

Novena

Dorothy Day

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Summary: A fictional account of a fourteen year old girl's troubles beginning a novena to the Little Flower—St. Therese of Lisieux.

Little Monica Records in Her Diary How She Was Able to Start Her Novena to the Little Flower, and Her Trouble About the Petition.

I WANTED so much to make a public novena to the Little Flower this year and yet it seemed at first that I was not going to be able to. Several weeks ago I read notices in the Catholic paper as to where public novenas were to take place. Two were in churches sufficiently near where I lived, I thought. One was in the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer down at Third St., which is 12 blocks away, and another at St. Francis Xavier's, seven much longer blocks across town. Then I found out that the first novena was not in English; and all sorts of work and duties and visitors interfered with the second and I was much discouraged. Then our pastor announced a novena starting six days after the feast of the Little Flower, but within the octave, and I was so happy!

Our church is right around the corner from the house where I live, and even if supper is late, mother is letting me leave the dishes to run there, whereas she wouldn't let me go further unless the work were all done for the night. Of course attending the novena means I have to get out of putting little Charlie to bed and that difficult job falls to mother, and he is a difficult job what with being sick so much, and mother being tired out with cooking and washing and mending. I hated to leave it to her, but I promised to work all day Saturday instead of just the morning, and do all the ironing Friday afternoon after school if she'd just let me make the novena, so she did, and it has started.

We had so many needs, it was hard to make up my mind about the petition. Ben needs a job and papa needs better work, and Rose needs to be kept from going with that boy who is not a Catholic, and mother and Charlie need health, and I need, in addition to spiritual graces, shoes and a coat for the winter, which seems like a silly, frivolous petition. But I do so dread going another winter in that thin old fall coat which never kept me warm at all. I was ashamed at the idea of writing all these things down and putting them in the box in front of the statue of the Little Flower and I hesitated for a long time.

Then I thought, "I'll just lump everything together and ask the Little Flower to take *all* our temporal affairs in her hands during this novena and add the special petition that she will teach me to walk in her little way." Goodness knows that if the love of God were burning brightly enough in my heart I should not only warm myself but those all about me, like that

saint I read about who was so consumed with Divine Love that all about him as he walked the snow melted and little birds came and perched on his shoulders, thinking that it was spring.

(Next week Monica tells of the tremendous problem caused by old Aunt Carrie's visit, and how the Little Flower took care of them.)