



**St. Therese of Lisieux,
our first sister
and inspirer of the Congregation**

The spiritual journey of Fr. Boccio has been intertwined since his youth with the figure of St. Therese of Lisieux.

The figure of the young Carmelite takes place in the life of Amilcare when he realizes that his vocation is not to become a missionary in distant lands, but to cooperate in the triumph of the Sacred Heart in the world while remaining in his homeland.

This change of perspective and desires occurs in days of trial, which will however reveal themselves to be of great graces.

In 1911, Amilcare reads for the first time the book "Story of a Soul" by Blessed Therese of the Child Jesus and this reading clearly shows him the way to lead souls: "I remember that in 1911, going to Fr. Orione, I had seen the book of the life of this Saint and I had felt the invitation to buy it. I read it, I felt invited to esteem Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, to follow her, to lead souls on the path of trust, simplicity, love".

Encouraged by this new perspective, the young cleric continues his journey: increasingly attracted by the merciful love of Jesus, he becomes a valid apostle driven by the one great ideal of responding to Love with love.

In 1918, while he is convalescing in hospital after being wounded in battle on Mount Grappa, Fr. Boccio once again reads "Story of a Soul" and, in the eighth chapter, finds the words that inspired the first clear idea of the "Little Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus".

"In 1918 - reading the eighth chapter of the "Story of a Soul" - I had a clear thought of you, that you would be "little victims of love"; that you would come to the house of the Lord to bear fruit in grace and live a life of simplicity and love".

Fr. Amilcare feels invited to gather a group of small generous souls who cooperate in establishing the Kingdom of mercy of the Lord through a life of simplicity and love; souls who would be "little victims of love".

But what words of St. Therese struck the young priest in love with God, so as to have the inspiration for a new opera in the Church?

He himself tells us in some short writings on unpublished sheets of tissue paper:

Victims of love: it is the realization of the desire of Blessed Therese of the Blessed Jesus:

"O my divine master, will it only be your justice that will receive its holocausts? Will not your merciful love also need them? He is everywhere unknown and rejected. Those hearts to whom you would like to make a generous gift of it turn to creatures... asking for their happiness from the miserable affection of brief moments instead of throwing themselves into your arms, and accepting the delightful flame of your infinite love. O my God, will this despised love remain closed in your heart? It seems to me that if you found souls who offered themselves as "victims of your love" you would quickly consume them and you would be happy not to repress so much the flames of infinite tenderness that are contained within you".

"This merciful love renews me, purifies me at every moment and leaves no trace of guilt in my heart." (B. Therese of the Blessed Jesus. Life chapter 8). B 2)

Victims of love because they sacrifice themselves directly and more especially not to the justice of God so that it may be appeased but to the mercy and love of God so that it may triumph. The holy French Carmelite, in the passage cited in her autobiography, noted that the merciful love of God was unknown and rejected; moreover, she realized that even those hearts to whom she would have liked to reveal herself did not know how to accept it and preferred the ephemeral affection of creatures to the infinite love of the Creator.

From this bitter realization, a question arose from the heart of the young nun, which manifested the cry of love of the lover towards the Spouse: "My God, will this despised love remain closed in your heart?"

Fr. Boccio wanted to answer this question by giving life to a new Congregation that had the purpose of welcoming this love of God and making it triumph in all hearts.

Fr. Boccio, reading this passage from Saint Therese, felt inspired to start our Congregation entitled: **"Victims of Love for the Triumph of the Merciful Love of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus"**. Ten years later the Church gave us our current name of "Little Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus".