

Seven 'Little Way' ideas for adults: Witness Through Service



The relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux will tour England and Wales from 16th September – 16th October 2009.

St Thérèse is the universal Patroness of the Missions and received a teaching which has been called the 'LittleWay'; the saint lived by this pathway which is a commitment to do every day small tasks with love. It is away 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' (18th – 24th October), which follows the visit of her relics, will encourage people to decide on seven small actions – one a day for a week – that they will do to witness to their faith through service. Below, Richard Hardy, from 'Care for the Family' (an ecumenical organisation) offers seven little ways in which we can touch the lives of those in our community with Christian love.

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, 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.

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 book shop. 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 works as Head of Church Relations for 'Care for the Family'. He is responsible for an initiative called 'Engage' that seeks to encourage churches to think more fully about the little ways they can

effectively engage with those who live around them. The next Engage Conferences will take place in: Gateshead (Saturday 3 Oct), London (Saturday 21 Nov) and Newport, South Wales (Spring 2010). To find out more, please visit www.engage.today.org.uk/conference

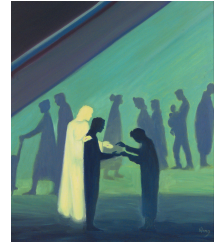
'Little Way Week' is an initiative of the Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation (CASE).
www.caseresources.org.uk

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Other important dates for your diary:

Home Mission Sunday, 20th September 2009

The theme of **Home Mission Sunday** this year is 'They will know Him by the good works that you do'. The Catholic Community is invited to reflect on the ways in which it can share the Faith with others through service and acts of charity. Resources are provided by the Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation (CASE), which is an agency of the Bishops' Conference; on the 20th September some leaflets will be available at the back of Catholic churches (one per family) with additional materials available from: www.caseresources.org.uk. There will be a second collection in support of the work of CASE on this Sunday; whilst this collection is optional the Agency is part-funded by it and relies on diocesan support. CASE also runs the Catholic Enquiry Office, offering free and confidential information about the Catholic Faith to enquirers: www.life4seekers.co.uk and for non-practising / resting Catholics: www.comehomeforchristmas.co.uk. It has also developed an evangelistic site for 11 – 13 year olds: www.yfaith.co.uk. (Image: © Radiant Light 2009, www.radiantlight.org.uk)



World Mission Sunday, 18th October 2009



The prayers and donations offered on **World Mission Sunday** help to support churches, hospitals, schools and vocations in countries where the Church is new, young or poor. It is the Catholic Community's chance to show its love and solidarity with its brothers and sisters; to support them in our shared mission of showing the love of God for all. Thanks to World Mission Sunday everyone can join with the whole Church in bringing spiritual and material help to those who need it most. For more information please see:

http://www.pontificalmissionsocieties.co.uk/mission_sunday/index.php