

## Module MTh11: St Thérèse of Lisieux: Doctor of the Universal Church

The focus of this module is the contemporary relevance to the Church and the world of the life and theological wisdom of St Thérèse of Lisieux. In proclaiming Thérèse to be a Doctor of the Church, the Church has declared that Thérèse's message is perennially relevant; she speaks in fresh and life-giving ways throughout all times and places.

Thérèse's Carmelite journey was unusual for her time, the youngest child from a highly devout family whose members all entered religious life. Unusually three of them would be in the same Carmel as herself. Her simple piety exemplified in her writings followed by her early death led to the rapid growth of a cult for her canonisation. Given the piety of the cult of the 'Little Flower' that had grown around her since her death there were some that were puzzled by her subsequent nomination as a Doctor of the Church by Pope John Paul II. This module sets out to investigate the life and spirituality of Thérèse of Lisieux and to clarify why she indeed became a Doctor of the Church.

The module first traces together the development of Thérèse from being a young woman constrained by her times, to being a woman of the Gospel; it is the Gospel-centeredness of her theological wisdom that gives rise to Thérèse's enduring contribution to the life of the Church and beyond. It then looks from different perspectives at the particular contribution that Thérèse's theological wisdom makes to our era.

**Module Objectives :** Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a general understanding of the term "Doctor of the Church" and a particular understanding of the various factors involved in applying that term to St Thérèse of Lisieux.
2. Appreciate the way in which St Thérèse's life and spirituality were initially shaped by the culture of nineteenth century French Catholicism.
3. Understand why and how St Thérèse transcended the limitations of her era and developed a Gospel-centred theology.
4. Comprehend and analyse some of the ways in which Thérèse's Gospel-centred theological wisdom is relevant to the twenty-first century.