

# A million children praying the Rosary

Letter to the children

Hi there!

In the month of October Pope Francis is inviting all Christians to pray especially for the mission of the Church and for missionaries. Who and what is a missionary? Do you realise that you are actually a missionary yourself? Yes, in fact we are all missionaries, because we have been baptised. Through our baptism we have been given a great gift – and that is our faith in Jesus.

And a missionary is simply someone who shares this gift with others. If you believe in God's great love for us, and if you try to be kind to everyone, even including people you don't particularly like or who are mean to you, then you too are a missionary.

However, there are also missionaries who are called by God to leave everything and travel to distant lands in order to tell the people there about Jesus and teach them how to live according to his Gospel.

These missionaries also teach people by their own example, helping the poor and abandoned, visiting the sick and elderly and comforting them and caring for children and young people. But being a missionary in faraway lands can also be very difficult, and missionaries have to be ready to give up all kinds of comforts and make many sacrifices. They have to leave family and friends behind, learn new languages, new customs and get used to living in a different climate and eating different food. In many countries it can even be dangerous, when there are wars and fighting, or where Christians are persecuted.

That's why these missionaries need our prayers and support, so that they can find a way to touch people's hearts and help them.

The Patron Saint of the missions and of all missionaries is someone called Saint Therese of Lisieux. Perhaps you have already heard of her?

She lived in France more than a hundred years ago and is famous all over the world today for her great faith and trust in Jesus and Mary and for the simple wisdom with which she showed her love for them. She became a Carmelite nun at the age of just 15 because she wanted to pray and save souls, and especially to pray for priests and missionaries. Although she never left her convent, she understood that she didn't have to travel to distant lands in order to be a missionary – she knew that she was too small and weak. And so she said: „My mission is love. I cannot do great works. I cannot be a missionary and preach the Gospel, and I cannot die for God as a martyr. But what does it matter? My brothers and sisters will do this work instead. And I will be love on their behalf. I have no other way of showing God my love than by strewing flowers... In other words, I won't neglect any little sacrifice, any word, to draw good from the smallest things, by doing everything out of love.“ This was her “Little Way” of being a missionary.

That is why she is known today as the “Little Flower”.



It would be good if you would try to imitate her and help missionaries in this way, even becoming a great missionary yourself. Even little things have great value in the eyes of God. Therese knew this and wrote a beautiful story about it: „Once upon a time there was a prince who wanted to build a church. But first he ordered that none of his servants could give any money towards this church. They were forbidden to make even the smallest contribution. The Prince wanted

all the glory for himself for having done something great for God.

And so the workmen began to build the church.

One day, however, a poor old woman was watching the horses struggling to pull the big stones up the slope for the church. And she said to herself, „I know I'm forbidden to give any money for the church, and yet I would be happy to contribute something. But I could at least help the animals who are labouring without knowing it at this great task, then perhaps God would be pleased with this? So she spent her last few coppers and bought a bundle of hay, which she gave to the horses. Now when the church was finally completed, the prince wanted to have it solemnly consecrated and so he had a large stone carved with his name and the name of his family, as an everlasting reminder of his generosity. But next day his name had disappeared from the stone and instead the name of a poor, unknown woman was inscribed on it. Furious, the Prince had the inscription carved once again. But every time the same miracle was repeated. Finally, he made enquiries and when they had found the humble old woman, he asked her if she had really given nothing for the building of the church. Trembling all over, she denied it. But they continued to question her and finally she remembered the little bundle of hay and confessed that she had helped the horses. And so, at last, everyone understood why her name had appeared on the stone, and no one dared remove it again after that.“

Little Therese lived by this faith, confident that even the smallest little task, done out of love, was of the greatest value. She even said once that “just picking up a needle out of love can save a soul.“ This is a mission that you can also share in. So just be faithful in saying your prayers and kind to everyone around you. And when you say the Rosary, just remember that every “Our Father“ and every “Hail Mary“ you say and every loving thought you think is like a little flower you have picked for God, to give joy to him and his Mother Mary. And at the same time you will also be helping many missionaries to joyfully go about their work, bringing people to Jesus and Mary and teaching them how to live in love. So then both you and the missionaries will be sharing in the same mission. And when at last all people have come to know and love God, then peace and unity will finally reign throughout the world.

