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Author Interview – Shower of Heavenly Roses

By Lisa M. Hendey

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I believe that my own strong devotion to St. Therese of Lisieux, lovingly known as "The Little Flower", stems from the fact that she gives me such great hope - hope that someone who spends most of every day doing mundane little tasks (like washing laundry and driving car pools), can make these little acts holy by offering them to God with a loving heart.

In her new book Shower of Heavenly Roses: Stories of the intercession of St. Therese of Lisieux (Crossroad Publishing Company, September 2004, paperback, 227 pages), author Elizabeth Ficocelli shares stories of countless hearts touched through the intercession of St. Therese. For those not acquainted with St. Therese and her wonderful autobiography Story of a Soul, Ficocelli's introduction relates the life history and spirituality of this magnificent woman. In her Prologue, Ficocelli shares her own personal faith journey and the role in that journey played by St. Therese, as well as the meaning of the sign of the rose.

Millions have turned to St. Therese for aid and intercession in times of difficulty and despair. The stories shared in Shower of Heavenly Roses are stirring accounts of prayers answered by miracles, great and small. St. Therese inspired many with her words "I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth." Shower of Heavenly Roses shows that St. Therese's spirit of love and service, her "little way", lives on in our world.

I am pleased to share the following interview with author Elizabeth Ficocelli.

LH: It's a pleasure to be able to share the following interview with Elizabeth Ficocelli, author of Shower of Heavenly Roses: Stories of the Intercession of St. Therese of Lisieux. Elizabeth, first off let me say that this book is a treasure! Would you please begin by telling our readers a bit about yourself and your family?

EF: I am a Catholic convert who entered the Church in 1983. I have been married to a wonderful man for 19 years, the man who first introduced me to the Faith. I am a stay-at-home mom and my husband and I are raising four boys — ages 13, 9, 6 and 4 — in central Ohio. For the last five years, I have been writing books and magazine articles to share my love and enthusiasm of the Faith with others. My desire is to excite and educate people about the sacraments and the other treasures that our Church offers.

LH: Elizabeth, this book has a great deal of personal meaning for you as you share your own story of conversion. Can you briefly relate to our readers your own personal experience with St. Therese during your faith journey?

EF: As I mentioned, I am a convert. I was raised Lutheran, and when I was eight years old, I found a

medal on the sidewalk as I was walking to school. I thought the woman on the medal was Mary. For some reason, I kept that medal in my jewelry box, and it wasn't until I was an adult Catholic that I discovered the meaning of the mysterious message imprinted on the back, "After my death I will let fall a shower of roses." It was the famous quotation of St. Therese of Lisieux. This prompted me to read her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, and like so many others, I fell in love with her. I felt she had always been present in my life, from my youth. Years later, I wrote a magazine article about the intercession of this saint in my life and the life of my son. It was my first published work, and it ran in *Catholic Parent* in January 2000. Interestingly, this was exactly when the relics of St. Therese were touring this country and creating quite a fervor, as they seem to do in every country they visit. I did not know about the relics tour when I wrote the article. The timing was all her doing. She accomplished this a second time with my book, *Shower of Heavenly Roses*. Due to the overwhelming response to my call for stories, the book was completed a full year ahead of schedule. It was released in September 2004, a few weeks before the launch of the major motion picture, *Therese*. I was aware that a movie had been made about her, but I had no idea it was going to be released this year until my manuscript was well into production.

LH: For our readers who have not yet had the opportunity to read *Shower of Heavenly Roses* please give us a description of the book.

EF: *Shower of Heavenly Roses* is a compilation of 65 stories that depict the intercession of St. Therese of Lisieux in the lives of a variety of people. The stories are beautiful and inspiring examples of faith that I think the world needs to hear right now. But I wanted to do more than present some beautiful stories. I wanted to make the world aware of this special Saint and the lesson of love that she teaches us all. That's why I provide an introduction about her life, her spirituality, and why she was named Saint and Doctor of the Church. In my prologue, I talk about saintly intercession in general, and I address how this idea can be easily be misconstrued or self-serving. And that's not the point at all. The saints are one of our terrific gifts from God, an example to us all, and yes, their help is available for the asking. But we should not limit ourselves to simply asking for personal favors. We really should be asking these holy men and women to help us follow the wonderful example they left us.

LH: In reading the stories included in *Shower of Heavenly Roses*, I was deeply moved by the impact that St. Therese has had on so many lives. The stories come from such a broad cross section – old and

young, lay and religious, male and female...how did you go about collecting the stories for the book?

EF: I used the Internet for my primary research. I discovered many organizations, publications and private web sites dedicated to St. Therese, in addition to lay and religious orders. I contacted organizers of the relics tour and was able to get a list of most of the churches and monasteries that hosted the relics. A few Catholic publications posted my call for stories, but for the most part, the word was spread electronically.

LH: Of the stories you share in Shower of Heavenly Roses, do you have a favorite?

EF: That's a tough question. All of the stories have special meaning to me; that's why I selected them for the book. I have developed friendships with the contributors — many of them have become like family. I had the great pleasure of meeting two of the contributors in person when I did a book signing at the National Shrine of St. Therese on October 1st. They were delightful — I wish I could meet each one. A few of the stories do have an extra special place in my heart. The very first story to come in, within 24 hours after I sent my call for stories, came from Brazil. It's about a mother who locates her grown children halfway around the world after many years of separation, thanks to the intercession of

St. Therese. This story set the tone of the book for me, and therefore I placed it as the first story that appears in the book. There are some "wow" stories, like St. Therese making her presence known in a wedding photo. A quieter story that touches me is called, "My Dad's Devotion." It is written by a grown daughter, recalling her father's love/hate relationship with St. Therese. By "hate" I mean that when things weren't working out as the father would have liked, his statue of St. Therese would be turned around with her nose against the wall. When things were okay, she was facing front again. I found this very open, honest and human relationship with the Saint very real and simple, like St. Therese herself.

LH: Elizabeth, St. Therese has long been one of my favorite spiritual friends and confidants so I am pleased with the influx of recent projects about her such as your book and the Therese movie. What message do you hope to share through Shower of Heavenly Roses?

EF: I hope the book will inspire people to learn more about St. Therese and her little way of great love, particularly through her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*. I also hope the book will lead people to discover other saints and the blessing they are to all of us. I think most importantly, I would like people to come away with the realization that God exists and loves us very much, and that His community of saints is just one more way He shows us that love in our daily lives. That's why I'm personally sharing this book with people of other faiths and those with no faith at all.

LH: As a fan of your books for children, *Child's Guide to First Holy Communion* and *Child's Guide to Reconciliation*, and now this latest book, I'm curious to hear about your plans for upcoming projects. What are you working on next?

EF: I am currently writing another adult book that will have a similar format to *Shower of Heavenly Roses*. This book is going to be about Medjugorje. I attribute Medjugorje and its call for peace, prayer, fasting, conversion and the sacraments as having a significant influence on my own Catholicism today. Since my pilgrimage there in 1989, Medjugorje has really helped to make my faith come alive. Because

there is much controversy about these apparitions, my intention is to release a book in 2006 (the 25th anniversary of the apparitions) that will bring healing and understanding to this controversy. Therefore, I am compiling stories of how individuals have been converted by their exposure to Medjugorje and its messages, and what is happening as a result of that conversion, 25 years later. For many people, it has spawned new ministries. The stories I have been receiving are wonderful testaments that these apparitions continue to bear good fruit in the world. I think the Church needs to hear these stories as it continues to observe the events happening in Medjugorje.

LH: Elizabeth Ficocelli, author of Shower of Heavenly Roses, thank you so much for your time and for this gift of this wonderful book. I know that it will touch many hearts and bring many into a closer prayer relationship with St. Therese of Lisieux. Are there any closing thoughts you'd like to share with our readers?

EF: I thank you for your web site that provides such helpful information for Catholic moms like me. I also appreciate this unique opportunity to talk about my own writing ministry. Readers are invited to visit my web site at www.elizabethficocelli.com for a complete list of books and magazine articles, or to submit a Medjugorje story. Books can be ordered through this web site or by contacting your local bookseller. Thank you, and God Bless!

For more information or to order Shower of Heavenly Roses: Stories of the intercession of St. Therese of Lisieux visit <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0824522567/digitalcropper-20> or www.elizabethficocelli.com

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A Beautiful Rose Is Natures Gift

By Mike Yeager

Roses are one of nature's most beautiful and splendid gifts. Roses come in a variety of colors and scents, from deep, deep red to the brightest yellow. The many petals on roses offer a texture and fullness to roses that far outshine any other flowers. Black roses, red roses and white roses have all been used in historical writings. Even Sherlock Holmes paused from his busy work while solving the case of "The Naval Treaty" and said, "All other things ...are really necessary for our existence...But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its color are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers.

It's interesting that something as beautiful as roses are also equipped with sharp thorns. An interesting play on our concept of taking the good with the bad from nature. The most esteemed of all cultivated plants, are the true roses. Rosa occurs indigenously in the north temperate zone and in tropical

mountain areas, usually as erect or climbing shrubs with five-petaled fragrant flowers. The rose has been a favorite flower in many lands since prehistoric times. It appears in the earliest art, poetry, and tradition. It has been used in innumerable ways in decoration. In ancient times it was used medically. But, for many gardeners just being able to grow beautiful roses is reward enough.

You can search all over the web to find some great resources to help. Yellow roses, blue roses or climbing roses can all be found on the internet. Take your time to look around and consider what kind of roses you would like to have blooming in your garden.

Mike Yeager
Publisher

A Beautiful Rose Is Natures Gift

Learn About The Different Types Of Roses

Mini Roses Are Going To Change The Look Of Your Home

Create Beautifully Wrapped Wedding Gifts

Add A Modern Designer Touch To Your Bathroom With Proper Shower Curtain Rods

The Ultimate Rose Garden– Neighbors envy, owners pride!

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