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On this day: Death of St. ThÈrËse

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Sep. 30, 2011 NCR Today

On this day in 1897, Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face died at the Carmel of Lisieux.

"On September 30, coming through the broken words of Thérèse who was very restless in her bed, the witnesses discerned the presence of possible despair. Their evidence concerning that day is unanimous.

"During the afternoon, Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart, very upset, left the infirmary because she could not bear any more . . . The valiant Mother Agnès herself, riveted to her sister's bed, left the infirmary at one time to go and throw herself at the foot of the statue of the Sacred Heart so that her sister might not fall into despair. . . . Sister Geneviève received the same impression".

--*The Passion of Thérèse of Lisieux,* [1] by Guy Gaucher, Crossroad, 1990, page 120.

"About five o'clock the bell rang to summon the community quickly to the infirmary. The dying nun welcomed the sisters with a smile. She was holding her crucifix firmly. A 'terrible death-rattle' tore her chest. Her face was flushed, her hands purplish, her feet cold; she was perspiring so much that the sweat soaked through the mattress. Time passed. The prioress dismissed the nuns.

"After seven o'clock Thérèse managed to say: *Mother, isn't this the agony? Am I not going to die?* 'Yes, my poor little one, it's the agony, but God perhaps wills to prolong it for several hours.' *Well, all right! All right! I would not want to suffer for a shorter time.* She looked at her crucifix: *Oh! I love him! My God, I love you!*

"Her head fell back. Mother Marie de Gonzague had the bell rung again: the community returned very quickly. The kneeling sisters saw her face become once again very peaceful, her gaze was fixed a little above the state of the Virgin of the Smile, 'for the space of a creed'. Then she sank back on to the pillow, her eyes closed. She was smiling She looked very beautiful and had the appearance of a very young girl. It was about twenty past seven."

-- *The Story of a Life: St. Thérèse of Lisieux,* [2] by Guy Gaucher, Harper & Row, 1982. Pages 204-205. See also, on page 224, quotations from letters written about St. Thérèse by Albino Luciani (later Pope John Paul I) in 1973, Simone Berteaut (Edith Piaf's sister) in 1969, and others.

Some essential books by and about St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church, whose feast we will celebrate tomorrow, October 1, are:

Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux, [3] translated from the original manuscripts by John Clarke, O.C.D., I.C.S. Publications, 1996.

Letters of St. Therese of Lisieux, Volume I: 1877-1890, [4] and Volume II: 1890-1897, [5] translated by John Clarke, O.C.D., ICS Publications, 1982.

Her Last Conversations,

translated by John Clarke, O.C.D., ICS Publications, 1977.

All books by Bishop Guy Gaucher, O.C.D.

All books by Father Stéphane-Joseph Piat, O.F.M.

Therese and Lisieux, [6] by Pierre Descouvemont and Helmuth Nils Loose, Eerdmans, 1996. Google Books provides a generous sample of this beautiful picture book online. AbeBooks [7] has copies for sale.

Abebooks also has copies of *The Photo Album of Saint Therese of Lisieux,* [8] Kenedy & Sons, 1962.

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Links:
[1] http://www.amazon.com/Passion-Therese-Lisieux-Months-Modern/dp/0824509870/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1317340665&sr=1-1
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