

**Seven 'Little Way' Week Ideas For Adults:
Witness Through Service
1 – 7 October 2011**



St Thérèse is the universal Patroness of Mission and received a teaching which has been called the 'Little Way'; the saint lived by this pathway which is a commitment to do every day small tasks with love. It is a way of witnessing to the love of God and neighbour and has nothing to do with seeking greatness but selflessness and service. The 'Little Way' is simple and direct and enables others to encounter Christ.

The teaching and example of St Thérèse reminds us all that most of us are not called to do great things but rather small deeds with love. She is quoted as saying:

"Love proves itself by deeds, so how am I to show my love? Great deeds are forbidden me. The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers and these flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doing of the least actions for love."

Isn't this how most of us feel much of the time?

Often we can be too busy with our own concerns and the needs of our own families to put St Thérèse's little way into practice and to reach out to others with the love of God.

It is hoped that the 'Little Way Week' (1 – 7 October) will encourage people to resolve to do seven small actions – one a day for a week – to witness to their faith through service. This year the initiative is being offered in support of the legacy of Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the UK who said:

"I know that you will take a lead in calling for solidarity with those in need. The prophetic voice of Christians has an important role in highlighting the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, who can so easily be overlooked in the allocation of limited resources. In their teaching document Choosing the Common Good, the Bishops of England and Wales underlined the importance of the practice of virtue in public life. Today's circumstances provide a good opportunity to reinforce that message."

Address at Oscott, 19 September 2010

Whatever action you do or gesture that you decide to make, be ever ready to share the reason for your doing or making it. If the opportunity arises, explain that it is 'Little Way Week', share something about your faith in Jesus who calls his followers to serve, as appropriate maybe even give the person or people on the receiving end of your action or gesture a prayer card, or invite them to your home and / or a parish event or Mass.

Below are seven little ways in which we can touch the lives of those in our community with Christian love.

1) Hobbies: Take what you do and turn it outwards

Many of us want to reach out to others but we lack confidence. We think we have nothing to give. Consider sharing your hobbies with others. Do you enjoy cooking? Could you start an apple pie ministry? What you could do is identify people in your community who are struggling, and take them a cake or an apple pie and just pop in for a chat.

Maybe you enjoy painting or card making? You could invite others to join you. What about reading? Launch a reading circle in a local coffee shop or bookshop. It is always easier to include people in what you enjoy and are

already doing. From time to time recommend one of your favourite spiritual books – perhaps the life of a saint - to the group.

2) Clubs: Join others in what they like to do

Maybe you have always wanted to do something but never had the chance. Find someone or a group that already does what you would like to do and join them in it. Be willing to make friends and open up to people. In every circumstance it is important to simply be who you are – a Christian who is happy to speak about what their faith means to them and perhaps show it by wearing a religious symbol of some kind.

3) Welcome: Open your home

‘Home is a Holy Place’ (<http://www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk/>) encourages us to think about the sanctity of marriage and family life. During a time when family breakdown is so commonplace, being able to welcome others into our homes can be a source of great blessing, healing and consolation. This is particularly the case for people who have had a painful experience of family and home life. Inviting others round for a meal might be a good place to start. Do use the opportunity to say Grace and thank God for all those whom he has gathered around your table.

4) Charity: Do little acts of kindness

Films such as ‘Evan Almighty’ have promoted the notion of little acts of kindness done with great love in the modern era. It is amazing how kindness in some places is still seen as a rarity. Genuine kindness causes people to ask: “Why are you doing this?” This gives us the natural opportunity to talk about the difference our faith, the Church and Jesus makes to our lives and behaviour.

5) Help: Ask for it when needed

Like offering help, asking for it can make the person who responds feel good about themselves. It gives people the opportunity to serve.

A friend of mine, well into her eighties, would regularly ask strangers: “I wonder if you can help me.” She would do this sometimes even when she did not really need help. It reminded her of her dependency on others and enabled some very fruitful conversations to take place. It also helps to affirm others in their gifts and talents.

6) Put Yourself Out: Go the second mile

Jesus said as part of his ‘Sermon on the Mount’: “If anyone requires you to go one mile, go two miles with him.” (Mt 5: 41) It always makes an impact when we put ourselves out on behalf of others. In a world where time is measured in milliseconds, to give someone five minutes or half an hour is widely regarded as remarkable. Even to attentively listen to someone can be a rare gift that makes all the difference in the world.

7) Volunteering: Long term ‘little way’ living

There are hundreds of organisations that rely on volunteers to offer vital services. CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network), for example, is the umbrella organisation of charities with a Catholic ethos, providing professional social care within the UK. Members provide services to marginalised and vulnerable children, adults and families of all faiths and none. In the long term consider getting involved. See: <http://www.caritas-socialaction.org.uk/> You may be required to have a CRB check.

In these little ways we can point people towards the Truth of the Gospel, to the love and mercy of God.

Rev. Richard Hardy wrote the seven suggestions above and recently worked as Head of Church Relations for ‘Care for the Family’. He is currently pastor of Albany Baptist Church in Cardiff.

‘Little Way Week’ is an initiative of the Home Mission Desk, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.
www.catholicchurch.org.uk/homemission