



The Context of Holiness: Psychological and Spiritual Reflections on the Life of Saint Therese of Lisieux

Marc Foley

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This book explores both the psychological and spiritual dimensions of the life of St. Therese of Lisieux. The basic premise of this book is that the spiritual life is not an encapsulated sphere, cloistered from the realities of our human existence. Rather it is our response to God within the physical, psychological, social and emotional dimensions of life.

St. Therese did not grow in holiness apart from the human condition. Like all of us, she was emotionally scarred by the fragileness of life. She was deeply wounded by the death of her mother at the age of four, bedridden as the result of a neurotic episode when she was ten, struggled with debilitating scruples most of her life, and suffered an agonizing dark night of faith.

St. Therese was no plaster statue saint. Her life was a real life. As it unfolds before us on the pages of Story of a Soul, we see a pilgrim soul who made her way home to God through many raging storms and dark nights. The specific nature of Therese's trials may differ from our own, but psychological and emotional suffering are our common lot. For example, we may not have know the pain of our mother dying when we were four, but most of us have know the pain of the loss of a loved one. The sufferings that we share with Therese are universal - physical pain, anxiety, anger, sadness, depression, loneliness, doubts of faith, to name a few. These sufferings make doing the will of God difficult, but they are the context of our choices. They are the context of holiness.

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