



Shirt of Flame: A Year with St. Therese of Lisieux

Heather King

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If you have not read Heather King before, her honesty may shock you. In this remarkable memoir, you will see how a convert with a checkered past spends a year reflecting upon St. Thérèse of Lisieux—and discovers the radical faith, true love, and abundant life of a cloistered 19th-century French nun.

Shirt of Flame: A Year with St. Therese of Lisieux Details

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Author : Heather King

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From Reader Review Shirt of Flame: A Year with St. Therese of Lisieux for online ebook

Christine says

Like another reviewer, I thought this book was shoehorned into the "do this for a year and write about it memoir."

To its credit it wasn't that!

At first, I didn't think I liked the book, but looking at all the post it flags hanging off the edges (I borrowed it from the library) I obviously liked it more than I thought.

That said there are certainly parts of the book where I have to scratch my head and then shake it; where I'm quite certain she misunderstood St. Therese and winds up making bizarre assertions from it.

Heather King is a fantastic writer, wielding the pen with power and skill. I love her writing, but I always read with caution.

Jewels says

How I wish I could conjure words as eloquent as Heather King's to describe this "little" masterpiece. Inspirational, painfully authentic, and riveting: I read it too fast and will have to read it again. After I pick up her other books and read them, first.

One of my favorite quotes:

All around me, people were saying, "I'm spiritual, but I'm not religious. Oh no, I'm definitely not religious." I wanted to reply, "Does blood not beat in your veins? Have you never ached with sorrow at the suffering of the world? Have you never cried at the flight of a bird? Have you never fallen in love?"

Like another reviewer, "I dog-eared many pages to go back and re-read" and I highlighted and used tag flag post-it notes, too.

I fully intend to take this walk with Ms. King and Saint Therese of Lisieux again. Soon.

lisa says

After reading Shirt of Flame: A year with Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, I feel grateful to author Heather King. Through this book, King uses her immersion in the life and writings of Thérèse to make this saint vibrant and relevant for contemporary seekers.

In the past I had picked up the writings of Thérèse and found her to be unremittingly optimistic. Thankfully, King has blessed me with a fresh perspective on this young woman, who lived quietly from 1873 to 1897, and her approach to spirituality.

Throughout this worthwhile, enjoyable book King relates significant moments in the life of Thérèse with events that have shaped her own spiritual journey. Each of the twelve chapters concludes with a beautiful prayer, each based on that chapter's theme. The book concludes with a helpful appendix of life events in chronology. Unobtrusive endnotes aid the reader in locating sources for quoted passages in the text.

This was a very enjoyable read. For my full review, please visit [light to read by](#).

Kacky says

Overall I liked this and I liked her biographical information about St. Therese. I didn't always pull out of that information, the same connections the author made, I was never able to relate to the author. However, it was still a good book.

Karen says

I found this book at the public library and picked it up on a whim. I've never felt especially drawn to St. Therese and her autobiography *Story of a Soul* had not resonated with me, as it seems to for so many other people. I immediately felt drawn into the author's life and her exploration of St. Therese's writing. This is an incredible book, organized into monthly chapters, with prayers at the end of each chapter. I read it quickly but I plan to buy the book now and re-read it more slowly, perhaps as a monthly devotion.

Claire Gilligan says

I'm hard on spiritual reading. I already know a lot of theology, liturgy, Scripture, hagiography... And connecting with my lived experience appears to be hard. This isn't my favorite of King's writings, but it was an excellent exploration of St Therese's life, with the events of King's own life presented rather like a thematic elaboration on the events of the saint's life. Goes into more detail than many biographies, but not in the sense of telling more facts -- more like sharing more stories.

The book is brief, well-organized, thought-provoking, engagingly told. If its premise intrigues you, I encourage you to go for it!

Fran Darling says

It was difficult to get used to the comparison drawn by King as she pulls her 21st Century urban experiences and 18th Century old-world meditations of St. Therese. I am still getting through many of the seeming contradictions between her parallels, but on re-read I find King's analysis is true and meaningful. I am finding myself drawing a calming message in my own personal mental dialogues daily. King is providing a context to make St Therese's simple strategies and processes relevant to today's confusing chaos. Still reading slowly, but will keep this book handy to refer to over the years.

Standing by my original impressions...

Sarah says

This was a perfect book to read during Holy Week. King's writing is very real and personal.

Stephanie Kelly says

A truly remarkable book - I couldn't put it down!

Kasey Jueds says

I'm going to start with my only quibble about this book, partly to get it out of the way: *Shirt of Flame* is structured as one of those "I did X for a year and now I'm writing a book about it" memoirs that are all over the place right now, but it doesn't really fit the model at all. Yes, each chapter supposedly covers one month, but there's nothing within any of the chapters that ties it to the month in question, aside from the chapter title. There are no seasonal references, and actually no references at all to the time of year or to the author's specific practice during a specific month. The book, to me, felt shoehorned into a popular format... and this is a shame, because *Shirt of Flame* is so smart, honest, moving, and generally lovely. It doesn't need any help from an imposed structure, and I was left wondering whether publishers encourage their writers to use this format to boost sales?

OK, now that I've complained... I loved *Shirt of Flame*. I'm not particularly drawn to St. Therese, though I'm definitely interested in her, but Heather King writes about Therese's life and teachings in such an incredibly heartful and personal way that I found myself totally drawn in, and reading very slowly so I could savor the author's thoughtfulness. Initially I was bumped by the fact that King refers to several major life events--becoming sober, falling in love, converting to Catholicism--without including much detail, but then I realized she's written two other memoirs which probably cover at least some of these subjects... and I also realized that, surprisingly, I wasn't that bothered by the lack of specificity. Heather King is one of those rare writers who's able to deal with enormous issues briefly (the book itself is quite short) but also with such depth... her writing somehow goes straight to the core. And it is also bravely, sometimes painfully honest--an amazing gift to her readers. Each chapter deals with one facet of Therese's teachings, weaves back and forth between Therese's life and the author's, and ends with a prayer. I usually find prayers in contemporary books sort of cloying, but Heather King's are beautiful--wise, honest, and grounded in the everyday, as is the entire book.

Bill Kerwin says

In this short book of biographical and autobiographical meditations, Heather King—self-described “ex-lawyer, sober alcoholic, contemplative, and Catholic convert who lives in the thick of Los Angeles”—spends a year (the book has twelve chapters, each named for a month) seeking inspiration from the life and sayings of St. Therese of Lisieux, commonly known as “The Little Flower.”

Sadly, this book didn't work for me. Perhaps it is my fault. I was looking—I realize now—for a Catholic Anne Lamott, an urban hipster filled with wry anecdotes and humorous self-awareness, expressed in clear, graceful prose. But Heather King is not that person. Her self-examinations are unhip and merciless, her anecdotes are sad, and her prose—though effective—does not delight. This is *definitely* not the book to read if—like me—you wish to be coaxed and pleased into spiritual enlightenment.

In addition, I've never been a big fan of "The Little Flower." I prefer my female saints fearless, with a large public profile: Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, Dorothy Day. Therese has always seemed too desperately mousy, too ardent in her embrace of suffering, to gain my admiration or hold my attention. I hope this book would change all that, but I don't think it did.

Still, though, Therese and Heather haunt me: I feel I have misjudged them, and may seek them out again. After all, I've heard good things about Heather King's memoir *Parched*. And Dorothy Day was a big fan of "The Little Flower," and I greatly admire Dorothy Day.

I'll end this review with one of the prayers with which Heather King ends each of her chapters. This is her prayer for the month of May:

Lord, help me to offer everything of myself. All the contradictions: the part that wants to be free and the part that is afraid to be free, the part that wants to forgive and the part that won't forgive, the part that wants to let go and the part that holds on for dear life, the lion and the lamb. I cannot resolve any of those warring parts myself and I have no idea what resolution would even look like.

Maybe the question isn't so much "When will I see Your face?" Maybe the question is "When will I sit still long enough to see that Your face is everywhere?": in the quince tree outside my bedroom window, in the sparrow on the telephone wire, in the sun that, by rising every morning and setting every night, helps me hold the unresolved tension and encourages me to trust.

Michael Havens says

While this was a difficult read for someone still in the process of grieving a loss, this book walked me through the psychology and theology of one amazing saint, and one I've chosen to follow and be guided by. I would strongly recommend to buy the book and follow it on its year long journey with St. Therese.

Alice says

Half awesomely profound, half "I do not think that means what you think it means."

Erin Henry says

Good intro to Therese of Lisieux. The author discussed parts of her life and teaching and shows how she applied it to her own life. Te prayers at the end of each chapter are beautiful.

Mrsreader says

This was good. It was comforting in the way proper to a work that accepts the value of redemptive suffering and that we're not here to be as comfortable as possible in this world. I think it is important to read this as a memoir rather than as a theological work, since just having it published could lend a misleading air of authority to anything that is merely Heather King's opinion. She also quotes a couple of sources whose names may be familiar but eyebrow-raising to anyone who's ever been accused of being part of some kind of self-appointed orthodoxy police, but I at least didn't catch anything problematic in what she quoted from them. Some people may be turned off by how much she writes about herself, but I don't think it's excessive, especially if you read the introduction, which makes it pretty clear to expect that.

I must sound so purse-lipped, writing some of these things. I think it is worthwhile reading. I'd probably give it three and a half stars if that were an option.
