

THE **CARMELITE**
CENTRE MELBOURNE



On-line Carmelite Conversation: Wednesday 1 April 2020: with Bernadette Micallef

www.thecarmelitecentremelbourne.org



Carmelite Conversations: Wednesday 1 April 2020

The Way of Confidence and Love:

The Spirituality of Thérèse of Lisieux

Part One: The Background

Thérèse family relationships are the background to her writing of the *Story of a Soul*. Part One will look at this background.

The publication of these writings, a year after her death in September 1897, is how her *little way* became known to the world. This will be covered in Part Two.

Thérèse at 15 just before she entered Carmel. [April 1888]

The Story of a Soul begins in the family



Therese at 3.



**Therese at 8 and
her sister Celine at 12.**

Therese at 13 years old.



The Story of a Soul continues in Carmel



The Story of a Soul continues beyond Carmel



The painting on the right is by Thérèse's sister Céline.

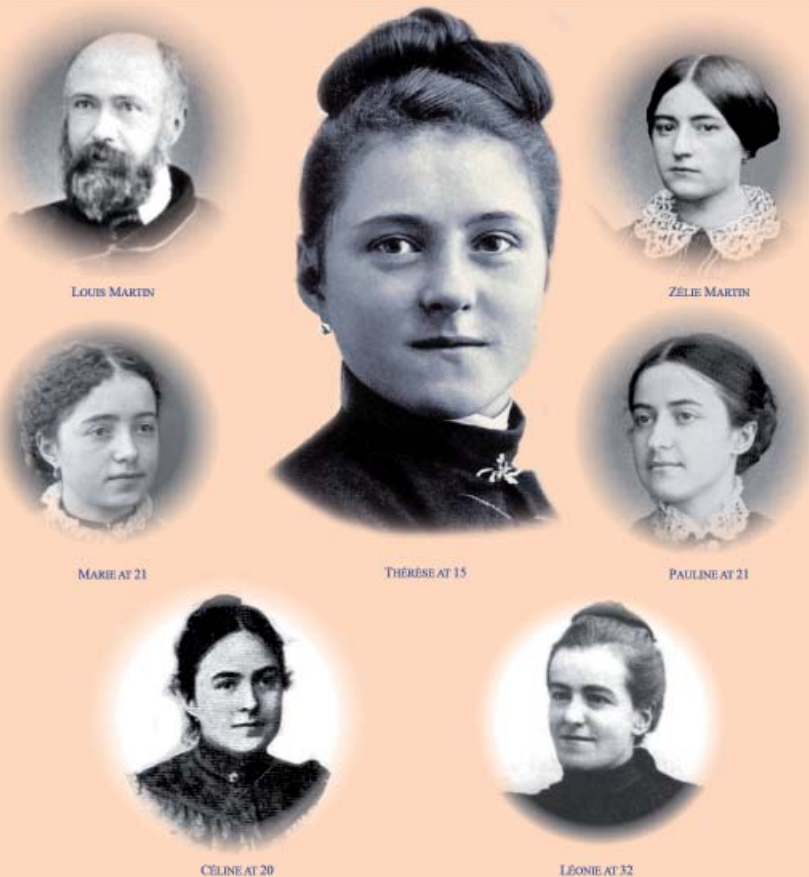
The photos in this presentation were taken from
<http://www.archives-carmel-lisieux.fr/english/carmel/>

There is a wealth of other information on this site including the full text of the *Story of a Soul*, the letters of Thérèse's mother Zélie, other correspondence.

The Home of St. Thérèse, The Little Flower

THE STORY OF A FAMILY

Fr. Stephane-Joseph Piat



Although we tend to focus on saints as individuals, they all grew and developed within a community of influences and relationships.

The *Story of a Soul* is very much related to the story of a family as this book title shows.

This is evident especially now with the canonization of Thérèse's parents, Zélie and Louis in October 2015, and the cause for the beatification of her sister Leonie opened in January 2015.

This book cover shows the family. Thérèse in the centre at 15, Parents Louis and Zélie (either side of Thérèse) Sisters Marie, 21 and Pauline, 21 (middle row) and Céline, 20 and Leonie, 32 (lowest two).

This is one cover of the book. It was first published in 1947 and has had a number of editions and reprints since then.

A Glimpse into Family Life – The Martins and the Guérins

The rest of this presentation will attempt to introduce you to the extended family in which Therese's spirituality developed. It includes:

A Genogram: a pictorial display of the family tree at the time of Therese's birth. If you take some time to study it, the symbols will become self-explanatory.

An Icon: a representation of her family as adults.

Testimonies: a selection from her sisters' interviews in the Process of Therese's Beatification.

Photos: The family in Lisieux Carmel – four sisters and a cousin.

Writing: Therese's creative writing and the story behind the *Story of a Soul*.

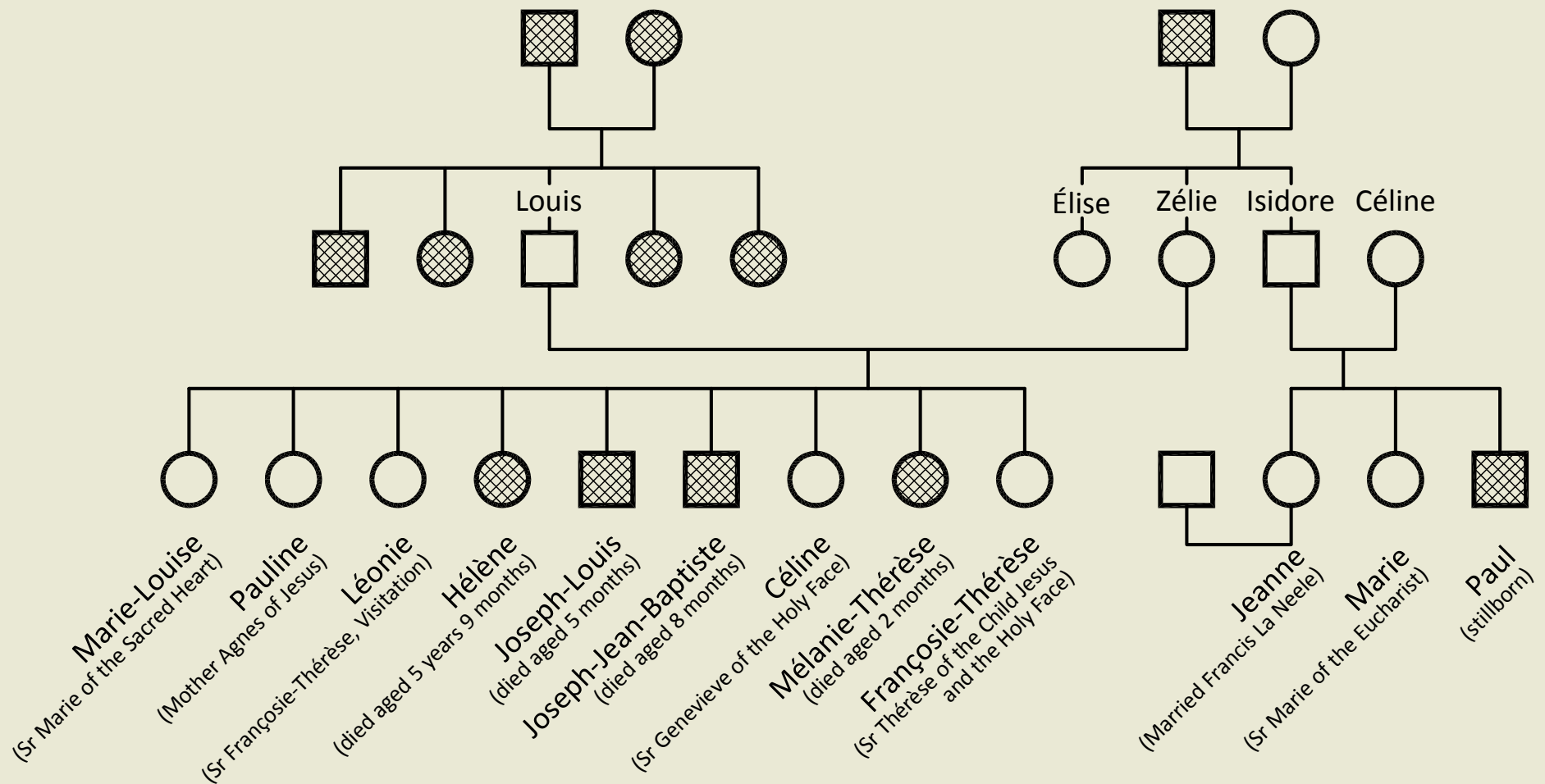
Part Two: A very brief introduction.

Before moving on ...

Take a moment to reflect on your own community of influences and relationships over the years in which your spirituality has developed.

In what ways has Therese been part of your own story of a soul?

Genogram - Thérèse Martin



A few things to know:

Louis youngest sister died at 9 years old; his other three siblings died in their mid-20's.

Zélie's sister Elise was a Visitation nun (the Order Leonie later joined, taking Therese's name as her religious name.)

Elise died of tuberculosis in February 1877, the same year Zélie died of breast cancer in August.

Isidore was 9 years younger than Zélie. His daughter Marie was born in the same week as Melanie-Therese.

All the Martin children had Marie as their first name - not shown here.

[Genogram drawn by Gilbert Micallef]



The Martin family

Parents, now declared saints.
 Four daughters, Carmelite nuns.
 Leonie, a Visitation nun now
 considered for beatification.
 Two sons and two daughters, died
 in infancy or childhood.

A little observation

Although this icon depicts all the adults as the same height, I found this comment by Celine interesting.

She wrote: Sister Thérèse was rather tall, about five-foot-four, whereas mother Agnès (our sister) was very short. One day, when I asked Thérèse whether - if she had her choice - she would prefer to be short or tall, she answered unhesitatingly, "I should prefer to be short in order to be *little* in every way."

[A *Memoir of My Sister St. Thérèse* by Sister Geneviève (Céline Martin), 44]

Parents – Louis and Zelig

Marie

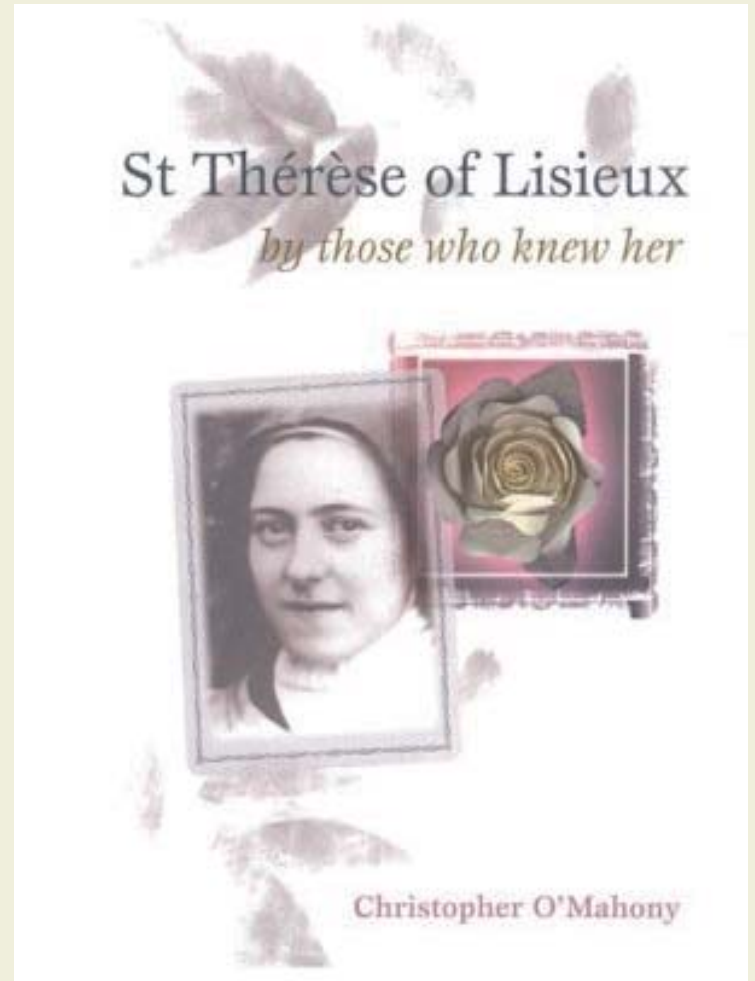
Our parents had the reputation of being extraordinarily devout. Mother observed Lent without availing herself of any lawful mitigations, [despite her delicate health] and both of them attended 5.30 Mass every morning ... they received communion frequently, more than once a week, [four or five times] which was rather exceptional at that time. ... My mother had a great abhorrence of worldliness, and wanted nothing luxurious in the house. [Additional information from Pauline inserted in the above.]

Leonie

... Our parents had both thought of entering religious life when they were young, and they kept up a very high standard of Christian living ... Father ... was very much given to religious practices ... Mother was very devout, and a member of the Third Order of St. Francis. In rearing her children she paid a lot of attention to training them in devotional practices and to making them think in accordance with their faith.

Celine

What impressed me most about my parents was their detachment from the things of this world. Life at home was simple and patriarchal; we shunned the disturbance of worldly acquaintances, and tended to keep to ourselves. Eternal life was the dominant concern of my parents.



This book includes transcripts of those interviewed in the Process of Therese's Beatification. The quotes given here are taken from each sister's answer to question 11 "... about the reputation, faith, conduct, character or piety of her parents."

Upbringing – family values

Marie

Our parents reared all of us in a spirit of detachment from the good things of this world. This seems to me to have been the characteristic note of our upbringing. They frequently reminded us of eternity.

Pauline

One might say that our spiritual welfare was our parents' only concern. ... Mother made us raise our hearts to God often during the day, and brought us on visits to the Blessed Sacrament. She brought us up rather strickly, and let nothing pass, especially anything that savoured of vanity, etc.

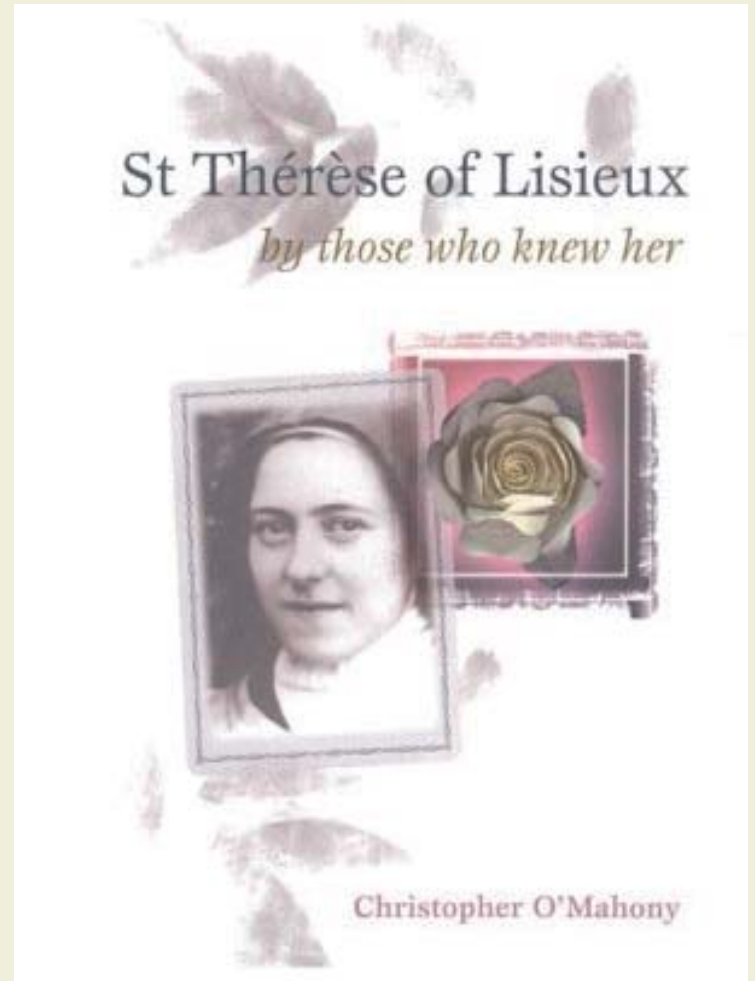
Leonie

The upbringing we received from our parents at home was kindly and affectionate, but also watchful and conscientious; we were not spoiled.

Celine

[Celine firstly related the death of their mother and the move to Lisieux to be with the Guérin family, that is, Zélie's brother and his family.]

Our father loved his children very much; he had an almost maternal love for us. We, for our part, had an affectionate reverence for him that almost amounted to worship.



This book includes transcripts of those interviewed in the Process of Therese's Beatification. The quotes given here are taken from each sister's answer to question 13 about "... how her parents loved their children, and how they reared them ..."

Family continues in Carmel



Photo of members of the family in the alley of the chestnut trees at Lisieux Carmel.

March 19th 1896, (Shortly before Thérèse knew she was dying and her 'trial of faith' began.)

From left to right:

Standing: Marie of the Sacred Heart (Marie) and Geneviève of the Holy Face (Céline),

Sitting: Agnès of Jesus (Pauline) and Thérèse;

In front: Cousin Marie Guérin (Marie of the Eucharist)

Their cousin Marie Guérin (Marie of the Eucharist) died 8 years after Therese, at 35 years old, of tuberculosis. [April 1905]

Family continues in Carmel



Photo in the sacristy court yard, showing the work of the sacristan and the making of altar breads.
Left to right: Marie of the Sacred Heart, Agnès of Jesus (Pauline), Geneviève of the Holy Face (Céline),
Marie of the Eucharist (Marie Guérin) kneeling and Thérèse. [November 1896]

Therese's writing – plays, poems, prayers and prose



Photos taken by Céline in the sacristy court yard. Thérèse as Joan of Arc, in her own play, *Joan of Arc accomplishing her mission*, January 21, 1895 [22 years old]

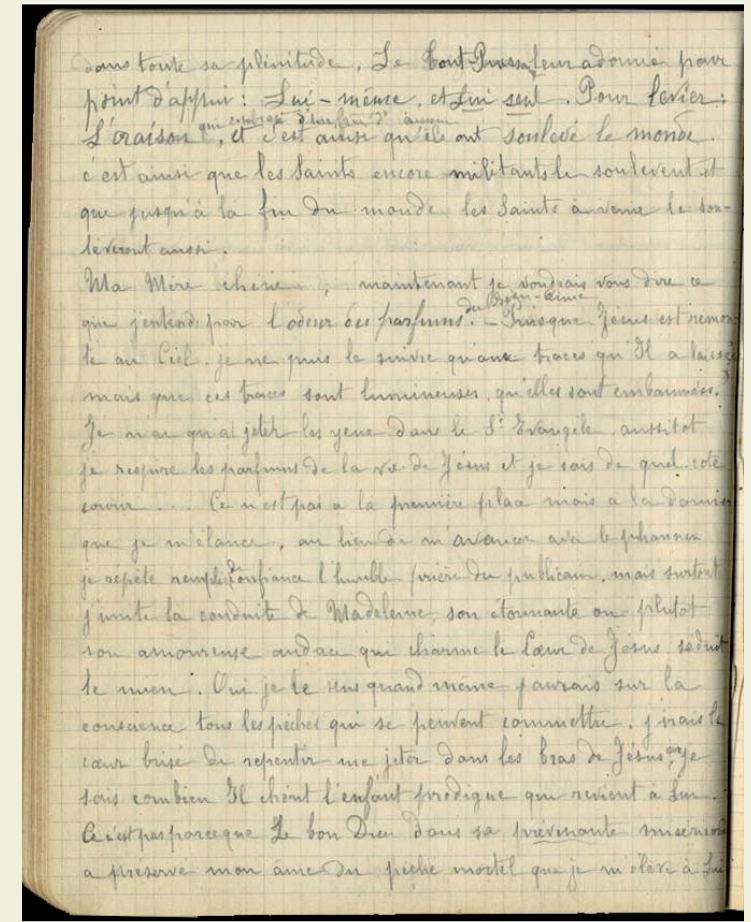
The Story behind the “Story of a Soul”

[Testimony of Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart, question 8.]

Manuscript A: “One winter’s evening [the four Martin sisters in the Lisieux Carmel] were warming ourselves together. Sister Therese related two or three incidents from her childhood. I said to Mother Agnes [Pauline, who was then prioress]: *Is it possible that you should permit her to compose little poems to please everybody, and that she should not write anything about all the memories of her childhood? ... [so we don’t lose] all these detailed accounts that we find so interesting.* Mother Prioress hesitated at first; then, at our insistence, she told [Therese] that it would give her much pleasure if she would give her an account of her childhood for her feastday. Sister Therese obeyed ...

Manuscript C: Later, Mother Agnes of Jesus, seeing that Sister Therese was very ill, persuaded Mother Marie de Gonzague, the prioress, to order Sister Therese to write the story of her religious life, ...

Manuscript B: Finally, I asked her myself during her last retreat (1896) to write down for me what I described as her little way. She did so, and these pages were added ... when the *Story of a Soul* was published. ... She wrote it quite simply, just as it occurred to her.



A handwritten page of the manuscript



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Part Two: Coming Wed 8 April

The message of Therese known as her *little way*.

Images, for the *Story of a Soul*, that Thérèse used to express this way of being in relationship with God.

Examples of her lived experience drawing especially on the Memoirs of her sister Céline.

Suggested examples of living the *little way* today.

Thérèse at 15 just before she entered Carmel. [April 1888]