

Discussion Question for St. Therese, a Treasured Love Story by Archbishop Fulton Sheen

It is recommended that the size of a book club discussion group not be less than 6 persons nor more than 12 persons to allow everyone to take part.

It is recommended that you treat the introduction and summary of the lives of Sheen and St. Therese as a chapter along with the 11 chapters in the book. This divides the book into 12 parts that can be reasonably discussed in six weeks by treating two chapters per session.

Introduction including the Biography of St. Thérèse and Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

List some of the details that make the lives of St. Therese different from Archbishop Sheen.

In spite of their many differences, list some things that St. Therese and Archbishop Sheen share in common.

In particular, how were St. Therese and Archbishop Sheen connected to the missions?

How were St. Therese and Archbishop Sheen both dedicated to prayer?

What differentiates the Chinese girl, mentioned in footnote A, who made 32 Holy Hours and Sheen who made over 20,000 Holy Hours in life (one daily for 60 years of priesthood).

Chapter 1: St. Therese, the saint for troubled times

Sheen describes St. Therese's path to sainthood as simple, but not easy. What are the important characteristics that define St. Therese's path to holiness?

Why could another person, or St. Therese, be a thousand times closer to the Good Lord than Sheen?

What are two examples given to demonstrate St. Therese's life of loving sacrifice?

Sheen points to St. Therese and not himself, but what are some examples of sufferings in his own life that Sheen bore with love?

Chapter 2: St. Therese and real saints (and how you can be one, too)

What characteristics of St. Therese (and Archbishop Sheen) make them relatable to the ordinary Catholic?

St. Therese wrote the story of her life under obedience. How is her humility evident in her biography of her life? Sheen wrote his autobiography at his own initiative, but did he also show signs of humility?

What were St. Therese's spiritual resources to protect her?

St. Therese taught spiritual childhood. How can an older person (like Sheen) practice the same virtue at an older age?

What examples of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses can give encouragement to the sinner?

When St. Therese was presented with a basket of dolls, she said, "I'll take everything." How did this incident become a model of spiritual perfection for St. Therese (and Sheen)?

Chapter 3: St. Therese and the virtues of faith, hope, and perseverance

List all the people St. Therese had to ask for permission to enter Carmel at 15.

How did St. Therese react when she was delayed until she was 16? Did Sheen also experience rejection and misunderstanding?

Explain some of the examples from Scripture that Sheen gives of Love's delay.

Explain St. Therese's spiritual insight about being a toy ball before the child Jesus.
Why does Sheen say that it is not good if God answers all our prayers right away?

Chapter 4: St. Therese and the power of intercession

Why did St. Therese believe she would not go to purgatory?

How does Sheen describe purgatory as a state of being caught between two desires?

The souls in purgatory and the saints in Heaven can pray for us. How did St. Therese want to spend her time in Heaven?

What does Sheen mean when he says we have two intercessors: Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?

At what age and on what day did Sheen want to die? Did he get his wish?

Chapter 5: St. Therese and the value of suffering

According to St. Therese, should we seek to be consoled or to console? What did Jesus thirst for?

How does Sheen explain this contradiction: Jesus can no longer suffer in his body, but Jesus continues to suffer in his body?

What is the difference between making reparation to Jesus and offering Jesus consolation? Which did St. Therese prefer? Which did Sheen prefer?

What are examples of suffering that can save souls? What sufferings did Sheen endure?

Chapter 6: St. Therese and the sword

Why is life not about what we acquire but what we lose?

Though St. Therese appeared frail, what bold desires did she have in her soul?

What is the secret to missionary work and evangelization?

Why does Jesus bring not peace but the sword? Why was Carmel not meant to be a place of peace and tranquility for St. Therese?

Why is the world often tired and exhausted? Is this true today as in the time of St. Therese?

What do you believe kept Sheen's zeal strong?

Chapter 7: St. Therese, God, and our relationship with Him

What spiritual lesson is taught by the image of the pencil in the hand of the Lord?

Though St. Therese embraced the vow of chastity, how did she see herself as married?

What does Sheen say to those who say a person who chooses priesthood or Carmel is "wasting his/her life"?

How can it be that hoarding a thing is a negative, but wasting a thing is a positive? How did Sheen remain detached from worldly goods?

Sometimes people say they don't have time to pray because, "I have too much to do and I can't

Chapter 8: St. Therese and fighting Satan

St. Therese loved Our Lord and turned her back on the devil. In this, she was not tempted by many of the sins that we may find commonplace today. However, how was St. Therese tempted (perhaps in a surprising way)? Why?

What does Sheen say theologians are not doing that poets and literary experts are doing?

From a psychological perspective, in what three ways does the devil try to tear us apart?

Although St. Peter recognized that Christ is the Son of God, why did Jesus call him Satan?

How does Sheen interpret the three temptations of Christ in the desert?

Describe how, during a temptation, Jesus appears to be an obstacle and the devil appears as our friend? After a sin, describe how Jesus becomes our friend and the devil becomes our accuser?

Chapter 9: St. Therese and suffering for the sake of Love

Give some examples of what Sheen means by transference.

How did Jesus transfer 1) our physical sufferings, 2) our emotional sufferings, and 3) our guilt and spiritual sufferings?

How did St. Therese take on the 1) physical, 2) mental, and 3) moral ills of the world?

How did her experience with the criminal Pranzini convince her of the power of prayer? Did Sheen have similar experiences?

How does Sheen identify himself as a priest-victim, as St. Therese identifies herself as a victim soul?

Chapter 10: St. Therese and humility, the way of the child

How does Sheen describe true humility?

Sheen uses the Philippians canticle (Phil 2:6-11) to indicate that Jesus Christ did not grasp at equality with God, but emptied himself. How is this different from Adam?

How does Sheen describe Jesus emptying himself?

What is the difference between sterile emptiness and St. Therese's emptiness that is fruitful?

How did God preserve humility in King David and in others like Sheen?

What signs of humility do you see in Sheen?

Chapter 11: St. Therese, sin, and mercy

How does the world deny guilt and sin? How true are these observations in our culture today?

What examples does Sheen give from the Old Testament of redemption from sin after the shedding of blood?

Sheen points to three essential elements (God's action, the use of a substitute, and the shedding of blood). How are these elements present when John the Baptist points to Christ? How are these elements present in the crucifixion?

Explain the relationship between the blood of the animal sprinkled on the Day of Atonement on the veil in the temple with the veil in the temple on Good Friday.

How did St. Therese incorporate this spiritual insight in her life? How did Sheen?