

**The Basilica of Sainte-Thérèse of Lisieux, is a Roman Catholic church and minor basilica. Located in Lisieux, France It can accommodate 4,000 people, and, with more than two million visitors a year, it is the second largest pilgrimage site in France, after Lourdes. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, was also called St. Teresa of the Child Jesus or the Little Flower, her original name was Marie-Françoise-Thérèse Martin. She was born on January 2, 1873 in Alençon, France, she died on September 30, 1897 in Lisieux, France. She was a Carmelite nun whose service to her Roman Catholic order, although outwardly unremarkable, was later recognized for her exemplary spiritual accomplishments. She was named a doctor of the church by Pope John Paul II in 1997.**

**Thérèse was the youngest of nine children, five of whom survived childhood. After her mother died of breast cancer in 1877, Thérèse moved with her family to Lisieux. In the deeply religious atmosphere of her home, her piety developed early and intensively. All four of her elder sisters became nuns, and at the age of 15 she entered the Carmelite convent at Lisieux, having been refused admission a year earlier. Although she suffered from depression, scruples—a causeless feeling of guilt—and, at the end, religious doubts, she kept the rule to perfection and maintained a smiling, pleasant, and unselfish manner. Before her death from tuberculosis, she acknowledged that, because of her difficult nature, not one day had ever passed without a struggle.**

**The story of Thérèse’s spiritual development was related in a collection of her epistolary essays, written by order of the prioresses and published in 1898 under the title *Histoire d’une âme* (“Story of a Soul”). Her popularity is largely a result of this work, which conveys her loving pursuit of holiness in ordinary life. St. Thérèse defined her doctrine of the Little Way as “the way of spiritual childhood, the way of trust and absolute surrender.” She was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1925 and was the youngest person to be designated a doctor of the church. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux was beatified in 1923 and canonized in 1925, her feast day is October 1st. Bishop Lemonnier of Lisieux, decided to build a large basilica dedicated to her in the city where she lived and died. The project had the full support of Pope Pius XI. Construction started in 1929 and was completed in 1954. The construction was supervised by three architects from father to son to grandson, Louis Marie Cordonnier, and his son Louis-Stanislas Cordonnier and his grandson Louis Cordonnier. The Roman-Byzantine style of the basilica was inspired by the Sacred Heart Basilica, Paris. The building is in the shape of a Latin cross, with nave, choir and transept. The crossing is surmounted by an imposing dome. The internal volume is all in one piece, due to the absence of columns, all who attend mass have an unobstructed view. Completed in 1932, the crypt evokes the secret of the spiritual life of Saint Thérèse. It is decorated with marble and mosaics representing certain scenes in the life of Saint Thérèse: baptism, first communion, miraculous healing, commitment to religious life, death. In the summer of 1944, the townspeople who remained in Lisieux took refuge in the crypt of the basilica. The Carmelites of Lisieux, including Saint Thérèse's two surviving sisters, lived in the crypt of the basilica that summer.**

**The basilica was blessed on July 11, 1937, by the papal legate Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII). Work stopped for some time due to the Second World War, but then resumed and the basilica was completed in 1954. The basic structure, which was completed before the war, suffered little damage during the bombing, which destroyed two-thirds of Lisieux. On July 11, 1951, the basilica was consecrated by the Archbishop Martin of Rouen, with the Papal Legate, Maurice Cardinal Feltin.**

**The area east of the apse houses a Way of the Cross and tombs which held the parents of Saint Thérèse, Saints Louis Martin and Marie-Azélie Guérin from 1958 through 2008. The causes for their beatification were introduced in 1957. For the first time in the history of the Church, the two causes were united into one by Pope Paul VI. Pope John Paul II declared them venerable in 1994 and Cardinal Saraiva Martins, Papal Legate, announced their beatification in the Basilica of Saint Thérèse on Mission Sunday, October 19, 2008. They were canonized by Pope Francis on October 18, 2015.**