled: ‘One must love Jesus above all things,’ and there it is still . . .”

ST. THERESE COMPARES OUR SOULS TO FLOWERS:

“[Jesus] set before me the book of nature; I understood how all the flowers He has created are beautiful, how the splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not take away the perfume of the little violet or the delightful simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose her springtime beauty and the fields would no longer be decked out with little wild flowers.

“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.

Read-Aloud Story

The following story—"Shut Up Posy"—is from a book published in 1900, *Story-Tell Lib* by Annie Trumbull Slosson. This book contains little stories told by a orphaned village girl, Elizabeth Rowena Marietta York, "stories out of her own head—kind o' fables that learnt folks things, and helped 'em without being' too preachy."

Once there was a posy. It wasn't a common kind of posy, one that blows out wide open, so everybody can see its outsides and its insides too. But it was one of those posies that grows down the road, back of the sugar shack and doesn't come till way towards fall. They're sort of blue, but real dark, and they look as if they were buds instead of posies—only buds open out and these ones don't. They're all shut up close and tight, and they never, never, never open. Never mind how much sun they get, never mind how much rain or drought, whether it's cold or hot, those posies stay shut up tight, kind of buddy, and not finished and humly. But if you pick 'em open, real careful, with a pin—I've done it—you find they're dreadful pretty inside.

You couldn't see a posy that was finished off better, soft and nice, with pretty little stripes painted on 'em, and all the little things like threads in the middle, such as the open posies have, standing up, with little knots on their tops, oh, so pretty—you never did! Makes you think really hard, that does: leastways makes me. What are they that way for? If they ain't never gonna open out, what the use of havin' the shut-up part so slicked up and nice, with nobody never seein' it? Folks have different names for 'em—dumb foxgloves, blind gentians, and all that, but I always call 'em "the shut-up posies."

Well, it was one of that kind of posy I was goin' to tell you about. It was one of the shut-uppest and the

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buddiest of all of 'em, all blacky-blue and straight up and down, and shut up fast and tight. Nobody'd ever dream it was pretty inside. And the funniest thing—it didn't know it was so itself! It thought it was a mistake somehow, thought it had ought to have been a posy, and was begun for one, but wasn't finished, and it was terribly unhappy. It knew there were pretty posies all around there, goldenrod and purple daisies and all; and their inside was the right side, and they were proud of it, and held it open, and showed the pretty lining, all soft and nice with the little fuzzy yellow threads standin' up, with little balls on their tip ends. And the shut-up posy felt real bad; not mean and hateful and begrudgin', you know, and wantin' to take away the nice part from the other posies, but sorry, and kind of ashamed.

“Oh, dreary me!” she says—I almost forgot to say it was a girl posy—“dreary me, what a skimpy, humly, awkward thing I am! I ain't more than half made; there ain't no nice, pretty lining inside of me, like those other posies, and only my wrong side shows, and that just plain and common. I can't cheer up folks like the goldenrod and daisies do. Nobody wants to pick me and carry me home. I ain't no good to nobody, and I never shall be.”

So she kept on thinkin' these dreadful, sorry thinkin's, and almost wishin' she'd never been made at all. You know it wasn't just at first she thought this way. First she thought she was a bud, like lots of buds all around her, and she counted on opening like they did. But when the days kept passin' by, and all the other buds opened out, and showed how pretty they were, and she didn't open, why, then she got terribly disappointed; and I don't wonder a bit. She'd see the dew

Read-Aloud Story

layin' soft and cool on the other posies' faces, and the sun shinin' warm on 'em as they held 'em up, and sometimes she'd see a butterfly come down and light on 'em real soft, and kind of put his head down to 'em, as if he was kissin' 'em, and she thought it would be powerful nice to hold her face up to all those pleasant things. But she couldn't.

But one day, before she got very old, before she'd dried up or fell of, or anything like that, she saw somebody comin' along her way. It was a man, and he was lookin' at all the posies real hard and particular, but he wasn't pickin' any of 'em. Seems as if he was lookin' for somethin' different from what he saw, and the poor little shut-up posy began to wonder what he was after. By and by she braced up, and she asked him about it in her shut-up, whisperin' voice. And says he, the man, says: "I'm pickin' posies. That what I work at almost all the time. Tain't for myself," he says, "but the one I work for. I'm only his help. I run errands and do chores for him, and it's a particular kind of posy he's sent me for today."

"What for does he want 'em?" says the shut-up posy.

"Why, to set out in his garden," says the man. "He's got the most beautiful garden you ever did see, and I pick posies for it."

"Dreary me," thinks she to herself, "I just wish he'd pick me. But I ain't the kind, I know." And then she says, so soft he can't hardly hear her, "What sort of posies is it you're after this time?"

"Well," says the man, "it's a dreadful singular order I've got today. I got to find a posy that's more handsome on the inside than it is outside, one that folks ain't took no notice of here, 'cause it was kind of humly and odd to look at, not knowin' that inside it was as handsome

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as any posy on the earth. Seen any of that kind?"

Well, the shut-up posy was dreadful worked up. "Dreary dear!" she says to herself, "now if they'd only finished me off inside! I'm the right kind outside, humly and odd enough, but there's nothin' worth lookin' at inside—I'm certain sure of that." But she didn't say this or anything else out loud, and by and by, when the man had waited, and didn't get any answer, he began to look at the shut-up posy more particular, to see why she was so quiet. And all of a sudden he says, the man did, "Looks to me as if you were somethin' of that kind yourself, ain't you?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" whispers the shut-up posy. "I wish I was, I wish I was. I'm all right outside, humly and awkward, odd as I can be, but I ain't pretty inside—oh! I almost know I ain't."

"I ain't so sure of that myself," says the man, "but I can tell in a jiffy."

"Will you have to pick me to pieces?" says the shut-up posy.

"No, ma'am," says the man. "I've got a way of tellin', the one I work for showed me."

The shut-up posy never knew what he did to her. I don't know myself, but it was somethin' soft and pleasant, that didn't hurt a bit, and then the man he says, "Well, well, well!"

That's all he said, but he took her up real gentle, and began to carry her away.

"Where you takin' me?" says the shut-up posy.

"Where you belong," says the man., "To the garden of the one I work for," he says.

"I didn't know I was nice enough inside," says the shut-up posy, very soft and still.

"They most generally don't," says the man.

MY FIRST COMMUNION JOURNAL
IN IMITATION OF ST. THERESE,
THE LITTLE FLOWER



Daily Journal Entries

Week 1

“In two and a half months, Jesus will come down into your heart for the first time! What a lot of work there is to do, what a lot of flowers have to be sown, and how little time there is to do it in!” – Sr. Agnes (Pauline) to her sister Therese upon delivery of her “copybook”

I Pray Today :

Virtues for My Garden Today:

My Sacrifices Today:

Week 1

The **SUNFLOWER** turns constantly to the sun, following it in its course. In our garden of virtues, first and foremost must be the virtue of **FAITH**, a light that continually guides us on our way. Tell Jesus today how much you love Him and how much you long to receive Him in Holy Communion.



I Pray Today :

Virtues for My Garden Today:

My Sacrifices Today: # _____
