

# *Brief Biography*



*Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face  
(Marie Céline Martín)*

*April 28, 1869 - February 25, 1959*

*By: R. Hannan*

Marie Céline Martin came into this world with beautiful light brown hair and hazel eyes. She was born in Alençon, France at the family home on Rue du Pont-Neuf on April 28, 1869. She was baptized in a private ceremony at home on the same day. At the birth of each of their children, their mother would pray: “Lord, grant the grace that this child may be consecrated to you, and that nothing may tarnish the purity of its soul. If ever it would be lost, I prefer that you should take it without delay.” (ML) Céline became the seventh-born child of nine children of Louis and Azelie Martin. Her parents named each of their children after Marie in honor of Our Lady. Céline’s official baptismal was at Saint Pierre at Montsort on September 5, 1869. Her godparents, M. Vital Romet and Mme. Celine Guérin, accompanied Celine and her family to the Church.

Prior to giving birth to Celine, Azelie was already worried about Celine’s fate. She wrote to her brother Isidore and said: “If God wills once more to take this one from me, I pray that it may not die unbaptised, so that at least I may have the comfort of three little angels in Heaven. You cannot imagine how I fear for the future as regards to the little one I am expecting (Celine). I feel as though the fate of the last two will be its fate also. (SF)

Each morning Azélie would make it a habit to rise early to attend morning Mass. Before participating in Mass she would light a candle and pray reverently before the statue of Our Lady. Humble at heart, Azélie petitioned Our Lady for the children that she and her husband were given by God, that one day they would all become saints. She would also ask Our Lady for her children to be more reverence toward God than she was.

Sadly, four of the Martin children would never make it to adulthood. Azélie gave birth to her fourth child on October 13, 1864, Marie Hélène who past away on February 22, 1870, at the age of five. Louis and Azélie were given the blessing of receiving another child on September 20, 1866 with the birth of their first son, Joseph Louis Martin. It was with great sadness the he too past away a year later on February 14, 1867. On December 19, 1867 the birth of their second son, Joseph Jean Baptiste was born. However, he too was taken away from them on August 25, 1868. The life of Louis and Azélie’s sixth daughter, Marie Mélanie Thérèse was very short from August 16, 1870 to October 8, 1870. Later, Azélie would remark: “Four of my children are already in their eternal home, and the others—yes, the others, will also go to that heavenly kingdom, laden with more merits, for they will have been longer in the fight.”(DBT)

Days after her arrival into this world, Celine showed the same symptoms that her other siblings showed prior to their deaths. Azelie was immediately alarmed by these symptoms and sought out a wet nurse in Semallé. Azelie sent her to stay with the wet nurse for several months and after several doctor visits it was deemed safe to bring Celine back home in 1870. Having Celine come back home was a great consolation to her mother especially at this particular time. Just months prior, Helene’s soul ascended to Heaven.

Celine’s godmother, Celine Guérin, bought Celine a beautiful white dress with a feathered hat. Celine admired this dress even at the tender age of sixteen months as her

mother Azelie saw it, “she never looked more delightful in it.” Anytime there was an outing, Celine would put on a white dress because she looked very beautiful in them.

On July 19, 1870, The Franco-Prussian War began. France declared war on Prussia and the lower German states then aligned themselves with the North German Federation. The French military would soon realize that the German army was far more superior in combat than their French adversaries. “As each battle ensued, French towns in the northern part of France started to fall, leaving behind massive amounts of wounded and dead. Once the Germans had advanced onto Le Mans in the latter part of December of 1870, parents from all over the area rushed to retrieve their children from the Visitation boarding school; Louis and Azélie were no exception.” Pauline's mother sought out several options to retrieve their children but the only option was for them to travel the lengthy road to Le Mans. It was impossible to go by train because the French army was using it for the war effort. “Louis set off along the dangerous roads to Le Mans to retrieve his daughters. Louis safely brought his daughters back home amongst seeing for themselves the spoils of war. Sadly, Le Mans fell on January 11, 1871. The Germans in turn used the boarding school to house the wounded, which in some cases; the wounded soldiers transmitted deadly communicable diseases to the local townspeople.

After the fall of Le Mans, the city of Alençon would be no exception. It too fell. “As the German army advanced onto Alençon, Azélie led all of the children into the root cellar as the bombs started to land nearby. To preoccupy their time, she had them bring their school books down with them. “Once the smoke cleared and the town officially surrendered, the Germans then forced each French family to house a number of German soldiers. When the soldiers entered, there were over 25,000 of them. The Martin family housed nine German soldiers on the bottom and second floor of their house during their occupation, which then lasted until May 10, 1871.

It was of great concern for Azelie of Celine’s well being. The soldiers had confiscated much of the food that the town had. Milk became a rarity and she was fearful that Celine would either get sick or die as a result.

Once the soldiers left Alencon, it was time to get things back to normal. It became a very difficult time financially for the Martin family because they were not able to collect the payments for previous work they had done as well as there was not any new work to be had.

Things slowly started to get back to normal for the Martin family.” They inherited the home once owned by Azélie’s father, Isidore Sr. and the home was much larger than what they had before. “So, they made the decision to leave their home on rue du Pont-Neuf and move into their new home on rue Saint-Blaise.”

Celine was also a great comfort to her mother yet again after the loss of her younger sister Melanie on October 8, 1870. When Azelie was feeling the guilt over Melanie’s death and repeating to herself ‘my poor little girl’ out loud, Celine would come to her thinking she was referring to her and tell her ‘here I am’ and give her a hug. Celine

would also ask her mother where Melanie was and looked all over the house for her demanding to know where her little sister was.

As relived through her mother's eyes in a letter dated April 1874, Azelie accounts to the strength of Celine: "She has a lively disposition, and a very fast learner, and most importantly, she triumphs over certain symptoms which would cause us great distress over." (DBT) But Azelie thought Celine might have been spoiled which could have been a result of all her many illnesses where she had to be constantly monitored. Celine naturally gravitated to her father and her father looked upon her as a 'pretty strapping girl' with a sweet disposition. Azelie observed how much Celine had a great affection for her father: "When Louis is there no one else may hold her. She cries to go to him with all her might, and when I want to take her again, I have to remove her forcibly from his arms." (SF) Her drive for a fulfilled life full of happiness from early on was what she so desired to seek.

At the age of four, Celine became a fast learner, she would listen attentively to her family members as she sat near them and listen to what they were singing or speaking. She would then repeat and memorize what they either sang or spoke. But when her family heard her repeat what they either sang or spoke, she immediately becomes quiet. It was time for Azelie to sit Celine on her knee and teach her, her first lessons. Every lesson she was given she learned it with ease such as learning the entire alphabet in a matter of weeks and also learning to read. Azelie taught her to make little acts of sacrifices to strengthen her character. Celine took delicate care of all her toys and personal possessions for fear of them becoming either destroyed or damaged.

One of the lessons Celine was forced to learn at an early age was forgiveness. One evening, Celine walked up to her mother and told her that she hated the poor. Even though, Azelie tried to convince her that hating the poor was wrong, Celine would not back down from her position. Days prior, when Celine was with a friend of hers on the front door step, a poor child walked by and gave her a sarcastic look which in turn caused Celine to tell the child to leave at once. In response to Celine's reprimand, the poor child slapped her across her face. Later that night, Celine was in a better frame of mind to be convinced by her mother to forgive the poor child. The next morning, Celine relented and forgave the poor child and in turn offered a bouquet of flowers to Our Lady and the Good Jesus said to her mother "I love the poor very much now!" (SF)

Celine's valiant efforts to overcoming obstacles were also centered in her demeanor. When she saw a row of wildflowers and found the one she desired to pluck, she also saw a snake at its stem. Without any hesitation, she tried to figure out a way of getting this flower. As she was proceeding to pluck this flower she was whisked away and carried away from danger.

Louis catering to the needs of his little ones, decided to erect a swing for them in the backyard. So that Celine and Therese could find some amusement while they were at home.

Prayer was especially important to the Martin family; it was of course a daily devotion to God. It was that love for God above all other things that held the family together. As Celine and Therese were inseparable, they would also join in union with their mother in prayer both in the morning as well as before they went to bed. Both Celine and Therese would kneel at their mother's feet and would recite after her the prayers she spoke aloud. Celine remarks about her mother: "My mother had a great spirit of detachment from earthly things and contempt for the world. Her longings were concerned only with those things that are eternal... she felt exiled here on earth." (SF) Early on it was Celine's declaration a loud that her future would behold her to be a nun.

Following the teachings of the Catholic Church was their top priority. It was that service of themselves to God and the church which made their lives fulfilling. The family maintained strict observance of times of fasting and abstinence. They venerated priests and participated in church functions. But most importantly, it was their giving spirit to others that permeated their souls. Celine alludes to this: "I consider the greatest grace of my life was to have the Christian parents and to have received from them a vigorous education that left no place for petty vanities. Nothing in our house was sacrificed to the material world. The only altar erected was that to God alone, and if sometimes the sacrifices seemed austere, the time always came when I enjoyed their delightful perfume." (C)

On August 2, 1875, Marie completed her studies at the Visitation boarding school. She immediately started instructing Celine in her lessons. Therese was not old enough yet to receive the same lessons as Celine, so when it was time for Celine to have her lessons, Therese would cry over the separation. As a result of Therese's dismay, Marie compromised and had her too sit at the table to either sew some material or thread some beads while she was instructing Celine. Marie also gave both of them a small chaplet of beads that she received from the Visitation boarding school. She gave chaplets to each of them for counting their "acts of virtue or practices as they called it". Celine, as valiant as she was in her lessons, conquered this as well and on a good day would have twenty-seven "acts of virtue" accounted for.

Azelie admired Celine's great disposition as a child much better than what she initially expected from any of her children. It was Celine's eagerness to learn new things as well as at the speed to which she learned them. It greatly comforted her mother's ambition knowing that Celine was far ahead of the course to which she wanted all of her children to succeed. What impressed Azelie most about Celine was her early interest of preparing for her First Holy Communion at the age of seven, well before it was time for her to learn the Catechism. As her mother looked in reflection upon her she stated: "She is inclined to virtue; it is in every fiber of her being. She is the soul of candor and has an instinctive horror for evil." (DBT)

Azelie saw in Celine great consolation to her many worries of rearing her children without them exhibiting great virtues and piety. Celine was an answer to her prayers. Celine was very attentive to her mother's requests and immediately accepted them

without any resistance or hesitation, she obeyed her through love. Sometimes, Azelie would tease Celine about leaving her when she went out with the maid and ask her if she was leaving her, but then Celine would turn around and run to her and tell her she would not leave her. Celine would wait with great affection until her mother says that it's okay for her leave and then she would go.

Both girls were virtually inseparable. Sometimes, when Therese was unable to sleep, she would crawl into bed with Celine. One morning when the maid went to dress them she found Therese sleeping in Celine's bed. Therese then looked up at her and replied: "Do leave me here, Louise; you see that we two are like town chicks that cannot be separated." (DBT)

During their family meals, when Celine would finish her meal first and leave the table, Therese would immediately follow suit without finishing her food. One of the ways Celine's and Therese's amused themselves after their meal, would be to go outside and play with the chickens. Valiantly, Celine would grab the rooster after only one swipe and then would grab a hen and take them both into the house near the fireplace and play with them.

Through their conversations together, while they were playing, they would always incorporate their own religious thoughts. In an effort to further advance their religious devotion, Celine and Therese would challenge each other during their playtime. By using a chaplet that their sister Marie gave them, they would compete with each other on how many sacrifices each one of them would make. At times, Celine would concede to Therese's demands, earning for her another 'pearl in her crown'. It was their "acts of virtue or practices", as they called it, a means of enriching their faith. Both girls were very close competitors in their acts of generosity towards others.

When Celine was old enough to attend Church, she would go with her family and be forced to leave behind her faithful companion. As Therese waited faithfully for her return she would always receive from Celine a small piece of the "blessed bread" from Church. Sometimes, Celine would return without any bread to give to her sister, so Therese asked Celine one day if she would use some of the bread they had in the house and use that instead. Celine recited an Ave Maria over it and Therese made a sign of the cross and would then eat it.

The Pavilion, located at the Rue des Lavoires, was a place of recreation for the Martin family. Louis would take his two youngest daughters there on several occasions to relax while their mother was taking care of the lace making business. Celine and Therese would walk around the lake and pick flowers, entertain themselves by playing games and later eat a picnic that was prepared by their mother or the maid. Celine especially loved to go there; it was a great place for inspiration for her creative drawings of landscapes and people. Sometimes, Abbé Lepelletier would join them and give Celine instruction on perspective in her drawings. She would use every opportunity to ask her father to take her there. This is where Celine's father taught her how to fish.

Celine never held the same influence over her sister Therese as with Pauline or Marie. It was more over a companionship that both of them forged together. Though, Celine did influence Therese in other ways by teaching her the great joys of divine love. Through the games they played together, the many discussions of their devotion to God and their eagerness to make small sacrifices all encompassed as Therese would later say of her childhood “these sunny years of her childhood.”

Celine’s mother had developed breast cancer. It was for her a devastating blow, the fear of losing her mother. Their mother making a final appeal to be healed at Lourdes had taken into effect. Zelig along with daughters Marie, Pauline, and Leonie went to Lourdes. Celine was too young to go with her mother and older sisters to Lourdes so both her and Therese had to wait for her return. It wasn’t until the train arrived in Alençon that she could see that her mother’s last plea for a miracle was not fulfilled.

When visiting the Visitation boarding school, Azelie would sometimes take Celine and Therese to visit their aunt. But there came a time when those visits would soon end. Sister Marie Dosithée was diagnosed with tuberculosis and it became apparent that she was going to die. On February 24, 1877, Celine’s holy aunt, Sister Marie Dosithée, took her last breath. The Martin family arrived by train to Le Mans to pay their last loving respects. All of the children wore black dresses out of respect for their aunt’s death. Her funeral was conducted in the Visitation Chapel and her body was then laid to rest in a nearby cemetery.

While Azelie was in the last months of her life, it was decided that Celine and Therese would be brought to a neighbor’s house during the day. Early in the morning, they would gather their playthings and follow their neighbor to her house. The family did not want the two younger girls to witness their mother’s suffering from this dreaded disease. In an attempt to explain her agony to Celine, Azelie allowed her to see the deep swelling and bruising of this disease which was located from her shoulder up to her neck. The experience left an indelible imprint on her for the rest of her life. The fear of losing their mother still preoccupied both of their minds even though they were not present to witness it. They looked into every opportunity they could find to comfort their mother’s suffering. They would take with them home an apricot they had saved and try to give it to their mother but it was well past the time where their mother was able to digest any solid food anymore. But a valiant effort on their part to try and relieve their mother’s suffering was only able to be symbolic in nature.

Even though Zelig was in intense pain, her main concern was on her daughters’ education. Marie and Pauline knowing full well that their mother would not survive to see Celine and Therese finish school, they devised a ceremony similar to one Marie and Pauline had gone through when they finished school. Marie and Pauline lined the room with periwinkle and roses. They placed a rug beneath the two arm chairs where Louis and Azelie would sit. Louis and Zelig both sat in arm chairs while the procession was commenced for the distribution of prizes. Both Louis and Zelig handed out the prizes and the wreaths to Celine and Therese, both dawned in beautiful white dresses. This was the

last celebration the family had together before Azélie's death. The joy in all of their eyes of this precious day would live on even after Azélie's death.

On August 28, 1877, after suffering from several episodes of intense pain from her illness, she ended her fight and her soul ascended to heaven. It was thought best not to wake them up immediately but to allow them to sleep because of the grueling days that were to follow. In some respects, it was a relief because of witnessing her ongoing suffering but it was also an unbearable loss for the entire family. The family had lost its matriarch. That morning, Celine and Therese were escorted in their mother's room by one of their sisters where they were able to say their goodbyes and kiss their mother on the forehead for the last time.

Immediately after Azélie's death, there was only a twenty-four hour viewing period. Ceremonies commence on August 29<sup>th</sup>, to honor the mother that they so loved, at the Notre Dame d'Alençon (Cathedral of Our Lady) at 9 o'clock in the morning. There, for the last time, the entire family were assembled together to hear Mass. Azélie's body was escorted to the Notre Dame cemetery and witnessed her burial. After the procession to the cemetery ended, when approached by their maid, expressing her grief for the children losing their mother, Celine responded by throwing herself into the arms of Marie and said: "It is you who will my mama for us now." The family remained in seclusion for days after her funeral. They only ventured out when they went to visit their mother's grave. Years later, Celine would reflect on the memory of her mother: "I have myself often regretted that I had not been able to appreciate my mother for a longer time, but she was spoken of so often among us that she continued to live, as it were, in our midst. We felt that she was watching over us, and had not left us." (ML)

In the weeks after Azélie's death, it was suggested that Marie and Pauline would enter into society and have Leonie, Celine and Therese placed in a boarding school. But that was not going to be the case. Prior to her death, it was Azélie's desire have her family move to Lisieux and be closer to Isidore and Celine Guérin so that they could keep an eye on them. But Louis hesitated on this venture for fear of leaving their friends and the familiar surroundings they were accustomed to. With much debate between Louis, Marie and Pauline, it was decided that they would move to Lisieux.

On the eve of their departure, the family went for one last time to the cemetery where they buried their mother. It was bittersweet in part due to leaving their mother's remains behind and starting a new life without her. They left Alençon on November 14, 1877.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, they had their first glance at the house they were going to call home. The girls inspected the property and planned out where everything was going to be placed. The house would soon be called "Les Buissonnets" which was located on a hillside on the outer edge of the city's center. The property had a large backyard with plenty of room for trees and for Celine and Therese play in. Unfortunately, the home lacked basic modern amenities such as indoor plumbing and electricity. The entrance from the street left something to be desired.



It was decided that Celine and Therese would share a room together on the first floor at the back of the house overlooking the garden. Years later, Celine and Therese would occupy Marie's old room after she left for the Carmelite monastery.

The roles between Celine and Therese had reversed itself after their mother's death. Therese became the timid one and Celine became the mischievous one. Therese took the lead role in becoming Celine's moral compass, keeping her on par with doing the right thing. Therese became her strength.

Once again, it was time for Celine to go to school. She entered the Benedictine Abbey of Notre Dame du Pré boarding school with her sister Leonie in 1878. Leonie stayed at the boarding school entirely where Celine only became a day-boarder. Celine would meet the Guerin's maid, Marcelline, at the pharmacy at eight o'clock in the morning and then Celine would be escorted to school along with her cousins every morning and then wait at the school to be retrieved by the maid around six o'clock in the evening, sometimes Celine father would escort them. Celine was placed in classes with students who were much older than she was. Despite the age difference, she became an excellent student in comparison to her older peers. For every obstacle she faced in her studies, she would thoroughly exam all aspects of the problem to completely understand it. She secluded herself in room when she studied her lessons, missing out on a lot of family adventures. One of Celine's subjects that she soared in was arithmetic, to which she was beheld honors of several prizes.

During this time, there was not such a thing as a free education from a public school system. If a child was to go to school, the family would have to pay for their education. With this thought in mind, it was frowned upon that any of the children would miss a day of school. Celine, who was susceptible to enduring headaches and toothaches, had to endure these discomforts and still attend. It was a trial for herself but she endured such displeasures triumphantly.

During the time when Celine was not working on her studies and going to school, she would play games with her sisters such as draughts. It was especially entertaining for each of them to have that family interaction together. Both Celine and Therese loved to challenge each other when they played their games together. It was a way for them to perfect their skills. After all the challenging games were played and the night grew near, Marie and Pauline would take out the book "*Liturgical Year*" by Dom Guéranger and read it to Leonie, Celine and Therese. Once in a while, Celine and Therese would sit on their father's lap and he would entertain them with a lullaby. And as Celine retired to her room, she would say her nighttime prayers.

On Sundays, the family would attend High Mass. First, gracing themselves in one of the side chapels dedicated to Our Lady for prayer and then returning to the main sanctuary to hear the word of God from the presiding priest. The priests were looked upon almost like Gods, they respected them reverently. On weekdays, they would attend the six o'clock Mass commonly known as the Mass for the poor but later changed it to the seven o'clock Mass due to the high demands of school and work. No matter what the weather was, the

family was dedicated to attending Mass. On certain Sundays, late in the afternoon, the family would retreat to the Guérin's home to visit their cousins and eat dinner together. It was a time of light hearted conversations as well as serious discussions on events happening around them.

On Mondays at Les Buissonnets, it became a common theme to see people gathering at the Martin household requesting their help. Whether it was an elderly gentleman or a mother and her child, it was their generous spirit that attracted so many needy people. Pauline had Therese and Celine meet the people at the entrance. They would return back to Pauline to let her know what they needed. Even when Louis and Celine and Therese took walks in the park, there they would find individuals in need of some help. Louis would send both Celine and Therese to give them some money.

Celine loved playing with her dolls. She had that insight like her mother for detail in dressing and arranging them. Therese, her companion, did not share the same insight and relinquish all of her authority over her dolls to Celine. During playtime, Celine's dolls would become her pupils and Celine of course would be their teacher. She would act out scenes to entertain both her and Therese.

Pets were constant companions with both Celine and Therese. They had a small aviary which consisted of some finches and later a parrot. One day, Celine and Therese captured a magpie and placed it in a squirrel's cage. They would release the magpie while playing in the garden but soon the magpie became more of a problem than of an innocent pleasure. The magpie would fly above them and poke them on top of their heads, having them run sporadically for cover. But their adventure with the magpie would soon end when they found the poor thing had drowned itself in a container of water.

Celine had reached the age where it was time for her to prepare herself for her First Holy Communion. Pauline interceded at home, devoting many hours, helping her prepare for this event. Pauline prepared a book for her to record her many thoughts. In this book, Celine wrote down many of her religious thoughts as well as the many acts of sacrifices she made for God. In addition to writing her thoughts as well as studying, she made a retreat. It was time for Celine's First Holy Communion ceremony take place. On May 13, 1880, dawned in a white dress, she received her first taste of communion bread. It made a great impression upon her soul. Celine states: "It was with an inexpressible joy that I received my Beloved. I had waited a long time for him. I asked him to have pity on me, to protect me always, and never to permit me to offend him; then I gave him my heart forever and promised that I would be completely his. I felt sure that he deigned to accept me as his little spouse and that he would fulfill the role of my protector that I had confided to him; and I felt that he had taken me into his safekeeping and would preserve me always from all evil." (C)

With complete surrender, Celine also recited the "Act of Humility" consecrating herself to Our Lady. I give myself completely to Our Lady. As Celine states: "Oh! how happy I was to say those words in the presence of everyone, in order to give myself irrevocably to my Mother in heaven, whom I loved with incomparable tenderness. It seems to me that in

accepting for her own the little orphan who knelt at her feet, she adopted her as her own child.” (C)

On June 4, 1880, it was time for Celine’s confirmation. The day happened to be on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As Celine recalled: “It seems to me that the Heart of Jesus himself had come to take the place of my heart by conferring on me his own Spirit. I was deeply moved by the thought that this sacrament is received only once in a lifetime and that it was going to make me a perfect Christian.” (C)

In 1881, Therese joined Celine and their cousins Jeanne and Marie to the Benedictine Abbey boarding school. The union had changed between Celine and Therese. Celine gravitated more towards Jeanne and Therese towards Marie. At this time, Celine was very outspoken. She loved to express her point of view and stood her ground on certain issues that were brought out in conversations that they had. She lived up to her name the “intrepid one” in both conversations and actions.

Celine held onto her father’s persona in respect for allegiance to France. Like her father, she was very patriotic. During school, when it was time for them to take their break and go outside and participate in school games such as war, it was always in Celine’s heart to be on the side of the French. When it was not in her favor to represent the French, she allowed herself to be defeated. She never quelled her thoughts to the courage and strength of those that represented France in times of uncertainty such as the French martyr Joan of Arc. Anything less of heroic virtue was unacceptable to her by others. Her strength as viewed by many of her peers became a double edge sword; she was strong and outspoken but suffered as a result from it because in part she had a very giving heart.

On feast days, it was always a tradition of the Martin family to give presents to each other. On one particular feast day when Celine was exchanging her gift to Therese, Therese was met with a bit of a shock when she opened her present. Celine had bought her a toy gun. To the amazement of both Therese and her family, it was decided that another gift would be more suitable for Therese and that the toy gun would be given to a family friend’s son.

There were times when the Martins, the Guérins and the Maudelondes would come together to visit one another. During these times of recreation, the children of each of the families would reenact scenes together from stories or plays that they had seen previously. Since Celine was commonly known as the “intrepid one” she would always receive the role as the notorious villain. Obviously, the role of the villain was not at all her choice for parts, but she conceded and played along. Afterwards, she paid handsomely for her role as the villain when her family friends and relatives would tease her using the villain’s name in place of hers. It was for the most part humiliating and obviously not one of the games that was favored on her list to play.

Through the years from 1878 to 1887, Celine and her sisters would be invited on vacations with the Guérins. They would travel with them to the seaside resort cities of Deauville and Trouville located just off the English Channel. There they would relax by

the seaside and swim as well as play games. Celine would take out her sketch book and make numerous drawings of the seascapes and others with her sister Therese in them.

It was not common for the Martin family to put on or either attend social events. Louis did not prefer either him or his daughters to get caught up into the vanities of society. Instead, the better alternative was for the family to spend time taking pilgrimages. There was one especially dear to the Martin family which was nearby. The shrine at the Notre-Dame de la Déliverande, located in the small town of Douvres-la-Déliverande, just north of Caen. It was a favorite place for the family to visit.

In October of 1882, Pauline entered the Carmelite monastery in Lisieux. She was the first out of the five sisters to leave the home destined for a new life. It was hard on Celine to see her sister go. They shared so much together and Celine learned a lot from her. It became especially harder for her for soon after her departure, Therese contacted a mysterious illness.

The Martin sisters all became members of a group called the “Children of Mary”. They promoted the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Celine entered the group on December 8, 1882. At a minimum the requirement was for Celine to spend two days a week praying before the Blessed Sacrament.

Celine completed her studies at the Benedictine Abbey boarding school in 1885. She graduated as an honor student, taking with her the prize in religious instruction and easily taking the first conduct prize for the least amount of absences. Celine became the only student in her graduating class to receive such an honor.

With much amazement at seeing Celine’s drawings, her cousin Jeanne got Louis’s permission to have Celine enrolled in some art classes taught by Mlle. Godard. Celine learned quickly on how to master the paint brush. She created her own studio at Les Buissonnets and worked hard at perfecting her skills as a painter. She painted some seascapes along with some portraits of her sisters as well as of Our Lady. Later, Celine would reflect back on her lot of paintings as she called it “a museum of badly painted pictures”. (C) Every artist has gone through that phase where they see the mistakes they made in previous paintings and Celine was not immune from that.

In October of 1886, the oldest of the five daughters, Marie, left the family and entered into the Carmelite monastery in Lisieux as well as the third oldest Leonie entered into the Poor Clare monastery. It was now left to Celine to become the “mistress of the household”. Marie had taught her how to run the household as well as her father. But the presence of her mother Azelie was felt by Celine the most, as if she never died.

During the Christmas holidays one of the long standing traditions celebrated by the Martin family, before going to midnight Mass, was gift giving. The children would place their shoes at the foot of the fireplace in hopes that *Père Noël* would fill them with gifts. When they came back from midnight Mass, Therese was hurt to see that her shoes were not filled and sadly went upstairs. Recognizing the disappointment in Therese’s eyes,

Celine confronted her father and asked him to continue the tradition one last time. Unknowingly to Louis and Celine, Therese overheard their entire conversation. Louis conceded, and Celine then went upstairs to comfort Therese. Celine told her: "Do not go down immediately; wait a little while; you would surely cry when looking at the presents before papa." (DBT) When Therese went downstairs to open her presents, she surprised them both. As Celine witnessed in amazement, Therese was no longer as sensitive as she usually was, she had regained the character that she once had before her mother died.

Celine's ambition of becoming a nun was very strong even from an early age; it was, as she saw it, her destiny. A change was occurring in Celine leading herself away from the attraction to the material world to a life serving Christ. Even Therese saw in Celine a change in her attraction to the religious life. With Celine only having a familiarity in the Benedictine ways, the Carmelite Order was for now only an entertaining thought. It was Fr. Pichon, whom becoming her spiritual advisor on October 12, 1887, was the one who instilled in her the confidence she needed to enter into such a union as well as which religious order for her to enter into. Celine captured her thoughts daily on the religious life by composing a spiritual diary. She wrote out her desires in her diary on what it meant to her to be Christ's bride. But the situations happening at home had put a temporary halt to her intentions of entering sooner. In her conversations with Therese, about the religious life, she soon realized that Therese too wanted to become a nun and desired to enter the monastery as soon as possible. The entrance into Carmel was for both of them, a means of displaying to God their ultimate union with Him. As Celine already having the dual responsibilities of both taking care of her aging father and the house, she conceded graciously to Therese's desire to enter first. As Celine stated: "The love of God was so intense in my heart, finding nothing that could bring even the least relief to this need I had of giving, I was happy to sacrifice all that I held most dear in the world... Like Abraham, I busied myself with the preparation of the Holocaust, and I helped my sister in all the steps she took to obtain permission to enter Carmel. I took her disappointments more to heart than had it been my own." (C)

Receiving Holy Communion was an important event in Celine's daily devotion to God. During these times, receiving Holy Communion on a daily basis was very rare for anyone. In order to receive Holy Communion more than regularly, she had to receive permission from her confessor Abbé Baillon. Once obtaining his permission, she was able to receive Holy Communion daily. Even when Celine went on holidays with her family she would make every effort to make up for the days she had missed. It was a ritual for her to remove whichever bracelet she was wearing just prior to receiving the sacred host. As Celine saw it, wearing the bracelet was a sign of servitude towards the material world, while Christ always yearned to be free. (C) She would hum the canticle "Take my heart; there it is, O Virgin, my sweet Mother" and "It is for its rest that it has recourse to thee. As for me, it's because I love her." (C)

Without knowing the strong desires Celine and Therese had for entering into the religious life, Louis had other aspirations for his two remaining daughters. It was in his interest that both of them be trained in domestic duties in the hopes that one day they will start

their own family. But that idea would soon change for when Therese told her father she wanted to enter the Carmel. He went with her to plead her case before the bishop to enter the Carmel but his refusal as well as from others was adamant.

In November of 1887, there was an opportunity for Therese to plead her case before the pope to enter the Carmel. On November 4<sup>th</sup>, Louis, Celine and Therese left for Paris to join in a pilgrimage to Rome. In the three days that they were in Paris, Louis took Celine and Therese to Basilique de Notre Dame des Victoires (Our Lady of Victories Basilica). There they showed their devotion to Our Lady through prayer and reverence. This was the place where Louis went to pray for his daughters' recovery when they were faced with life threatening illnesses.

It was not without any imagination and interest in seeing the sights of Paris. From visiting the many attractions most notably made famous of the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre Museum and the Notre Dame Cathedral to strolling down the Champs Elysées. It was time to begin their pilgrimage on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November. The rendezvous point for the Martin family to join the others in their pilgrimage to Rome started at the Basilique du Sacré-Cœur (Basilica of the Sacred Heart) located in the district of Montmartre. Once the pilgrims had assembled in the Basilica, a religious ceremony was conducted to consecrate each one of them to the Sacred Heart of Jesus prior to their journey. Once the ceremony ended, they left the Basilica and headed to the train station. In honor of the pilgrimage each compartment was named after a saint. Hence their last name being Martin, they were assigned the compartment for St. Martin.

Their journey on the train was filled with both excitement and amazement. From the different characters that surrounded them on the train to the tranquil natural scenery viewed by them outside their window. It was a first for Celine and Therese to see the beautiful mountains and the lustrous waterfalls of the Swiss Alps. After spending numerous hours aboard the train, they finally made it to their first stop late in the evening to Milan, Italy.

Their destination was to the Duomo di Milan (Milan Cathedral). The next day, they entered from the piazza into the great Gothic Cathedral, one of the largest Cathedrals in Europe. They showed their devotion by celebrating Mass with the other pilgrims. They then toured the Cathedral filled with fine art and showed their devotion to St. Charles Borromeo's remains, located in one of its chapels. Most importantly, it was a blessing for them to see one of the nails from the crucifixion of Christ which was housed above the apse, strengthening their devotion even more.

After the Martins visited Milan, they boarded the train the next day and traveled to Venice. There, they travelled the city by gondola. Louis, Celine and Therese made frequent stops and toured several museums like the Ca' Rezzonico and the Torre dell'Orologio (the Moor's Clock Tower). The Basilica di San Marco a Venezia (St. Mark's Basilica) was also one of the stops that they made while admiring the Christian themed mosaics with their golden and bronze backgrounds. Just north of Venice, in Padua, the Martins traveled to the Basilica di sant'Anthony (The Basilica of St.

Anthony), there they venerated the saint's remains in two of the side chapels of the Basilica dedicated to St. Anthony. The Chapel of St. Anthony houses his tomb and The Treasury Chapel most notably houses his incorrupt tongue and jawbone.

Continuing on their pilgrimage journey in northern Italy, Louis, Celine and Therese reached Bologna. Bologna, most notably famous for being the home of the Basilica di San Petronio (Basilica of San Petronio), was one of their first stops. Admiring the works of Francesco Raibolini (Francia) and Lorenzo Costa, which dawn the walls of the Basilica, they completed their visit and set off for Siena. Once reaching the city of Siena, Louis, Celine and Therese went to the Basilica di San Domenico (The Basilica of San Domenico or commonly called the Basilica Cateriniana) which houses the partial remains (incorrupt head and thumb) of St. Catherine of Siena. There they venerated the saint's remains and prayed for her intercession.

At the latter point of their pilgrimage in Italy, they reached the hillside city of Loreto. Most notably famous for being the home to the Santa Casa di Loreto (Holy House of Loreto), a basilica was built over the Holy House. Mass was held for the pilgrims within the Holy House where Celine and Therese were blessed to receive Holy Communion there. This was the last stop before they reached the city limits of Rome.

Once entering the city of Rome by train, they checked into a hotel and then proceeded to visit the famous tourist attractions Rome had to offer. The Roman Coliseum was where the pilgrims along with the Martins first visited. Once inside the Coliseum, it was debated by Celine and Therese as to how they were going to enter the center of the Coliseum where the first early Christians were martyred. The area where the archeologists were unearthing the ground was cordoned off and that is where Celine and Therese wanted to go to kiss the ground. Both Celine and Therese entered the restricted area and found the cross inscribed in the stone and kissed the ground nearby as well as praying a prayer for the early Christian martyrs. After they said their prayers, they reunited with the group of pilgrims.

As they left the Coliseum, they proceeded to the Catacombe di San Callisto (The Catacombe of St. Callixtus) where there were five levels of galleries containing a half million tombs. As being one of the largest of the catacombes in Rome, this was the place where sixteen popes from the second to the fourth centuries were entombed as well as up to fifty early Christian martyrs. One of the tombs that both Celine and Therese venerated was the tomb of St. Cecilia, who was one of the saints, if not the saint, that Celine was most devoted to. Even though her remains were removed between 817 to 824 A.D., they each laid down in her Loculi (burial niches) to show their devotion to her.

After touring the Catacombe of St. Callixtus, the Martins and the other pilgrims proceeded to the Basilica di Sant'Agnese Fuori le Mura (Basilica of St. Agnes-Outside the Walls). The Basilica was built in the seventh century next to the mausoleo di Santa Costanza (Mausoleum of St. Costanza). Entombed in a silver sarcophagus, the partial remains of St. Agnes were both venerated by Celine and Therese. After venerating the remains of their beloved St. Agnes, a fragment from one of the mosaics fell in front of

them. The fragment was picked up and taken with them. Later, after their pilgrimage to Rome, this same fragment would be given to their sister Pauline, who was named after St. Agnes in the Carmelite monastery.

One of the highlights of their visits to the famous places in Rome was the Scala-Santa which was brought over from Jerusalem by St. Helena. The stairs is famously known as the steps that led up to the praetorian of Pontius Pilate which Jesus stood on his way to his trial. In both Celine and Therese, it was an honor to walk up the same steps that Jesus himself walked. Their next stop was the Mamertine prison, which is best known as the place where St. Peter and Paul stayed prior to their martyrdom. There the girls both paid their respects.

Their next destination brought them to the Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (Holy Cross of Jerusalem). There, the basilica is widely known as the place where pieces of the cross and nails relating to Jesus Christ which had been brought back by St. Helena from the holy land and also the relics of Saints Caesarius and Anastasius. With much adoration, the Martin family viewed the relics of Jesus Christ with pristine honor and reverence. Therese was given the opportunity of being able to touch one of the nails.

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, it was set for the Martin family and the rest of the pilgrims for the pontifical audience at the Vatican with Pope Leo XIII. At eight o'clock in the morning, the Pope appeared in the Hall of the Papal Audiences (Sala Clementina). He ascended to the altar and proceeded with the Latin Papal Mass. Once the Mass was concluded, the Pope left the Hall and went to an adjoining room to receive each one of the pilgrims for their Papal blessing. When they entered the Old Audience Chamber, Celine nudged Therese to speak to the Pope about entering the Carmel. It was Celine who encouraged her to act on this great opportunity to do so. Celine took the lead and went ahead of Therese to receive the Papal blessing first. After Celine had received the Pope's blessing, it was Therese's turn. As Therese received her blessing, she looked at Celine and then asked the Pope for his permission to enter the Carmel. Not receiving the answer she expected, her eyes filled with tears and she was then carried away by the Swiss Guards and escorted out of the room. Both Louis and Celine tried to console her great disappointment in not receiving the Pope's permission. Once they left the Vatican, they went back to the hotel.

The next day, the Martin family left Rome and boarded the train to Montecassino. There they traveled to the Abbazia di Montecassino (Monte Cassino Monastery). It is most famously known for housing the relics of St. Benedict and his sister St. Scholastica. There they paid reverence to the saints' relics. After leaving Abbazia di Montecassino, their next destination was Pompeii. Due to the inclement weather in Pompeii, they were only allowed to view the ruins from the devastation of the volcano nearby.

Once viewing the ruins, the Martin family set off for Naples. Once arriving to their destination to the Certosa di San Martino (St. Martin's Charterhouse), they were able to view the priceless art and artifacts that adorned the monastery now a museum. Once there



visted ended in Naples, they traveled back to Rome where they went to board the train that would take them back to France.

On November 24th, Celine and Therese got into the carriage to take them to the train station. Once in the carriage, Mgr. Legoux joined them and spoke to Therese about the conversation she had with the Pope. After their arriving at the train station, they boarded the train heading to the Northern part of Italy and making a stop in Assisi to visit St. Frances monastery. There they viewed the priceless frescoes that adorned the walls of the church as well as paying their adoration to the relics of the famous saint.

After boarding the train once more, they stopped in Florence. There, both Celine and Therese kneeled before the tomb of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi and prayed for her intercession. The “Pazzi” which is commonly known for the religious complex is now a museum. The pilgrims then traveled back to Assisi where the train was waiting for them to make a couple more brief stops to Pisa and Genoa. Once in Pisa, Celine and Therese went to see La Torre di Pisa (the leaning tower of Pisa) which is the bell tower for the cathedral. There they climbed the steps of the tower and reached the top to take in the view of Pisa.

After making their final stop in Genoa, they boarded the train home to France. Prior to arriving in Paris, they stopped in Marseilles and went to the highest natural point in the city where the basilica Notre Dame de la Garde (Our Lady of the Watch) was located. The basilica, traditionally known as being dedicated to the “good mother” and “guardian of the seafarers”, not only allowed Celine and Therese time to pray and pay reverence to Our Lady but gave them a breathtaking view of the entire city that was located below them.

Once leaving Marseilles, they made their last pilgrimage stop in Lyons. In Lyons, they went to the Basilique Notre-Dame de Fouvière (Basilica of Our Lady of Fouvière). The Basilica was erected in honor of Our Lady as a thank you from the citizens of that city for saving them from the plague in the mid 1600’s. The Basilica is perched on top of one of the highest points in the city called Fouvière Hill. There, too, Celine and Therese were able to view the city with a great view of Lyons and pay reverence to Our Lady.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Martin family finally arrived in Paris. They said their goodbyes and boarded another train back to Lisieux. As soon as they arrived home, Celine and Therese went to the Carmelite monastery to see their sisters Marie and Pauline. Both Celine and Therese discussed with their sisters the highlights of their trip to Rome. But the topic that was focused on most between the sisters was Therese’s entrance into Carmel.

All of her sisters encouraged her up to the very end when the date was set for her entrance. Even Leonie, whom was forced to leave the Visitation monastery in January of 1888, encouraged her entrance but also reminded her about some of the pitfalls associated with her decision. Each day leading up to her entrance, Celine and Therese were inseparable. Celine helped her prepare as much as possible all of the things that needed to

be done prior to her entrance. When the day came on April 9, 1888, it was the most difficult time for her to say goodbye to her sister. As Celine describes: "I had to support myself unsteadily against the wall...and yet, I did not cry. I wanted to give her to Jesus with all of my heart; and he, in return, clothed me with his strength. Ah! How I needed that divine strength! When the door finally closed at the monastery entrance a wall was raised between our two lives." (C)

As Celine and Leonie had mostly attended and helped at their uncle and aunt's parties, it was an opportunity for them to get out and mingle with other people. They would not only help with preparation of the food being served but also attend the dances. After Therese's direct influence over Celine had vanished, due to her entrance, an unforeseen opportunity had arise. Celine, never considering ever getting married before, was propositioned on the subject by a gentleman that she knew. But Celine thought she was convinced that her destiny lie always as a religious and not as a wife. At an unforeseen crossroads, she prayed on the subject a lot, but without ever receiving any signs from God on what direction for her to go, it casted a lot of doubts in her mind about being a religious. As Celine stated: "I kept telling myself: Isn't this offer, which is made to me the instant Therese leaves me, an indication of God's will for me, which I hadn't foreseen?" (C) Celine had no direction on this subject from her sisters, for they never had the proposition of marriage come across their own paths. So, she leaned on her sister Therese and Fr. Pichon. With Therese's prayers guiding her and Fr. Pichon commitment of persuading her to stay on the path to religious life, Celine ended the proposal and continued on with her life.

Louis's health was deteriorating. The signs of all the strokes he had previously, had taken a toll on his health. Even with Leonie at her side, Celine's fear of losing her father became for her a very heavy cross for her to bear. Celine continuously updated her sisters at the monastery, her sisters could tell that she was emotionally drained by the effects of seeing her father suffer; Therese prayed for her to be able to endure the process of seeing her father die. Therese saw a remarkable change in her sisters when she saw her the next time in the parlor. Therese wrote to Celine from the monastery to enlighten her while she was enduring the pain of seeing her father suffer and to reaffirm that God is with her. Therese wrote: "Celine, have no fear; He is there, quite near. He is looking at us. It is He who asks of us this suffering, these tears...He has need of them for the sake of souls, for our soul, as He wants to give us so glorious a reward." (DBT)

During this time of suffering, Celine had still grown in her artistic talents. On June 16, 1888, it was offered to her by her father that he would send her to the Academy to perfect her talents as an artist. But instantly, she refused for fear that her path to a religious life might be derailed by worldly temptations. Instead if it was in God's interest to make her into a great artist, it was going to be Him who would perfect her skills. This was the perfect opportunity to express to her father that she, too, wanted to be a religious. When Louis realized that Celine was serious about entering into the religious life, he looked upon it as God's will for her and each of his daughters. So, after their conversation, Louis and Celine went to the Blessed Sacrament to thank God for the grace that he had bestowed upon his family, all of his daughters to become a religious. After hearing the

news from his daughter, Louis started the process of trying to separate himself from her emotionally. He didn't want to be a burden to her that he thought he would be which would keep her by his side at home. But as fate would have it, Celine stayed at his side till the very end.

On June 23, 1888, Celine started her usual routine of going to morning Mass and then taking care of the household and her father. Little did she know that while she was taking care of the house, Louis had wandered off. Once Celine realized that her father was missing, she became very frantic. She immediately went to her uncle Isidore to get his help in finding her father. Isidore and Celine looked everywhere around Lisieux to find him. She also went to the monastery to let her sisters know that he was missing. Her sisters prayed for his return and the prioress of the monastery, Mother Geneviève, foretold to them that he would return. It was three days of grief for Celine until they received a telegram from Louis asking them for money. It was a surprise to find out that he had wandered all the way to a town called La Havre. Once Celine found out where he was, Isidore joined her and they both went to La Havre to track him down. After hours of waiting for him to appear, he finally arrived and they took him home.

During the time of Louis's disappearance, a fire broke out in the early morning hours to the adjoining house. Without knowing of the destruction occurring next door, Leonie was still in the house. Once alarmed of the situation, she fled to safety. Later, Louis would buy the property where the destroyed house once stood.

Louis had received a brass crucifix from his daughter Marie before she entered the monastery to which he kept it in his bedroom. Celine had much admiration for this crucifix and asked her father if she could have it. With much hesitation he resisted giving it to her until one day in September of 1888, during Mass; he whispered to her "I give you my crucifix" and then handed it to her.

It was Therese's desire to have Celine join her in the monastery as soon as possible but with the current situation with her father's health it was unrealistic for Celine to make an attempt to even enter. With Therese's soul elevating to new heights in her relationship with God, she, too, desired that Celine's soul elevate with hers as well. Celine's prayer life had become for the most part lifeless; dealing with her father's failing health and the past opportunity for marriage left for the most part aridity in her soul. Even though Therese was not with Celine in person she was with her always in spirit. Ultimately, she became Celine's mentor through visits to the monastery and letters she wrote. Therese encouraged her to take in part the "joys of perfect immolation". For Celine, it was to practice many virtues and to take every opportunity, no matter how small the virtue was, to please Jesus. Therese encouraged her to start out by making small gestures towards individuals that surrounded her by either saying something nice to them or just giving them a smile. But if Celine did not find any opportunity to practice these small gestures towards any individuals at least tell Jesus how much you love him. Telling Jesus how much you love him as many times throughout the day as you can, with motivate your soul to get closer to Him.

On January 10, 1889, was Therese's clothing day. It was the last time the entire family would be joined together for a celebration of this magnitude. As Celine described, it was both Louis's and Therese's day. Louis escorting Therese to the altar in a beautiful white gown, the inseparable duet during her childhood, is given away him to Jesus.

Weeks later, after Louis started to have more violent strokes, Celine had the daunting task of notifying her sisters that the decision was made to have Louis sent to Bon Sauveur Home in Caen. Celine wrote: "Beloved sisters, I am calling to mind these words of the Imitation: I will give infinite glory for a single short-lived humiliation... Oh! Humiliations! They are our daily bread, but if only you knew what I see hidden in them... To me, it is a mystery of love. Oh my little sisters do not be grieved, I pray you. I feel that our Lord is so very pleased when we have unlimited confidence in him, finding all that he does good... No, I am not going to ask God to relieve me of the humiliations, misunderstandings, heartaches, anxieties, bitterness... But I do beg God to take all that away from our dear father. He can grant us this grace, and I am sure that he will." (C)

On February 12, 1889, the time had come to take Louis to Bon Sauveur Home. It was for Celine and Leonie a crushing blow to have to escort their father and place him in a psychiatric institution. There weren't enough tears to shed that day to change the course of events. Louis didn't know he was going until he entered the building. Upon entering, he accepted it with great humility and grace. A week later, on February 19<sup>th</sup>, Celine and Leonie returned to Caen and stayed with the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul to be nearer to their father. The rules only allowed for them to see their father once a week. So each day they would communicate with Mother Costard who took a special interest in their father. Louis believed that his stay at Bon Sauveur was a trial, for he was always the one who took the lead, now he must be the one to follow and obey. It strengthened Louis's spirit to know that Celine and Leonie were nearby and that they inquired each day, every letter they sent him gave him hope.

When Celine experienced the separation and the witnessing of the deterioration of her father's health, she could see it in her father's eyes that he was in the last years of his life. It was the same feelings when her mother was in her last days here on earth. Celine wrote a letter describing her feelings on this: "The longer I live the more I see exile on all sides. The world seems like a dream to me, immense confusion... The more I travel, and the more I see of things, the more detached I am from this earth, because, at each instant, the more I observe the nothingness of what passes away. I am in a real cell; nothing pleases me more than this poverty. I would not exchange it for the most brilliant drawing room in the world. Suffering accepted in this manner is an uphill climb. In this rough apprenticeship, the soul is refined and purified. (C) At this time her only real solace was praying in the chapel, it was for her a safe haven from all the dramas that were taking place in her life.

When Celine and Leonie went to see Mother Costard on May 8, 1889, she suggested to them that they return to Lisieux. Mother Costard promised both of them that she would contact them if there were any changes to his condition. The helplessness and the guilt of not being able to take care of their father directly were taking a toll on their health. Their

uncle Isidore and their sisters also suggested to them to return to Lisieux. Celine writes: “I feel more and more that my duty is to remain here; yes, it is better to suffer and not to abandon our dear little father. (C) Celine and Leonie resisted leaving their father but finally conceded and on May 14<sup>th</sup>, they returned to Lisieux. To both Celine and Leonie it was a bittersweet departure, for they had to leave their father behind but they would get to see their other sisters for whom they haven’t seen in months.

Celine’s uncle Isidore inherited a chateau called La Musse, located outside of Evreux. Once the summer holidays started, they went with their uncle’s family for some much needed relaxation. When Mother Costard told Louis that Celine and Leonie were at La Musse, he said: “Oh! How lovely! Tell them to stay there as long as their good uncle thinks best. I do not want them to return to Caen on my account. I am well, very well here.” (FL)

Celine and Leonie went on several trips with the Guérins including the Exposition Universelle of 1889 (World’s Fair in Paris) where they saw for the first time the now famous Tour Eiffel (Eiffel Tower). They climbed to the second floor to see the many views of the very large city they had visited several times in the past. The family also made a return visit to Lourdes; it was for Celine, to see the place where their mother went seeking out a cure for her cancer and for Leonie, the place of where so many memories were rehashed of where so many things that went wrong. Leonie toured the sites with Celine and showed her where their mother went to bathe in the springs, places of prayer and the other places they had visited. It was an insight for Celine on the journey that was once taken and a closure for Leonie of some of the bad memories that were held in her heart.

By the end of the year on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December in 1889, the lease to Les Buissonnets had expired. Celine, wanting a memento from the place that gave her so much joy and so much sorrow, took ivy leaves instead of flowers. It was a bittersweet parting with several tears to see their help being sent to serve in other places; it was like a family once again being separated. The furniture was dispersed to other members of the family and also to the Carmelite monastery where Marie, Pauline and Therese were residing. Their uncle Isidore took Celine and Leonie into their home along with their dog Tom.

Uncle Isidore and aunt Celine welcomed their new members into the family with open arms. It was a quick adjustment on both fronts. Celine, being of strong mind, was the only one in the family that could argue her point on several issues with her uncle and get her way. It was for the most part a happy union between the two families.

Daily life for Celine at the Guérins home was filled with numerous tasks. She started her day off by attending Mass every morning. After returning from church and eating breakfast, she devoted herself to her “religious themed” artwork. Working in many different styles, she enlisted several people to pose for her paintings. After lunch, she devoted herself to serving to the needs of the poor by using her skills at needlework. After every piece of clothing that she made for a poor person another one would soon follow. Somehow God would match her skills with those who were most in need. If it

was not new clothing that people needed, she also spent her time preparing children for their First Holy Communion. She taught the most difficult students that many others had abandoned. Her remarkable patience of finding new ways to inspire and educate them left lasting impressions on her students throughout their lives. Even ten years later, one of her students came to her and requested his notebook back of all the sacrifices that he had made in preparation for his First Holy Communion.

Celine had a drive for learning new things. Her constant motivation to educate herself in different types of works made her a very well rounded person. She delved into reading and researching in her free time several literary works which ranged from science to religion. Photography also triggered her interest, most notably her photography skills would prove themselves ten times over on behalf of the pictures she took of her sister St. Therese. Later in life and even today, the images of a great saint that she gave us are still cherished and in use today. She spent time memorizing poems and verses from the Bible that had a deep meaning for her which gave her the emotional support when times became unbearable.

Understanding the meanings and lessons of the Old Testament was a welcomed challenge to her. She embraced it with conquering odds. The books that peaked her interests the most was the Book of Wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon) which takes on a more traditional and philosophical approach that your trust and fear in God provides a path for redemption. The Book of Wisdom was a tool that Celine applied to the obstacles that she faced which gave her the reassurance that God was always with her. “But the just shall live for evermore; and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the most High. Therefore shall they receive a kingdom of glory and crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord; for with his right hand he will cover them, and with his holy arm he will defend them.” (Wisdom 5:16-17) The Book of Revelations (or Revelation of St. John) was another one that peaked her interest. Obviously, one of the most controversial books of the Old Testament, even today the content regarding the “apocalyptic events” still has a wide range of interpretations of the actual meanings from the verses. Celine compiled several notes of the verses from these books as a reference tool as well as quick guide for her to meditate on.

Celine sought the guidance of canonized saints for answers to her many questions through their writings. She studied the works of St. John the Cross (known for his poetry and his studies on the growth of a soul and reformer of the Carmelite Order) and St. Teresa of Avila (known as a writer of the Counter Reformation and a reformer of the Carmelite Order) Celine analyzed their works to find out the secrets that were hidden in their message most importantly of denying oneself of the worldly pleasures of life. The loss of the immediate presence of Celine’s father was felt by her in more ways than one. His protection for his daughters from worldly pleasures was no longer there. Living with the Guérins offered the opportunity for Celine’s soul to be tested more than once. Even though there was no longer a question of marriage in her future there still were other temptations that were associated with it when the Guérins held their parties. When Celine felt vulnerable to the temptations and could no longer fight against them she would leave the party and retreat to her room where she would hold on to the statue of

Our Lady and pray for her protection. Celine came to the conclusion that she would take a private vow of chastity on December 8, 1889.

Celine and her cousin Marie developed a close relationship while living together in the Guérin household. Marie suffered greatly from her internal struggles against living the life of the pleasures of the world or abandoning it and giving her life solely to God. Celine saw in her cousin the internal struggles that she was facing and offered to guide her through all of the doubts she had. Celine advised her towards giving herself to God solely and persuaded her to receive Holy Communion more often as well as perfecting her soul by abandoning all that the world had to offer. As with most parents they want to see each of their children get married and have children, Celine's uncle Isidore and aunt Celine were no different, the idea of giving up their second daughter to the monastery was not what they had in mind. But Celine persisted in guiding her and eventually all of her work paid off because five and half years later her cousin Marie joined Celine in the same Carmelite monastery.

The Carmelite monastery was a weekly ritual for Celine, not only was it a time for both her and Leonie to visit and speak with their other sisters but it was also an opportunity for all of them to worship God together as when they were young. Therese took every opportunity to enrich Celine's soul to bring her closer to God. Therese's soul was developing rapidly and as they both thought a lot alike, she wanted Celine to be by her side even though they were not physically together. This was a challenge for both of them when faced with crisis concerning their family but it became a welcomed opportunity for them both to perfect their soul.

On September 8, 1890, was supposed to be a very blessed day for the Martin family. Therese was making her profession as a Carmelite nun. But there was one family member that was not going to be present for her sacred ceremony and that was her father Louis. It was most devastating to Therese as well as Celine. Both of them agonized over the thought of his absence. So prior to the ceremony, Therese asked Celine if she would take with her on her next visit to Caen a copy of her vows and have her father bless them as well as the crown to which she was going to wear and place it on his head. It was very important for them to include him in the ceremony even though physically he was not going to be there.

Having her father in Caen was a constant trial for Celine. It was difficult for her not to be able to take care of her father on her own. Sometimes on their visits to Caen, Leonie would stay behind in Lisieux. Celine would make the weekly pilgrimage and stay with her cousin Jeanne and her husband Francis. After her visits with her father, she would write her sisters a little note. As Celine describes of her father's condition in a letter to her sister Leonie dated November 12, 1890: "Oh! My dear Léonie, when shall both of us be able to take care of our dearest father? I believe that we would use all our strength and all our love for that. The very thought of it makes my heart beat with joy. The hardships of the task do not frighten me, and I am ready to undergo them till death for him. Oh, let us pray very hard that Our Lord may grant our desires, and make the realization possible.

But meanwhile let us learn how to suffer and not lose the merit of so many annoyances.”  
(FL)

During the months of staying in Caen, Louis’ health continued to deteriorate, his legs have become so numb that it was difficult for him to stand up at all. He was no longer able to walk as he once did. It was the most inopportune moment for Louis physically but it was a welcomed opportunity for him to be reunited with his family. Celine’s prayers will finally be answered and she would resume taking care of her father. It was discussed and debated amongst all the parties involved about bringing him back home. Once it was decided and all the arrangements were made, it was time to bring their beloved father back into the family realm. On May 10, 1892, Louis was brought back home. This was a joyous day of all days for both Celine and Leonie.

On May 12, 1892, Louis had the gift of being able to visit his other daughters Marie, Pauline and Therese in the Carmelite monastery. The entire Martin family was all together again. This would be Louis’ final visit to the monastery marking the last time the entire family would ever be together. It was at first a joyous occasion to finally see their father but the reality of his bad health really came to light when they witnessed for themselves how frail he really was emotionally and the tears started to flow. Concluding their visit, he remarked to his daughters as he was about to leave “In Heaven”. All of them, understanding that this visit marked the end of their union together on earth.

Louis, Celine and Leonie stayed at their cousin Jeanne’s former home for a couple of days before moving into a house on rue Labbey close to their uncle and aunt. Celine at this point did not care what the house looked like or what amenities there were, only that she was able to take care of her father once more. Preparations were made for starting up another household. Servants were introduced into the household to help assist Celine and Leonie in taking care of their father. Celine resumed the role of taking care of the household whereby her uncle and aunt were always near if she ever needed their assistance. Celine stated: “It was my joy to be able to take care of my beloved father myself...I never grew tired of embracing him; I showed him my affection in a thousand different ways and did everything I could to please him.” (C)

Celine, foreseeing minor problems with one of the new servants, made a novena to St. Joseph for their conversion. After Celine made her novena to St. Joseph, one of the servants came to Celine to confess to her, as she told Celine: “I am a miserable wretch; for many years I have been separated from God, I have committed sacrileges, but I want to change. It is just now, while looking at the picture of the Blessed Virgin that my heart melted like wax.” (C)

The picture of the Blessed Virgin that Celine painted for her father played an indelible role not only in the conversion of one of the new servants but in Celine’s life as well. She looked upon the image for solace in wake of her decision to tell her father of entering into the religious life. It was that sense of security of being in the presence of the Blessed Virgin that gave her the courage to tell her father of her decision to give herself completely to God.



Isidore saw the dedication Celine had for her paintings. He in turn contacted Flandrin artist Krug. Celine took lessons from him to enhance her skills in painting. As her father had once before tried to send her to an academy for art lessons, this situation was more successful. Even after her entrance into the monastery, Krug would continue to visit her and advise her in her work.

The stressors of taking care of the household, witnessing the digression of her dying father and the unknown future she was to have all weighted heavily down on Celine. What she knew and already learned was no longer enough to sustain her. God had started the transition in her life and it was all out of her control. It was difficult for her to abandon what she wanted to see happen and what God wanted for her to happen in her life. On December 16, 1892, when the anxiety of her situation overwhelmed her to the point of tears, the vision of “Our Lady” appeared smiling before her.

Both Celine and Leonie were still afforded the opportunity to go on pilgrimages as well as stay at their uncle and aunt’s chateau La Musse each summer. In the spring of 1893, while the servants were taking care of their father, both Celine and Leonie opted to make a pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial. It was a place where the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus had gained support through the years from hearing about the story of St. Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (Margaret-Mary) who was a Visitandine nun that saw visions of Jesus Christ. The visions revealed to her the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was especially important to Leonie because of her calling to the Visitandine Order. Celine was also attracted to the devotion of the Sacred Heart. The pilgrimage and the introduction to the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus helped strengthen Celine’s soul and inspired her commitment to perfecting soul.

It was not long after their pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial that Leonie herself was set to leave on a retreat to the Visitation monastery in Caen. On June 23, 1893, Leonie made her second attempt at the same monastery to enter into the religious life. Once again, Celine was alone with her father. Even though Celine would have preferred Leonie to be at her side, it was blessing to see her sister make another attempt to serve and devote herself to God and God alone.

At the end of June of the same year, Louis, Celine and the Guérins went to La Musse. It was the first time after Louis’s paralytic condition that they were able to clear the obstacles for him to make the grueling trip. Celine and her cousin Marie would spend time pushing his wheelchair around the grounds of the chateau. Louis especially loved to look down upon the woods encircling the property and gaze at the sights below. It was refreshing for both Louis and Celine to travel through the woods and listen to nature which were reminiscence of the memories they had when they lived in Alençon. She also took advantage of the time by painting picturesque scenes of the surrounding landscape.

It was always a challenge for Celine when the Guérins entertained at their residence. There were many temptations that she faced especially at their parties. She took time for herself prior to any social event to pray. People were attracted to her honesty as well as

her great kindness towards the needs of other people. She avoided hot button issues which would often offend or separate others in their conversations. Anytime she was placed in a situation which was out of her control she would silently pray and rub her crucifix seeking guidance. There was one situation where “divine intervention” played an active part. It was at the wedding reception of one of her relatives, she was asked by a certain gentleman to dance, when the dance commenced, he forgot all the steps. He immediately became embarrassed by the awkward situation and left the dance floor. She never saw him again.

Even though Celine spent leisurely time with her relatives at the chateau, her devotion to God never left her. She still sought him out in everything as he was preparing her soul for the life she was going to live at the monastery in the future. For in the monastery, you surrender all of your material possessions. Her interest in material possessions started to lose its appeal. It became more apparent for her after she immediately lost interest in a bracelet she had just bought as she stated: “What I would have a chain fastened to my wrist! Am I then a slave?” (C) If she ever surrendered herself to an indulgence, guilt would soon follow. God would place reminders in front of her to show her what was more important in life such as her seeing the poor state of the local church they were attending when they stayed at the chateau or the unsightly state of the living conditions of the poor.

Holy Communion and prayer on a daily basis was her “support” which sustained her throughout the day. Her outlook on her surroundings were reversing, God was working inside her soul. No more was success considered to be surrounded by stately possessions but the need for simplicity around her was becoming a desire. Celine reflected on this by saying: “I thought back to my childhood, when I used to visit my Therese at the home of her nurse, and we were ushered into the one and only room, which served as the kitchen, bedroom, and parlor all at the same time. The floor was hard-packed earth...I reflected that truth and freedom, and therefore happiness, dwelled under the old dark beams rather than under artistic ceilings, and I looked forward to the happy moment when I would be transplanted to a poor cell.” (C)

Fr. Pichon, Celine’s spiritual advisor, kept in touch with her through letters. He had already established himself in Canada. He had asked since she had not committed herself to entering the monastery that she join him in Canada to prepare the children there for their First Holy Communion. He requested to her that she keep this a secret from her sisters so that they would not influence her decision in joining him. It made it a very difficult sacrifice for her to keep it a secret from her sisters especially Therese. But as fate would have it, God needed her elsewhere.

On May 27, 1894, the seriousness of Louis’s health had taken yet again another turn for the worst. While Celine was helping her cousin Jeanne in Caen, her father had another stroke. She immediately rushed to the train station and headed back to Lisieux. On the way there, she prayed to God asking him that her father still be alive when she returned. She wanted the blessing to be there when her father took his last breath. Once she arrived, he appeared to be getting better. Nine days later on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June however, he suffered

from a heart attack while Celine was at Mass. The servants came and got her and she rushed with fear in her eyes as she was running back to the house. As Celine reflected on this experience when she wrote to her sisters about his heart attack, she said: “While I was running the whole way home, I did not know whether I would find him better or dead. Our Lord wished me not to be deprived of assisting him in his last moments; help me, dearest Sisters, to thank Our Lord for that grace. Oh! Pray for both of us. Papa and me...I feel my heart so filled with emotion. (FL) Throughout the month of June, Louis’s condition was slowly improving.

The decision was made for the family to go to La Musse; Louis’s condition had improved enough for them to make the trip. It was the perfect place for him and Celine to be together in his last days. There were so many fond memories that he had spent with her there that it was befitting for him to be in a peaceful environment. Both Celine and the Guérins made every effort possible to keep Louis comfortable, Celine especially took special care of him, her being the “guardian” of her beloved father.

On July 28, 1894, Louis suffered from another heart attack, this time it was to be his last. Celine stayed at his bedside until it was time for her to go to sleep and the servant Desiré looked over him throughout the night. At five o’clock in the morning on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Celine was awakened by Desiré to come and see her father, his condition was dire. At seven forty-five a.m. while she was attending to him, she noticed that he was turning ice cold. As Celine’s aunt woke up her husband Isidore and retrieved some hot water bottles, Celine was left alone with him. She was so distraught that she asked God what she should do. Without any hesitation, she spoke aloud: “Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart, my soul, and my life...Jesus, Mary Joseph, assist me in my last agony...Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you.” (FL) He looked upon her with a loving glance showing her that he understood everything without saying a word. By eight fifteen a.m. his breathing slowly came to an end. Immediately after he passed away, Celine stood over him and placed her fingers over his eyes and closed them forever and gave him her last loving kiss. The expression on his face after his death gave her the peace she needed. Celine’s prayers were answered that she was able to witness her father’s last breath. Celine described in a letter to her sisters: “Papa is in Heaven...his expression was that of happiness and profound peace. My heart burst at the last moment, and a flood of tears bathed his bed. But underneath I was really glad for his happiness after the terrible martyrdom which he has undergone and which we have shared with him.” (FL)

That night as Celine was having trouble sleeping; she got up and looked out of her window and looked into the night’s sky. As she was gazing outwards, she saw a “luminous globe” disappearing into the Heavens. It was an affirmation for her that her father had made it to Heaven.

The Guérins and Celine prepared Louis’s body for the journey home from La Musse. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, his funeral took place at the Cathedral of St. Pierre. There were many people in attendance for his funeral including the journey to the cemetery. It was a great honor of his life for so many people to complete the journey with him and his family to

his final resting place. Immediately afterwards, Celine and the Guérins went to the Carmelite monastery for a service in honor of their father. It was to honor a father that they loved so much and who all held dear to their hearts.

Now it was time for Celine to fulfill her destiny and take her rightful place among her sisters at the Carmelite monastery. But initially all of the nuns were not too happy about her entrance. For fear of four Martin sisters in the same monastery there was a lot of hesitation to allow her in. But the opposition would soon fade with the exception of Sr. Aimee of Jesus. Therese decided to use prayer as a weapon to weaken her opposition to her sister's entrance as she prayed: "Dearest Jesus, you know how earnestly I desired that the trials my dear father endured should serve as his purgatory. I long, to know if my wish has been granted. Since one of our community is strongly opposed to Celine's entrance here, if she withdrew her opposition I shall consider it as a sign from you that my father went straight to Heaven." (WW) Therese's prayers would soon be answered; Sr. Aimee of Jesus, who was strongly opposed to Celine's entrance, came to Therese in tears and told her that she had changed her mind and that she would gladly welcome Celine into the monastery with open arms. The final opposition to Celine's entrance was cleared. Therese writes to her sister Celine: "Come we will suffer together, and then the good God will take one of us, and the others will remain a little while longer in exile. Now hearken to what I am going to say to you, never will God separate us. If I die before you, do not think that I shall ever be separated from your soul; never shall we have been more united. Do not be troubled by prophecy, it is but childishness. I am not ill; I am strong as iron; but God can break iron as easily as potter's clay." (DBT)

The date was set for September 14, 1894. Celine took care of all of the things that needed to be done prior to her entrance with the help of her aunt Celine and cousin Marie. The day of her entrance had come and Celine was escorted by her relatives to the Carmelite monastery. In the chapel, the ceremony took place for her entrance and not without a bunch of tears flowing from her uncle and aunt's eyes. As she entered the door and looked back at her relatives, as her other sisters had previous done, she gave them a loving tearful goodbye. As soon as the door closed, all peace resided in Celine's heart as she describes that moment: "The storm gave way to calm and the deepest serenity. I felt that at last I had found the place of my repose." (C) Once she entered, she knelled before her sister Pauline, who was then prioress, and submitted herself to her and met all of the sisters.

Since Therese was the assistant novice mistress, Pauline handed over the responsibility of showing Celine around the monastery. Later that evening, all of her sisters would meet her in her cell. Once Celine entered her cell, she saw a poem laid out on her bed, once she saw the poem; she realized that was once written by her father, Louis. In the poem, the verses from her father read: "Come to us, little girl! My crown lacks one bright pearl. The Lord said to us, and we are all here. To pluck you from the world on our wings of white like birds on the branches pluck a flower bright. Oh, come to us! Come to us, dear!" (C) As Celine reflected on reading the poem, she stated: "I could not express my emotions when I read this poem and recognized that it was my father's handwriting. . . It was he who welcomed me to this dwelling where the love of Jesus had reserved a place

for me...At the sight of this, waves of gratitude pressed my heart, and the emotions made tears flow, something that grief and anguish had not been able to do. I cannot say what took place in me at that first meeting with my dear sisters. We said hardly anything to each other. I sat down silently on the edge of my straw mattress, like a tired traveler who, after a long absence and having gone through innumerable perils, now stops to catch her breath upon arriving at her destination, not daring as yet to believe her good fortune.”(C) Therese honored Celine by being the first to tell her that her new name would be Sr. Marie of the Holy Face.

The first lesson Therese taught her sister in humility was to kiss the floor every time she entered. Therese stated to her sister: “Each time you enter your cell and each time you leave it, no matter whether it be ten or twenty or forty times a day, you must always first kiss the floor as I showed you. What this exercise of humility will do for your soul, only years of unremitting practice - which I now have – will prove that our Carmel has all the secrets of perfection. This is something I have learned.” (WW)

One of Celine’s first reprimands was when she said “thank you” to her sister after she received a list of the daily routine that they are expected to follow. Therese told her to say “May God reward you” instead of “thank you” because “thank you” is meaningless and when you say “May God reward you” you are asking for intercession from God on their behalf. Each time that you do something for someone or someone does something for you, “its meaning is in relation to God and that alone is what counts.” (WW) Therese went onto say: “God commands us to love each other. We prove this by being of service to one another, and for this He will reward us eternally.” (WW) It was also taught to her that she should never refer to “my” or “mine” when referring to material possessions. It is always “ours” for it is by every means of helping us detach ourselves from all things material which is parallel to the vow of poverty which is taken by each nun. For in the end, after this life is over, the original meaning of the possession will disappear and someone else will take on that same possession as their own without having the same meaning. The need for acquiring possession only temporarily satisfies us and leads us to believe that it will make us fulfilled within ourselves, for it is God who completes us and fulfills our needs and we must seek him and only him.

Once alone in her cell, her first glance was at the list of her daily routines, for she was content on memorizing and embracing her new life at Carmel. While lying in bed, the realization of living an enclosed life came into reality. The reality of staying stationary in one place as well as the unappetizing meals and the uncomfortable bed all proved to be obstacles which Celine had to embrace while living the rest of her life at Carmel. As always, she willingly accepted this challenge and embraced it wholeheartedly.

Celine embraced her new surroundings with open arms. The physical character of the place was what she admired the most both “simple and austere”. It was shocking to her sisters by how much her willingness to embrace her new life, with the likelihood as with most new sisters who have lived in the outside world for a longer time; they bring with them the “scars” that the world has placed upon them. At twenty-five, she had none.

It was not long where those instances arose when Celine finally found her difficulties. As she settled into her new life, one of her biggest obstacle was her straw mattress. Her mattress was very uncomfortable for her to sleep on which caused her to have many sleepless nights. Periodically, during times of prayer, she struggled to stay awake. As with any new nun, many eyes fell upon her during those times of group prayers, and she was caught many times and reprimanded for it. Next, it was food that was being served, that caused her much heartache. It took her almost a year for her body to adjust to the new changes in her eating habits. Even though she battled her physical difficulties, she survived her postulancy and welcomed the next step into becoming a novice.

On February 5, 1895, Celine took the habit and became a novice. In the ceremony, she left the cloister and met her relatives. Canon Ducellier presided over the ceremony. Céline's uncle Isidore escorted her down the aisle in her beautiful bridal gown while she held a bouquet of lilies as her aunt Celine and cousins' Jeanne and Marie looked on in the Carmelite chapel. Even though Celine's father and mother were not there, their presence was felt throughout the ceremony. The homily was befitting and dear to her because it was about her father, Louis, the one she closest to and cared for up until his death. Celine recalled the ceremony by stating: "I received a particular grace of intimate union with my Beloved; I saw nothing of what was going on around me. The presence of the Bishop, the numerous clergy, the crowd of visitors, had all disappeared before my eyes; I was alone with Jesus...when suddenly, I was awakened from my interior silence by the singing of Compline, which was vibrant and full of spirit. The choir intoned the palm: Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi (He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High), and I understood its meaning; each word fell on my soul like the pledge of a sacred promise made to me by the One to whom I had united my life." (C)

Prior to the ceremony, it was originally decided that she would receive the name Sr. Marie of the Holy Face but when Fr. Delatroette heard what her new name would be, he objected plainly. He felt that it was more befitting an honor to use one of the recently deceased founding members of the Carmelite monastery; he preferred to have her named Sr. Geneviève of St. Teresa. His demands were granted. Therese was very distressed over the name change when she heard about Fr. Delatroette objections but Pauline reassured her that "of the Holy Face" would be added to her name. In return, Celine received relics of the deceased foundress whom the community revered as a holy nun.

As a part of the Carmelite rule, each postulant entering the monastery is allowed to bring with them a limited number of belongings upon the approval of the prioress. Celine, herself, chose her camera and camera equipment which history has proven to be one of the most valuable assets for the community and for her sister Therese. With many saints prior to St. Therese, very few of them ever had photographs taken of them showing the true character of the saint. Even today, the world is still captured by the images of St. Therese that were taken by Celine.

Celine was very detailed oriented in her work, interruptions were her biggest obstacle when she was working on a task and she strived every day to overcome them. One day when a sister chastises her for spending too much time on a particular task, she lashed

back at her but soon regretted it. As she reflected on the incident: “It is true, as one wise man put it, that you feel a pinprick on yourself more than the broken arm of your neighbor.”(C) After Celine faced many similar situations between her and her sisters, she began to realize her faults and saw them for herself. As she states: “In the world, my soul lived, so to speak, in a strong fortress: it was quartered there and reveled in its riches. On the inside as on the outside, everything obeyed it. Praised and applauded, it had no doubt that it was really something. Moreover, did it need to be praised from without when it felt itself so alive with constantly renewed energy, when the good God set before it, so to speak, the gifts that he had so liberally accorded it? But suddenly the picture changed. In place of the edifice, I no longer saw anything but ruins that allowed the hitherto ignored chasms to be discovered. Then war was enkindled in me: my faults, which up till then had been slumbering, were awakened. Was it to live with them that I had come to Carmel?” (C)

Celine had a preconceived notion of what life would be like at Carmel. She felt that since she gave up her family and what the world had to offer that it would be easy for her to endure the many minor dramas that occur in monastic life. She proved herself wrong. One day she spoke to her sister Pauline and complained to her about the obstacles she was facing with the other sisters and Pauline said to her: “Are you finding it too hard? Do more” (C) The realization that the people around her were from many different backgrounds and interpreted what she said to them differently was an eye opening experience that she had to come to terms with. With some, she had to be more gentle and caring and with others she had to be much sterner. Overall, she learned how to love each and every one of them.

In the introduction to the Carmelite life, the only reference Celine had, when facing obstacles, was what she learned outside of Carmel. Addressing these obstacles was a completely different process within the walls of Carmel and Therese was there to help her through it. Therese said to Celine: “To rely on what the world has taught you is like leaning on a red-hot iron! It leaves a little mark! You must surrender all things blindly to God.” (C)

One obstacle, thought to have already been won, was her relationship with her sister Therese. Even though both of them were inseparable and equal when they were younger their relationship had to be relearned by Celine. Therese was no longer her equal but now she was her teacher. Celine could not, as she was accustomed to in the past, just go up to Therese and speak with her any time she wanted to and however long she wished to speak with her. She now had to measure her time with her own sister and cautiously make the sacrifice to not place herself above the other novices that Therese was also responsible for. As Celine states: “I was not the only kitten drinking out of the Infant Jesus’s bowl.” (C)

When Therese saw Celine struggle, she joyfully accepted it, she knew that through humiliations that Celine’s soul was being transformed before her very eyes. Instinctively it was expected for Celine to fight back the reprimands brought about by her other sisters in the Convent. For Celine, it was more over a struggle with self-love. Celine wanted to

be known for her accomplishments moreover than her faults. But that in itself was not enough for Celine to learn what true humility was. Therese used stories in the Bible to illustrate to her the similar situations that she was facing at the time in order to help her learn how to deal with them and moreover to learn how to love the humiliation that she was in.

Therese hoped that Celine would come to a point in her life for her to desire to be reprimanded for her faults. This in itself would convince her with confidence to seek out God first and not rely on what the world had taught her previously on how to handle difficult situations. As Therese made Celine feel the joy in believing that she was of course a “very little soul” whom God constantly had to support because it was nothing but weakness and imperfection. (C)

One of the things that Celine cherished the most was receiving Holy Communion on a daily basis. Prior to monastic life, she reaffirmed that union with Jesus by receiving the Holy Eucharist daily. At Carmel, things were much different, due to the regulations of the community; she was only afforded the opportunity to receive Holy Communion 3-4 times a week. Unable to receive the Holy Eucharist everyday was a trial and a sacrifice for her to endure and overcome from which she was once accustomed to.

As an act of surrendering, she imitated her sister Therese by showering the crucifix she was given with rose pedals. Each rose pedal was a sacrifice she made for Jesus. She removed the crown of thorns which were placed on Jesus’s head and removed the nails which were placed in both of his hands and feet.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1895, Celine completely surrendered herself to the “Mistress of Her House”, the Virgin Mary. It was an easy step for her to take due to her wholehearted devotion to the Virgin Mary. Equal to her own strong personality, she sought out the protection of St. Michael, St. Elias, and St. John the Baptist.

A turning point had occurred within Therese, in the formation of the little way. On June 9, 1895, after Mass, Therese and Celine approached Mother Agnes and requested to gain permission to become a “Victim to Merciful Love”. Mother Agnes gave her permission not fully understanding what she was requesting at the time. Therese understood clearly now how Jesus longs to be loved and she led her sister Celine into making “the Act of Oblation of Merciful Love”. As both of them knelt before the Blessed Virgin, Therese recited “the Act” on both of their behalf.

As Therese explains in her autobiography: “I was thinking of those souls who offer themselves as victims to the justice of God, so that, by drawing it down on themselves, they turn aside the punishment due to sinners. I thought this a noble and generous offer, but I was a long way from feeling that I should make it myself. From the depths of my heart, I cried: “O my divine Master, must it be only Your justice which has its victims? Hasn’t Your merciful love need of them too? It is everywhere rejected and ignored. Those on whom You long to lavish it seek a wretched, fleeting happiness in other creatures instead of flinging themselves into Your arms and welcoming the flames of



Your divine love. Must Your rejected love stay shut up in Your Heart? It seems to me that if You found souls offering themselves as sacrificial victims of Your love, You would consume them speedily and would rejoice to unloose those torrents of infinite tenderness You hold within Yourself. If your justice must spend itself, though it is concerned only with the earth, how much more must Your merciful love long to inflame souls since ‘Thy mercy reacheth even to the heavens.’ O Jesus, let me be Your eager victim and consume Your little sacrifice in the fire of divine love.” (SS)

As with Therese, Celine’s heart was being inundated with God’s love. As Celine, describes for herself, on September 8, 1895: “Jesus living in Celine; Celine possessed by Jesus.” (C)

At the end of the 1895, a dark cloud hovered over the announcement of Celine’s profession. There was a disagreement about delaying her profession by Mother Marie de Gonzaga and Mother Agnes of Jesus. Mother Marie wanted the ceremony postponed until after the elections of the new prioress. So, to appease Mother Marie, Mother Agnes consulted the Bishop’s representative and the matter was fully resolved that the profession ceremony would commence in February as first decided. Once that matter was resolved, days prior to the ceremony, Celine had doubts about her profession. But with prayer all doubts about her profession were removed.

In celebration of Celine’s profession on February 24, 1896, Therese composed a marriage contract between Celine and Jesus with the motto: “To leave oneself in order to find God.” Therese secretly placed it in Celine’s room addressing it to Celine: “From the Knight Jesus to my beloved spouse, Genevieve of Saint Teresa, living by love on the Mountain of Carmel.” (C)

On Celine’s profession day, she knelt down before Mother Agnes and placed her hands in hers and recited her prayer: “Lord, my ambition is to be, with my dear Therese, a little child in the Father’s heavenly home...I desire only to work for your pleasure...I agree always to lose here below, for I want everything I receive from you to be gratuitous, because you love me and not the riches acquired by my virtues...Do not judge me according to my works, do not lay my faults to my charge, but look on the Face of my Jesus. He will answer for me.” (C)

Not long after Celine’s profession, the date was set for her veiling on March 17, 1896. Here veiling was held in the Carmelite chapel presided over by Msgr. Hugonin. Canon Ducellier gave the sermon which consisted reading “the Office of the Dead”. The Office of the Dead was commonly used at a profession to describe the abandonment of the nun to the outside world as opposed to its original intent of the separation of an individual’s soul from its body.

Elections were held on March 21, 1896; Mother Marie de Gonzaga was once again elected as the new prioress. A new monastery was being built in what is now known as modern day Vietnam and the bishop requested Mother Marie to send a couple of her nuns in Lisieux to fill the positions. On Mother Marie’s list were of course Pauline, Celine

Therese and their cousin Marie. But with the early signs of Therese's illness appearing and other situating circumstances prevented any of the Martin sisters from being sent to Vietnam.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1896, Therese's body showed the first signs of her illness when she hemorrhaged on both nights. As she described in her autobiography: "I had scarcely put my head on the pillow when a warm gush of something filled my mouth. I thought I was dying and my heart almost burst with joy. But as I had just put out my lamp, I restrained my curiosity until morning and went peacefully to sleep. When the bell rang at five o'clock, I remembered at once that I had some good news to check. I went to the window and saw the good news was true—my handkerchief was sodden with blood."(SS)

As 1896 ended, 1897 was the year of the last great agony of Celine's sister Therese. Her symptoms had already showed themselves to her and now was the time when her sisters were alerted of her serious illness—tuberculosis. In early April, Therese fell seriously ill which scared all of her sisters. There was no remedy to cure Therese's illness and death was foreseen in the future.

After the shock of her illness wore off, Celine, obvious took it very hard. She knew that only a miracle from God would cure her sister. Therese was to Celine, her close companion and confidant. Celine looked to Therese every time she was facing a difficult situation. As Therese's illness progressed Celine knew by year's end Therese would no longer be there for her in the flesh.

Once Therese was permanently moved to the infirmary on July 8<sup>th</sup>, Celine was there at her side. Celine held the duty of assistant infirmarian. Celine took care of all the nuns who were seriously ill or incapable of taking care of themselves due to their advanced age. When Celine spoke to Therese in the infirmary, she annotated everything both of them said to one another.

July 12, 1897 was the first recorded conversation both of them had with one another while in the infirmary. As Therese looked upon Celine, she said: "Ah! My little Sister Genevieve will feel my departure the most; certainly, she's the one I pity the most because as soon as she is in trouble she comes looking for me, and she will no longer find me... Yes, God will give her strength...and besides, I'll come back!" (LC) Knowing that Celine would suffer the most of her departure; Therese kept reiterating to her that she would always be there at her side in spirit. Every time Celine brought up the subject of her impending death, Therese would reaffirm to Celine that she would be there. For example, on the same day, Therese hummed some verses to her: "She is mine, she whom Heaven itself, the entire Heaven has come to delight me. She is mine, I love her, oh! Yes, I love her and nothing can ever separate us." (LC)

In their continued conversation on the same day, Celine explains to Therese and tells her that "God will not be able to take me immediately after your death because I won't be good enough." (LC) But Therese disagrees with her logic and gives Celine an example

of what happened with St. Joseph Cupertino and his three companions when they requested to enter the priesthood. Thus Therese states to Celine, I will be there to speak for you on your behalf and God will give you the same as he has given to me. “We will be like two little ducks; you know how closely they follow each other!” “How sad I would be if I were to see anyone but you on God’s other knee; I would cry all day long!” (LC) A few weeks after her death, Celine was meditating on these same words when she was in choir, did Therese ever get to sit on God’s knee? Immediately after the thought had passed through her mind, the words were uttered by the choir - “*Haec facta est mihi...*” (This has been done to me.) (LC)

July 21<sup>st</sup>, Therese’s death was always on Celine’s mind, there wasn’t a minute in the day where either the subject was not thought of or spoken about. Therese reaffirmed to Celine: “In Heaven, you will take your place at my side! And then I will place on you sky-blue wings of a rosy cherub.” (LC)

On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, in an effort to comfort Therese of her impending death, Celine read a passage on the happiness of Heaven. While Celine was reading it, Therese stopped her from going any further by telling Celine that it was not what attracted her to Heaven. Celine responded by saying, “Okay, what attracts your soul to Heaven?” “It’s love!” “To love, to be loved, and to return to the earth to make love loved...” (LC)

As Therese continually coughed up blood, she still tried to keep a positive outlook on it, even though Celine found it harder to watch. Celine wanted to go with Therese to Heaven, both of them together but as Celine saw it, there was no sign of her own impending death. But then Therese said to her: “Oh! Yes, you have a sign! My death is a sign of yours!” (LC)

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, witnessing daily the cruelty of a slow and painful death, Therese’s illness, was taking a toll on Celine’s confidence. How can Therese be so positive and brave when she was suffering so much? When most people who are dying don’t have the positive energy to get them through it? Celine says to Therese: “You are my ideal, and this I cannot obtain.” (LC) I don’t see how I can embrace death the way you do when you are suffering so much when my natural instincts tells me otherwise. I am like a child, in her mother’s arms reaching for everything and not able to realize that nothing is in my grasp. And Therese says to Celine: “Yes, but on the last day, Jesus will approach His little Celine with all she has desired, and then she will seize everything.” (LC)

August had arrived and her health was slowly depleting even more. Therese looked at her with endearment and said: “Remember always that you are very little and when you are very little. You don’t have beautiful thoughts.” (LC)

As Therese was speaking to one of her sisters, Celine entered into the conversation and added: “I will not be able to live without her!” And Therese responded: “That’s right; so I’ll bring you two wings!” (LC)

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, as both Therese and Celine were speaking to each other, the teaching never stopped between the two of them. In an effort to teach Celine “poverty of spirit and of heart”, Therese reminded her never to strive for accomplishments and accolades in this life but to stay where she was and most importantly become “very little”. Celine’s focus was to be fully on God. Therese lovingly said: “When I am in Heaven, I’ll draw from God’s treasures and I’ll say: “This is for Marie, this for Pauline, this for Leonie, and this for the very little Celine.’ And making a sign to Papa: ‘She is the littlest now, so we must hasten to get her!’” (LC)

Further in their conversation, Celine again reproaches Therese about her leaving her. And Therese counteracts her words with: “Oh! Not for the space of an inch!” (LC) As Celine told Therese a story that placed obstacles in her path where she felt she wouldn’t be able to be with Therese in Heaven, Therese said to her: “You must ask God: ‘I know very well that I’ll never be worthy of what I hope for, but I hold out my hand to You like a beggar and I’m sure You will answer me fully, for You are so good!’” (LC)

As the teachings continued each day, Celine remarked to Therese about her obituary and said to her: “I would rather be gone before they wrote it. Do you believe it? Yes, I believe it, but you must not lose patience; look at how patient I am. You will have to act like that.” (LC) Therese continued to instill in Celine that she must detach herself completely from herself. For her to not worry about what was going on around her and what she thinks she must have or obtain but to have total trust in God to provide for her what He sees that her needs are. Essentially, Therese asked her to please follow my lead.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of August, Celine awoke to see Therese in physical agony. She approached her and Therese told her the devil has surrounded her. She remarked: “I cannot see him but I can feel him. He is tormenting me; he is holding me with an iron hand to prevent me from taking the slightest relief; he is increasing my pains in order to make me despair. And I can no longer pray! I can only look at the Blessed Virgin and say: ‘Jesus!’ how necessary is that prayer at Compline: ‘*Procul recedant omnia et noctium phantasmata!*’” (Deliver us from the phantoms of the night.) (LC)

Therese then went on to say to Celine: “I experience something mysterious. Until now, I’ve suffered especially in my right side, but God asked me if I wanted to suffer for you, and I immediately answered that I did. At the same instant, my left side was seized with an incredible pain. *I’m suffering for you, and the devil doesn’t want it!*” (LC) After Celine hearing what Therese had told her, she went and got a blessed candle. Celine lit the candle and then the pain that Therese was suffering from on her left side was gone. Since Therese experienced the same amount of pain on her left side as she did on her right, she now jokingly calls her left side “Celine’s side”.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, Therese was relapsing physically, her suffering had strengthened and she was emotionally exhausted. She said to Celine that she didn’t want to sound as though she were complaining so when Therese said to Celine that she was suffering, Therese wanted her to say to her “All the better!” The next day, after realizing how upset Celine was over seeing her in such great pain, signaled her over to her bed and said

to her: “Little Demoiselle? I love you very much and it’s very sweet for me to be taken care of by you.” (LC)

September had arrived and it was the last month that Therese would suffer on this earth. Celine remarked to Therese about the close relationship they had: “People will not be able to know that we loved each other so much. And Therese responded back: “It’s not worth desiring that people believe it; the important thing is that it’s so.” (LC) Days later, Therese affirmed to her that she would protect her always.

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, Celine had done something that she knew that she shouldn’t have done and Therese caught it and looked at her and responded: “You will be there at my side just the same!” (LC) Later that day, Therese, filled with emotion by how well Celine was taking care of her, she said: “Oh, how grateful I am to my poor little Bobonne! You will see all I’ll do for you!” (LC) Therese was very thankful for all the attention she was given by Celine during her illness, every other day, she would tell Celine how much she loved her and felt the obligation of repaying her for all that she has done for her. Therese remarked: “To love you, you have me...and not to love you, it isn’t God...it’s the devil.” (LC)

On the last four days of Therese’s life, Therese was in an enormous amount of pain. So much so that she begged Celine to pray to Mary on her behalf. She said to Celine, please pray to the Virgin Mary for me, my little infirmarian but when it comes to praying for myself I cannot get myself to do so...(in a sigh) “Oh! How necessary it is to pray for the agonizing! If you only knew!” (LC) Therese’s sister’s asked her who will receive your last look, and Therese said: “If God leaves me free, it will be for Mother Prioress.” (Mother Marie de Gonzaga)

On the day of Therese’s death, September 30<sup>th</sup>, it was her final bitter taste of suffering. She was suffering so much that Pauline had to hold her up on one side and Celine had to hold her up on the other side. Moments later as Celine was rubbing ice against her lips, Therese raised her eyes to Celine with a “prophetic insistence”. Therese’s look expressed to Celine was with great love and compassion and with it a “superhuman expression of encouragement and promise” as if she actually said to Celine: “Go, go! Celine, I shall be with you!” (LC) All the pains and worries of this earth were now Therese’s past and her eyes were on Heaven and the start of her journey was about to begin. Minutes before her death, Therese’s eyes searched the room for Mother Marie de Gonzaga. She had stated to her sister earlier that her last look would be on mother prioress. As Therese spoke her final words, Therese turned instead to Celine and placed her last look on her, a blessing Celine so desired and received. As Celine stated later in life, “For the memory of that last look, so much desired by all and given to me, sustains me always and is an inexpressible strength for me.” (LC)

After Therese took her last breath, Celine ran out of the infirmary and leaned against one of the pillars, in hopes of seeing her sister’s spirit ascend to Heaven. But the visibility was obscured by clouds and just then as she spoke aloud to herself crying: “If only there

were some stars in the heavens! (LC) The clouds and the rain suddenly dissipated and the stars shone through. It was a sign for her that her beloved sister's soul made it.

On October 1, 1897, Therese's body was prepared and Celine took her first photograph of her sister in the infirmary. Due to the dynamics of the camera lens, it was only "equipped for pictures of longer focus, and Celine did not have much space in the small infirmary; thus the picture had to be taken from a high angle and was not taken in natural light." (PA) Celine was not really happy with the photograph because she felt it did not capture Therese's true facial expression but admitted it did show her "heavenly smile".

As they transferred her body from the infirmary to the choir to be viewed by family and friends, Celine decided to take another photograph of her beloved sister on October 3, 1897. This photograph too, felt by Celine did not capture what they saw of their sister. Mother Agnes of Jesus had stated: "We felt there was an air of majesty about her, but we did not recognize her anymore." (PA)

As Celine stood in her sister's presence, she saw a tear clinging to Therese's eyelid. She reached for her handkerchief and wiped away her last tear. Later, she would cut the cloth into a tear itself for veneration.

On October 4, 1897, Therese's funeral was conducted and she was laid to rest in the new cemetery for the Carmelite nuns. Celine and Therese sister, Leonie, led the procession of mourners.

As Celine was admiring the night's sky, a flame appeared before her eyes and encircled itself in the sky. As she visualized this unexplainable event, she felt in her soul a resounding peace. It was to her, an image of her sister Thérèse's soul. Celine was so convinced that this unexplainable event was brought about by God and her sister that it was a response to her prayers.

Not even a year after Therese's death did Celine experience another favor of a different kind. Prior to Therese's death, she knew that Celine would always come running to her for advice and while she was dying, Celine never had the opportunity to speak with her about a passage she meditated on and didn't understand from Zechariah 9:17. After Therese's death, she again meditated on this same passage and this time she received from her sister "an inner sweetness accompanied by the warmth of divine Charity." (C)

Celine held the responsibility of the sacristan, an individual who cares for the sacred vessels, vestments, lights, reliquaries, pamphlets, statues, etc, anything related to the care of the sacristy and its contents within the Carmelite chapel. It was a position held close to her heart and Celine paid special attention to taking care of all of these essentials. But all of this attention she placed on taking care of the Carmelite chapel brought about criticism from Mother Marie de Gonzaga which was to Celine's dismay. But it wasn't until Bishop Amette who visited the Carmelite chapel when he conducted a ceremony in honor of Blessed Denis of the Nativity, O.C.D of Honfleur, at the Carmelite chapel and

spoke about how impressed he was by Celine's work in front of the entire community did Mother Marie de Gonzaga change her mind.

During the month of February in 1899, a spiritual attack ensued on Celine, questioning her virtues when it came to celibacy. No matter how many prayers she prayed, the temptation was still there but she held her ground and clinged to God even though it was difficult to do. She refocused her efforts instead on saving souls. Saving souls from Satan's clutches, if saving only one, would mean more to her than the temptations she herself was facing, there was no comparison to the two. As she said: "The desire to save souls was like a mania for me...It was this hope that gave me courage." (C) The spiritual attacks she endured lasted for two years and three months.

With an ever increasing interest into the life of Thérèse after reading her autobiography, the Bishop of Bayeux asked Celine to write a booklet about her sister. In this booklet, it described the life of her sister prior to entering the Carmelite monastery and the virtues she practiced with the last part of the booklet about how she dealt with her illness and her death. The final name of the book would be called *Appeal to Divine Love*. The purpose of the booklet was to lead Therese's followers to her message.

Secondo Pia photographed the Shroud of Turin in May of 1898. Later, these photographic negative images would be published in a book called *Le Linceul du Christ* by Professor Paul Vignon. On a pilgrimage, Celine's uncle Isidore, purchased this book and brought it back with him to Lisieux. Her uncle decided to give Celine the book. When Celine saw the book, it enraptured her soul; she could not put it down. When it came time for her to retire to her cell, she would take it out and examine the image of the face and studied it feverishly.

Celine writes in her notes on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1900, "O my Jesus...you know that my desire has always been to love you and to make you loved. Since I cannot express a greater love than that which Therese lavished on you, my dream is to lavish it on you myself. Together, and on the same day, O Jesus, you accepted us as little Victims of your Merciful Love, I am the first one to have followed her *Little Way*. She opened the door, and I dashed in after her...Is the day very distant when I will hear the sound of your voice, when you will clasp me to your Heart, when I will be able to see your Countenance and kiss your sweet Face, when will I be seated eternally beside Therese on our lap? O Jesus, may I live for you and die of Love!" (C)

As Celine first saw the image of his face she stated: "It was truly my Jesus as my heart had sensed him to be...And, looking for the marks of his sufferings, I observed by the wounds the imprint of the cruel crown of thorns..." (C) After examining the photographic negatives, she found it in her heart to paint the image of the Shroud of Turin.

In the spring of 1904, Celine started her quest to paint the image of Jesus. Her first attempt was using charcoal as a medium but unfortunately when she tried to get the image she created published the charcoal painting was rejected. Using charcoal as a medium did not offer a three dimensional effect needed to print the image on paper.

But Celine's determination did not end there, a year later; she once again began her journey to paint the same image again as a grisaille (usually painted in a multiple shades of gray). This time, it would involve many prayers to Our Lady of the Smile, St. Joseph, her deceased family members and all the angels and saints. This was a real labor of love for her and she used every ounce of her strength to recreate the image she had imaged to be the true face of Jesus. Once the painting was completed, she brought it with her before Our Lady as an offering. After offering the painting, she was inspired to research the gospels and found this verse: "All those who were there and who saw what took place said: 'Truly, this is the Son of God.'" (C)

Celine's painting had such a likeness to the image on the Shroud of Turin and the Carmelites devotion to the Holy Face was great, they wanted to promote the likeness to the faithful. At the same time, devotion to Therese was increasing. To include both, they thought of placing the image of the Holy Face on the front of the card and a devotional prayer from Therese on the back.

Fr. Eugene Prévost, cfs helped the Carmelites in distributing the cards composed in eight different languages. Fr. Eugene had strong ties to the Vatican, he requested an indulgence for the picture and prayer to the Holy Face in February 1906, it was granted by Pope Pius X. A year later, Fr. Eugene gave Pope Pius X a copy of *the Story of a Soul* and as he opened it, he found the picture of the Holy Face and he was delighted in seeing it incorporated into the 1906 edition of *the Story of a Soul*. Pope Pius X gave Celine a remembrance and sent her a bronze medal with his picture on it.

As devotion to the Holy Face spread to millions, it was suggested that the image painted by Celine should be entered into an art competition. And so the masterpiece was entered into the International Exposition of Religious Art at Bois-le-Duc in the Netherlands in 1909. The painting was awarded the grand prize. Celine states: "I am not surprised at having succeeded with the sorrowful Face of my Jesus. I know it is said that only a pure soul could have the gift for reproducing so beautiful a Countenance; but I still say that, in order to understand such wounds, a soul would have had to bear its imprints." (C)

Celine found her devotion in the Passion of Christ. As she stated: "God had seduced me". (C) She painted 2 more paintings of the Passion of Christ. The first one was Our Lord being tied to the pillar and the second one was of his crucifixion. Her zeal and fervor increased to composing a special prayer said in the Breviary (Divine Office) and a Mass in honor of the Holy Face. She was faithful in her devotion.

As her continued devotion increased to the Holy Face and the Passion of Christ, the prioress, Pauline, gave her consent on November 14, 1916 to changing Celine's religious name to Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face and of Saint Teresa. Her feast day would be on the day celebrated on the Transfiguration of Christ- (The Transfiguration of Christ is the culminating point of His public life, as His Baptism is its starting point, and His Ascension its end)(NA)



Each year the Carmelite monastery would hold a community procession, Celine, with her passion for the Holy Face, bore the banner of the image of the Holy Face as the procession proceeded. Having had the banner of the image of the Holy Face she states: “The face of God, how could I not present myself with the assurance before that Face of God? Yes, since the Face of my Jesus is God made visible to me under the appearance of flesh, ‘the bow of the mighty is broken, and the feeble have girded themselves with strength.’”(1Sam 2:4)

Celine delved into the life of Jesus wholeheartedly. She wanted to know everything there was to know about Him. She studied everything that was in her possession and at her disposal. She reference and cross reference the places in the Bible where there were major events that occurred in his life. Celine made every effort to take her knowledge that she had gained and educate the community through a series of slides of the scenes that Jesus encountered in his life. She went so far as to outline routes Jesus took prior to his crucifixion. She outlined in detail the events during Holy Week. Many of her sisters were impressed by her knowledge.

As a gift to Pauline for her feast day, Celine arranged “a little chest in which she had collected a sample of the twelve stones that, in the Apocalypse, form the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem.” (C)

Celine sought out to study many different Bibles that had been produced by a variety of authors. Their translation of the Bible held a variety of differences among each of them and she found that they were usually based upon their own perception of who they thought God was.

The Little theological Summa of St. Thomas was given to Celine in June 1917. She read through the entire book and made annotation of quotes describing Jesus. She analyzed her own thoughts and words which she had written down previously and compared them to the book. After close analysis of both interpretations, she found that they were similar in thought. In all of her readings, she still held true to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. As she states: “I do not believe and do not wish to believe anything except what holy Mother Church believes and teaches.” (C)

Celine studied large volumes of books on Christ. Previously, when she had a theological question or did not understand a verse she would seek out and consult with Therese first. But after Therese’s death, she used prayer and meditation as a means of understanding passages for which she did not understand. Her drive for knowledge on Jesus was a need for her to have a closer union with Him. He was her life. As she describes: “Each morning when I go to prayer, I can see the dawn rising and I am thrilled with hope, because I know just as surely as the horizon is tinged with color before me that Jesus, asleep during the night of this life, will also rise and his glory will shine on me. It will no longer be the “pale morning star”, brilliant but fleeting, that I will greet in passing. No, Jesus, whom I have loved so much, my God whom I have found in his Sacred Humility, he, my Sun, will no longer set. He will be my eternal light and my glory...and all this will happen soon.” (C)

Celine's devotion to Our Lady was just as great. Our Lady is not unapproachable, as a figure just to admire, but she is someone that we can imitate, easily speak to and of course, lay all of our burdens onto. Celine was a child of Mary, for her, all of the honor bestowed upon us was ours. "To the existence of the Mother of God: work, prayer, rest, study of the Scripture, with no blazing lights or marvels of any kind. That is what makes her close to us and capable of sympathizing with our ills." (C)

The process for the canonization had begun for Celine's sister Therese. There were many different views about this subject from dismay to indifference to acceptance. Either way, the beginning stages of the canonization process had a life of its own. Therese was viewed by many in the Vatican as just an "ordinary religious" and at that time, many of the people who were previously canonized as saints performed heroic acts in the name of Jesus. But Therese was special in that she captured the hearts and minds of the ordinary person. It was the public who insisted that her message be heard.

When an investigation into the life of Therese during the diocesan process began in 1910, Marie, Pauline, Leonie and Celine were asked to write a deposition about their sister. Each one of them was asked not to share their version of events in their sister's life with each other. When it was time for Celine to give her accounts of her sister's life, she continually instituted the phrase "The Little Way". When she spoke of "The Little Way" while she was being questioned it brought chills among the listeners, especially the Promoter of the Faith. Later, the Promoter of the Faith approached her and asked her not to say those words. He was fearful that Therese's cause would be ended abruptly. But Celine was defiant and insistent upon including this phrase. As she remarked: "If it is defeated, it is defeated; but since I have sworn to tell the truth, I must give witness to what I have seen and heard, no matter what happens!" (C)

But Therese was different, in that she "practiced only simple and hidden virtues". There was no comparison; she broke the mold of what a saint could be. As Celine stated: "I would not let my sister be placed in the circle where custom aligned the other saints, that she had practiced simple and hidden virtues, and that it would be necessary to get used to it..." (C) Despite the objections by the clergy, the process continued and as history has proven, "The Little Way" has withstood the test of time.

At this same time on September 6, 1910, Therese's first exhumation was conducted at the Lisieux cemetery. The ceremony consisted of placing the remains of Therese and her old coffin into a better coffin and officially recognizing her remains by both clergy and doctors.

Celine had always longed to be with Jesus and her sister Therese in Heaven. In 1911, she developed an attack of pneumonia in both of her lungs; her sisters had thought that she would not make it because her illness was so severe. But Celine proved them all wrong and her health improved dramatically.

In 1915, the Superior of the Carmelite Order, waived the “Rule” where there was to be only 2 biological sisters in the chapter of the same monastery. Celine became exempt from this rule and was finally able to take a position within the chapter.

On April 9, 1915, the progression of the canonization process of Therese had reached to the Apostolic Process where the Holy See was to conduct an examination of Celine’s sister virtues. It was decided that this examination would take place at the Carmelite monastery in Lisieux. Celine’s sister Leonie was asked to come to Lisieux to testify on the virtues of her sister. It was a great joy, knowing that the sister, Celine, Marie and Pauline haven’t seen in several years and thought that they would never see again in the flesh was coming to their Carmel. Leonie was accompanied by Mother Superior Jeanne-Marguerite. Once Leonie arrived, it was as if time had never passed. It was as if they were back at Les Buissonnets. The presence of the entire family both living and dead was felt by all of them. It was a moment in time they all would remember the rest of their lives and it would be the last time all of them would be together until they were all reunited in Heaven.

To complete the examination process, an exhumation of the remains of Therese was conducted. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1917, a procession led by Bishop Lemonnier went to the Carmelite cemetery and unearthed the casket and brought it to the Cemetery chapel. There the casket remained enclosed until the next day. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, Celine was given permission as well as one of her Carmelite sisters, Sister Madeleine of Jesus, to leave the monastery and assist in the examination of the remains. Celine was driven to the cemetery in the early hours of the morning and witnessed the removal of all of the remains of Therese out of the coffin. The only thing that remained unchanged from the first exhumation in 1910 was the silk ribbon banner and roses that was placed in the coffin reading: “I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth. After my death, I will let fall a shower of roses.” Celine assisted in wrapping the remains of her sister in white linen and tying them with silk ribbons.

On August 14, 1921, Pope Benedict XV addressed in his papal message to the faithful about “the little way of Spiritual Childhood” and Thérèse’s virtues, for Celine it was a “victory” for all the hard work she and her sisters had done for her sister Therese. As Celine stated: “I have never experienced such a great and deep joy as I did... The beatification and canonization themselves did not bring me as intense a happiness.” (C)

On November 25, Celine wrote: “Finding myself in the garden, in the hermitage of the Holy Face, I saw once again the humiliations that have been our lot and that of our dear father; relatives distancing themselves from us, apologizing for being part of our family; friends and acquaintances who said among themselves: “what good was his piety?” He bore the weight of his own sacrifices; and the godless sneer, because of him, at the lamentable end of the just.” It seemed to me that then God had said to his angels: “Write” and I saw one of them mark something down on the “Debit” side of the ledger. Since then, many years have passed. Would the All-Powerful delay the day of reckoning? At that moment, I raised my eyes, and I noticed on the cross of Carmel’s dome the little

glittering star...All the celebrations of our Therese's canonization were summarized there, and I heard in my heart these words pronounced with indescribable fatherly tenderness: "Are you happy?" Then a wave of gratitude swept over me completely, and, with tears in my eyes, I could say over and over again with love: "O my God!" (C)

With the influx of interest in St. Therese after her canonization, Celine worked continuously hard on spreading her sister's message. Her duties evolved into fully dedicating herself to her sister's cause, thus having herself replaced from the daily responsibilities of the monastery so that she could spend more time promoting her sister.

Celine co-authored with her sister Pauline, the book "Little Catechism of the Act of Oblation". Both of them simplified Therese's message so that everything could be included and understood especially by those that faced learning disabilities. After that book was completed, another book was written called the "Little Way" encouraging followers of the Theresian message to imitate her sister. Pauline composed the writings and Celine took on the design aspect of the book. A third book was put together called "Life in imagery", which was a collection of photographs that depicted the life of St. Therese.

Celine then took on the task of cataloging everything that was about Therese from her life as a child through the canonization process. Everything was organized based upon Therese's love for God. The information she had gathered and organized culminated into a book called "The Spirit of Blessed Therese of the Child Jesus" expressing Therese's love for God. In all of the work that Celine had accomplished there never was a sense of completeness for her, she continuously had the drive to continue to pursue more ways of promoting her sister's way which for many others was a daunting task.

Celine worked increasing hard on obtaining the houses once occupied by the Martin family for the sake of pilgrims as well as having them organized in the way that reflected the way Therese lived her life. From the house they resided in Alencon to daunting task of the Basilica. Every detail was examined and contemplated on before it was instituted.

By 1929, the foundation stone was laid for the start of the Basilica. It was a task closely monitored by Celine where she aided in the design aspects.

Painting was a great passion for Celine, not only in her work for St. Therese but also as a means of expression. Her eyesight was depleting as she got older which made it more difficult for her to paint. There were however, critics which detested her work and made it known but there were many religious and lay people which rose to her defense as Fr. Francis of Holy Mary stated: "Therese nevertheless used these pictures to make her presence felt throughout the entire world, for the remote huts in the bush country to the tents of the nomads...exercise their her gracious influence. Because of this, Celine's portraits merit our respect." (C)

Also in 1929, she was given the position in the community council for which she kept until her death. Celine's role consisted of advising and overseeing of the publications of

works distributed through the Central Office of Lisieux and also direct correspondence with people from around the world. The most difficult obstacle for her to face wasn't the vast number of letters that were written by followers of St. Therese but the constant visits that were received into the monastery. As Celine described it: "To be treated like some strange animal" was the most difficult and gave her the feelings of wanting to rebel against it. (C) She didn't want to be seen as a "great attraction".

For Celine, it was the "little way" that gave her her serenity. As she wrote to Pauline: "I don't know how to show my gratitude to God for putting us, like Jesus through humiliation. I feel I will bless him for it throughout eternity. Down here, I thank him for it with a joyful soul. I believe there are no graces greater than that. Ecstasies and Miracles seem trite compared to that. Besides, I thrill with happiness to recall all that has happened in my life that made me fall, all that contributed to humbling me, even my faults, since they could not disfigure what is used for loving more." (C)

On October 9, 1935, Celine described in her writing her union with Our Lady: "Yesterday evening, during the time of silence, I felt ineffably united to my heavenly Mother; I experienced an indefinable feeling I dare not express. It seemed to me that the Blessed Mother was here with us, that she was my sister, my friend; there was a familiarity between us, a kind of equality like that of a family. Oh! How pleasant that was! This morning, during Mass, I was still thinking about it, and it was sweet for me to make the comparison between that grace and the Feast of the Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin we celebrate today. This the third time in my life that my heavenly Mother has visited me at first Vespers of this very consoling solemnity." (C)

On July 11, 1937, Pope Pius XI sent Cardinal Pacelli to Lisieux for the solemn blessing of the Basilica. The next day, he went to visit Marie, Pauline and Celine at the Carmel. There he had a conversation with Celine, where he echoed the words about St. Therese's mission: "spiritual childhood and the little way". It was a blessing to hear those words which Celine had echoed from the start. She asked him to pose for a picture and he graciously did. When the opportunity came, Celine had a presentiment that he would be the next pope. He responded to her by saying: "Ask rather that I will have the grace of a happy death. That's more precious to me. May the good God be merciful and kind to me at the supreme moment." (C) After the death of Pope Pius XI, it was announced that Cardinal Pacelli was the next pope, Pope Pius XII. When she heard who it was, it was with great satisfaction that she played the role of the prophet.

In December of 1939, Marie's lungs had filled with fluid. It was a great indication that she was gravely ill. The doctors were summoned at her bedside and their final verdict was that she was not going to make it much longer. Pauline and Céline spent several hours a day at her bedside while she suffered. They informed Léonie of the daily events occurring around their beloved sister.

During recreation, Celine spent her time with her sister Marie in the infirmary. It was very hard for Marie to be confined to bed because of her independent spirit. On one of the days Celine spent with her sister, Celine spoke about their parents Louis and Zélie heroic

courage and supported their courage using Maccabees: “Oh! Do not sully our glory; do not allow it to be tarnished! The “dear Godmother” filled with emotion, said to her devoted attendant: ‘Did you hear her! How eloquent she was! What a beautiful soul she has! Little Therese saw the truth of her, even through all her faults.’ And Fr. Pichon often said to me, “Your Celine is a vessel of election!”(C)

Marie had managed to make it to the month of January. On January 19, 1940 her last audible words in front of her sisters were, “I love thee” as she kissed her crucifix. As she was praying the rosary and gazed her eyes on the statue of “Our Lady of the Smile”, she breathed her last breath, the time had come for her soul to ascend to Heaven. Later that same day, Celine experienced the scent of roses, when there was no explanation to be seen for the aroma of what smelled like roses, she “understood how the death of saints is precious in the sight of God.” (C)

On January 23, 1940, a Mass was said in the Carmelite chapel and witnessed by many worshippers including two lay sisters that were sent by the Visitation monastery in Caen representing Léonie on her behalf. Marie’s body was then brought down to a vault located underneath the chapel where her body rests today.

Celine confided in Pauline through a note on April 19<sup>th</sup>. “I am drawing up for myself a little balance sheet called a precision balance, which is used in medicine to weigh milligrams, because it is perfectly true that I am sensitive to the least milligram and that even one milligram makes me stumble. But I know very well that it will always be like that. I still feel that I will always be like quicksilver, doing things before I think them through. It is very unfortunate to have so little equilibrium and level-headedness because of a host of imperfections is the consequence. But I think God likes to cope with difficulties and that he is not embarrassed to make a passage for himself in the midst of a muddy abyss. (C)

As the events were reshaping Europe with Nazi Germany invading surrounding countries, it would not be long before Nazi Germany would amass its grip on France. As news of each country’s downfall, Celine removed herself from this world more and more and looked forward to Heaven.

It was not long after her beloved sister Marie died; France was invaded by Nazi Germany. It was a fear cast down by many Frenchmen and a fear that would soon be realized on May 10, 1940. A German dictator by the name of Adolph Hitler decided to invade France. The French army thought that the Germans would attack them on the French and German border, where they had a strong line of defense. However, the Germans decided to attack France through Belgium instead. The French army made an enormous effort to stop the German army from penetrating the front lines. However, they were no match to the German arsenal of weapons. On June 22, 1940 the French and German governments signed an Armistice agreement that called for two different zones. One zone occupied by the Germans and the other zone occupied by the French. Unfortunately, Caen and Lisieux were both positioned in the German occupied zone. The Germans setup outposts in most of the major cities in France, Caen and Lisieux being no

exception. It was heartbreaking for Celine to see foreign occupiers, occupy the country she loved so much.

On the last day of May 1940, Celine spoke to Pauline about all the work they had accomplished on their sister Therese, she said: “Humanly speaking, all seems lost, and we have every right to ask ourselves what is going to become of us and the relics of which we are the guardians. As far as we are concerned, it matters little because it would be a great good to cross over to the eternal shore towards which all our thoughts tend. But our treasures, I mean those precious relics of Therese? For a long time, I was preoccupied about that, and I suffered great anguish on their account. But now, I am no longer preoccupied...The time has come when our little Therese is loved in spirit and in truth. So there is no real need for our senses to touch and see.” (C)

France, for Celine, was very dear to her heart, just as it was to her father Louis. In trying to rationalize the invasion of France by Nazi Germany, Celine wrote: “I think that if God chastise us, it is because we are dear to him...France is very guilty and, consequently, very ill. It is a mercy that God has decided to allow her to continue...I beg him to extend his arms in order to save us, not because of our merits, but because of his goodness. I say that because I am shocked when I hear the virtues of France being praised excessively, as if, because of them, God were indebted to us. I would prefer to see the just, with all their justice, follow the counsel of our Lord by admitting they are “unprofitable servants” and humbly taking his hand. (C)

While France was being occupied, the pilgrimages almost came to a halt. It was one of the darkest years that were spent while the Germans laid their claim on Lisieux. But to reverse the negative effect on the occupation, Celine placed all of her efforts on a new book called, “The Story of a Family”. In this book, she went back and researched the archives and pieced together the details of the life of her family. Previously, there were many rumors and misinterpretations in regards to the many details of her family’s life. What was most heartening was the gossip surrounding her father’s ailments. There were many clarifications that needed to be addressed from previous years of misinformation and this was the book that cleared many of those rumors.

No sooner than the death of Marie did Leonie’s health start to deteriorate. She was once again stricken with an illness that was becoming fatal. Her illness removed her from all of the duties that she was responsible for in the monastery. No longer was she going to chant in the choir. Celine’s sister Pauline added in a letter to Leonie: “As long as your heart chants unceasingly the praises of the good God, all is well.” (GV)

Leonie was given the opportunity to be buried at the Carmelite monastery along beside her sisters Marie and Therese, but for fear that her beloved Visitation monastery would be lost after her death, she chose to be buried at the Visitation. Both Pauline and Celine reassured Leonie that their communication would not stop after her death.

The Mother Superior of the Visitation monastery in June of 1941 notified Celine and Pauline that their beloved sister was in her final days. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, Leonie had a stroke and was found on the floor unconscious. The doctor came and examined her and there wasn't any good news concerning her condition. The Mother Superior then notified the Carmel of Leonie's condition and Pauline sent 2 lay sisters that afternoon to represent both Celine and herself. Celine and Pauline wrote beautiful messages to their sister along with bouquet of flowers that they picked to give to her. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, hours leading up to her death, Leonie's struggle was at its most difficult for her and soon thereafter, she made her final surrender to God, her soul after so many years of sacrifices, ascended to Heaven. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, two lay sisters represented both Celine and Pauline at the funeral. Despite the occupation, many townspeople turned out for her funeral to pay their respects.

The spring of 1944 had advanced and the D-Day invasion began. In the allies attempt to liberate France, the bombs would begin to rain on Lisieux. The start of the bombing missions by the Allied forces began on June 6, following subsequent days afterwards. Several hundred 500 lb bombs were dropped over Lisieux and the surrounding areas. As the reign of terror began over the fight for Lisieux, the Carmel was in the middle of it. It was Pauline's wish for her and her sisters to stay at the Carmel, but as the surrounding buildings were set ablaze, Pauline, Celine and their sisters had no choice but to leave Carmel and take cover in the crypt of the Basilica of St. Therese of Lisieux on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June.

Both Pauline and Celine and their sisters fled the Carmel. One of her sisters escorted her up the hill to the Basilica. Celine was at peace with the journey as if she was being guided up the hill by her deceased family members. As she stated: "Since I cannot do anything about it, I am not going to worry over it. If our whole monastery disappeared, its spirit would still remain." (C) She detached herself from all of the hysteria that was taking place around her and focusing on God and God alone.

When they reached the Basilica, the Carmelite sisters took up the place in the side chapel where a statue of Our Lady of Smile was. They rested on the pews and hurriedly ate while the fighting was going on outside. There were several townspeople who also took refuge in the crypt as well.

Since, the two remaining Martin sisters were the last ones that were still alive, many of the townspeople who have also taken shelter took turns making their way to greet them. One of the townspeople that spoke to them told Celine that it was impossible for the Carmel to survive the firestorm of bombs that were being dropped on Lisieux. Celine responded by saying: "That is no longer up to us; let us abandon ourselves to the Lord for everything he will permit. He has always had pity on us. We can have complete confidence in him" (C)

Living in a cloister and then being forced out into the world again brought about its challenges for Celine. The modest clothing that was once the custom was no longer there. There wasn't any dignity in dress anymore. But what was even worst for Celine to bear was the constant agitation from people that surrounded her. She felt like she had



before like an “attraction at a fair” and she called upon God to help her overcome it. Out of prayer, peace overcame her and she embraced it and humbly made herself available to anyone who sought out her attention. As she stated: “it is for this hour that I have come here. Yes, I am certain that this trial was necessary for me at the end of my life.” (C)

If it wasn't the visits that preoccupied her mind, it was all the work she had accomplished in honor of her sister St. Therese that was also worrisome for her. The fear of losing all of the work she had accomplished for decades would go up in flames. She came to realization that she must abandon it all as she stated: “I feel deeply that it's all nothing, nothing. What does matter is God's intervention; only his grace counts and it does not need writing to penetrate and enlighten a soul. A little self sacrifice practiced unobtrusively will open up the wellspring of it.” (C)

As the British advanced on Lisieux, the church bells began to ring, signaling to the Germans in a defiant manner that their reign of terror was soon ending. With days enfolded with heavy fighting, Lisieux finally fell to the Allies, finally Lisieux was free. Out of all the mayhem that had erupted for months, there was a silver lining out of it. Pauline and Celine took the opportunity that they would not ever have of visiting the places that was a part of their family for years. They visited the graves of their beloved family as well as Les Buissonnets. It was a blessing for them.

On August 27<sup>th</sup>, it was time for the Carmelites to return back to their monastery. In a procession from the Basilica of St. Therese to the Carmel, Celine and Pauline along with the devotees of St. Therese traveled along the road of a destroyed city to their final destination.

It was now time to resume what was interrupted in the past months. Celine, again, took on the tasks of writing and also painting. She painted more portraits of St. Therese and painted three medallions that would be on the chasubles used by the priests for the jubilee of her profession. In all of the work she accomplished it was not without researching her subject first. Most often, even in the latter part of her life, she continued to comb through archival records and still maintained the willingness to learn new things in books she read. As she was quoted as saying once: “I have always weighed and dissected the propositions set before me; I wanted proof of what had been put forward, and I was ill at ease as long as the question was not fully resolved.” (C) She owes a lot of her researching techniques from learning from her uncle Isidore.

On October 8, 1944, Celine wrote to a confidante: “If I consider where I am, I notice that I have not gone forward but backwards...And there, I enjoy an astonishing peace even though it is in darkness. I take as my own this passage from a prayer to St. Thomas Aquinas: ‘...At the distance intervals, Lord, you draw me out of my lethargy, but alas! They are only passing visits. I do not know if you love me, or if I love you...I do not even know if I live by faith! I find only infidelity in myself, only random beginnings, only fruitless sacrifices...and yet, I long for you!’”(C)

Celine reflected heavily on Psalm 63 and meditated on the words: ‘O God, my God! For you I long, for you my soul is thirsting. My body pines for you like a dry weary land without water. So I gaze on you in the sanctuary in order to contemplate your strength and your glory; for your mercy is better than life.’(C)

Celine, in her writings, describes herself as the “Queen of Imperfect”. “My kingdom is extremely vast, and I have myriads of subjects but, whatever they do, they cannot surpass their queen in this... The fox will never change.”(C) Imperfection! She also meditated on her sister Therese’s words: “It is enough to humble oneself, to bear one’s imperfections with gentleness. That is true sanctity for us.”(C)

On the anniversary of Celine’s 50<sup>th</sup> year of profession, the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1946, there was a Mass conducted in her honor. The Bishop of Bayeux, Msgr. Picaud, gave the sermon and an envoy that came from the Vatican, Msgr. Roncalli, the Apostolic Nuncio, read her a message from the Pope. After the Mass was conducted, Celine led the group around the convent where many of the events of St. Therese’s life occurred. Afterwards, they celebrated over lunch where Celine was toasted by many of the dignitaries. She was given a watercolor by Pope Pius XII. It was three pictures of Celine at different points in her life. It was a joyous day spent by all.

In 1949, Celine reflected on her soul: “I look upon my soul as a fortified castle that was extraordinarily coveted by the enemy. I was the object of endless dangerous attacks, perilous assaults, and extreme wars. Certainly, I have suffered much, but my Jesus, my divine Cavalier, faithful to his Lady, has fought for me, and he has won.

The virtue that Celine valued most was humility. She prayed endlessly to receive this gift from God. As she said: “I desire only one thing, and that is that God may have pity on me; and one can be pitied only when one is in a pitiful state.” (C) Several times over when there were opportunities for her to hold important positions in the monastery she was always overlooked. These were all lessons in humility. As Celine stated: “If our mother does not think of me, she was content to say, it is because I have faults that I don’t realize. I must submit without understanding.”(C)

Celine remained hidden in the shadows of the monastery which is contrary to her usual outspokenness. There were many people from outside the monastery that thought that she was suffering from a mental illness and quite possibly was sent to an asylum. The rumors became so widespread that the postulator of the cause for Therese went to speak to her about it. He encouraged her to step forward when important people were allowed into the monastery. It was a trial for her to be a “carnival attraction” and she endured it more often than most. When opportunities arose, Celine stepped forward conversing with important people and to their amazement she dispelled the rumors once and for all. After one of the officials witnessing for himself that the rumors that were cast down were not true, he stated: “I must be the one who is crazy.” (C) Referring to the rumors that were circulating from other people about her prior to him entering the monastery.

There were many books written about St. Therese by writers in the late 1940s and early 1950s which drifted away from her message. The life of the saint and her Theresian message became distorted from what she wanted to communicate to the devotees of St. Therese: "Spiritual Childhood". The images were derogatory about the saint and to combat this effort by certain authors Pauline and Celine faced this trial head on.

Due to the frailty of Pauline's health, she was permanently moved into the infirmary and thus catapulting Celine into taking the lead in defending her sister Therese. On February 2, 1950, Celine completed a brief outlining all of the misinformation that had already circulated among the devotees by other authors. In this brief, she clarified every segment of "half-truths" or "lies" which distorted the Theresian message. Not only did Celine sign the brief but wrote in the footnotes: "Pauline has read, approved and adopted this document on February 11, 1950." (C)

Due to the health concerns of Pauline, the Holy See intervened on the issue of releasing the entire contents of "The Story of a Soul" until after her death. But Pauline already knowing what derogatory statements was made about the Carmel and St. Therese concerning the autobiography, she said to Celine: "After my death, I commission you to do it in my name." (C) After the death of Pauline, this was finally accomplished in a later addition.

The relationship between Pauline and Celine was very close. After the deaths of their sisters Marie and Leonie, World War II, and the onslaught of the defamation of their sister Therese and themselves, they only had each other. As Pauline stated: "I love my Celine more than anything else on earth and what would become of me if I did not have you"(C)

As the health of Pauline declined in 1951, Celine spent most of her time with her sister. One month before Pauline's death, Celine described her in her last days: "She is as sweet and serene as possible, totally abandoned to God." (C) It was for Celine a trial to see her beloved sister in such a poor state, Pauline, who always took the lead and bore the responsibilities of the community, was now dependent upon other people to help her do everything.

By mid-July, Pauline's health had deteriorated to the extent that it would be only days before her departure to Heaven. A priest was called to give her her last confession and the Last Rites. On July 28, 1951, Pauline's soul ascended to Heaven with Celine and her community at her side. A funeral Mass was conducted on August 1<sup>st</sup>, where dignitaries and followers of St. Therese were in attendance.

The companionship between the two sisters was felt most deeply by Celine. As she described: "If I am stung with grief at the thought of my 'Little Mother', I also have waves of joy in knowing that my whole family came out of the "great tribulation" victorious." (C) I am thankful to be the last surviving member of my family. Celine also stated: "I am always talking to my 'Little Mother'; we too old women were fused

together in these last years.” (C) Celine retrieved a photograph of her sister and placed it in her cell as a gentle reminder that she was always with her.

After the death of Pauline, there was nothing left for Celine but the union she had with Jesus. She offered all of her faults and weaknesses to Him. If her immediate thoughts were for her to rest before her departure to Heaven, she would be very wrong.

Even though Celine reached a mature age and faced many afflictions such as rheumatism, sciatica, gout and the partial loss of her eyesight, she still persisted onwards. But in the winter of 1953, she was struck with influenza. At this time, it was thought of by Celine that this illness would be the one to ascend her soul to Heaven. She was preparing herself for her departure but as God would have it, she survived but not without any regrets. As Celine stated: “I am in an abyss of misery...Am I going to pull myself out of it? Surely, Oh! How hard it is always to miss the train...Nothing can go more slowly than the state I’m in now. I keep asking God not to let me lack confidence. My soul is struggling in the lower depths...I am always losing; when will I win?” (C)

Despite all of the physical ailments that came across her path, Celine continued to promote her sister’s way of “spiritual childhood”. She spent countless hours interpreting and defining the meaning of the Act of Oblation to Merciful Love. She battled many of the authors in her own writings who wrote books which either “watered down” or “misguided” devotees from the purity of the message. Her character never pondered on or procrastinated on issues that regarded her sister, she was swift to respond without making any compromises.

Celine set out again to write another book called “Conseils et souvenirs”. In this book, her goal was to help those souls that struggle day to day with all of their imperfections. She used herself as an example to encourage those that sought to follow the “little way of spiritual childhood” can be accomplished. As Celine stated: “Our Therese had to reach a high level of perfection quickly; and she led us, me above all, her Celine, by the path she followed...God allowed her apparent strictness not to discourage me but to incite me to perfection. It was in his designs that my virtues and graces would be ‘slow’ in coming. With Therese, the ‘bomb’ of graces exploded on the spot!” (C)

There was a large interest in the lives of Louis and Zélie Martin. Many devotees saw the parents as ‘saintly’. With the constant interest in knowing more about the parents of St. Therese, Celine was asked by the prioress in 1953 and 1954 to write 2 different booklets titled: “The Father of St. Therese and also The Mother of St. Therese”. The booklets focused on the Christian lives of her parents Louis and Zélie Martin. She spent countless hours in the long list of notes and correspondence that had accumulated throughout the years of their lives. She also reflected on her own accounts of situations that occurred between them.

As with any subject that interested her or she was assigned to do, characteristic of her nature, she delved into it full force. Instinctively, she focused all of her attention on it and at many times it became frustrating for her when she was interrupted. Instantly, she

would fire back at the person that interrupted her but later after realizing her fault, she would write a little note to that sister and ask for her forgiveness. As Celine reflected on herself: "I always wanted the details of my life to fit together like a puzzle. Anyone who disturbed them was in for trouble! If some unexpected circumstance happened to ruin the scheme and mix up the pieces, I showed my displeasure." (C)

Celine always felt that her patience was a virtue that she could not reach: "I need many prayers to become patient, but I will suffer the want of that virtue my whole life and I will die without ever having enjoyed it; I feel it's hopeless. So, dying as I have lived, without patience, I will not be able to wait at Heaven's gate, and I will go straight on through it." (C) Celine prayed many times that people would see Jesus in her more so than herself.

Poverty as Celine described was a virtue that many religious practiced the least. She was very careful not to destroy anything that could possibly be used by another sister at a later date. She knew that things which were not important to one sister maybe important to another, it was after all a community that they were living in and all things belonged to everyone. One's value on a possession is always different from another. She was after all an archivist, where she catalogued, organized, and retained documentations on her sister Therese and the community. The value in all the things she retained was tenfold especially when discrepancies arose from outside the monastery or from within. Celine did not view this as a spirit of attachment to things but an opportunity to be used by another if need be. She offered no resistance to any of her sisters who needed something from her collection.

Celine practice the virtue of temperance. Her views on individuals and subject matter did not waver at the first signs of a 'big storm'. In a letter written by Celine to her sister Leonie, she described a situation that was occurring with a family member outside of the monastery. In this situation it was scandalized, and of course many people naturally distance themselves from it. Celine wrote: "It seems to me that it is not the time to abandon a soul when everyone else is abandoning him. How I would wish to be a prison chaplain, in order to go as I pleased to lift up fallen souls...I have much more compassion that distaste for withered lilies. Oh! What we ourselves would be if the good God had not preserved us, for we are capable of anything, absolutely anything!" (C)

Celine held steadfast to her Catholic faith. Her virtue of diligence in her devotion to the Roman Catholic Church was unequivocal to none. She followed closely the teachings of the Church and most importantly in all the works she had written that she aligns herself to that belief. She once stated: "She professed never to have wanted anything but the truth and requested that her writings be burned, 'without mercy and with her thanks' if any errors were found in them." (C)

Spiritual childhood was at the center of Celine's life. It was what her sister Therese had expressed to her so often. She understood the concept of spiritual childhood: "Since God is merciful Love, misery attracts him and provokes a sea of graces; it is enough for us to

recognize it, to accept it, to love it, and not to cease to offer to the Lord our ineffective efforts, which he will crown in his own good time, an absolute faith in infinite Love.” (C) Celine expressed her union with God: “He is a Father to me, and I love him unto folly, passionately...My only desire is to know him more and more, to attain to the ultimate limits of this knowledge on earth, and later in Heaven..., and to do that, I feel it is necessary to attain the ultimate limits of humility; which is why I keep begging for it so insistently. That sums up the whole of my poor little soul.” (C)

Celine’s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her profession was celebrated on February 24, 1956. It was an event which she would rather have avoided because of all the fanfare that it entailed. She requested all the gifts that she was to receive to be donated to the Basilica of St. Therese for the renovations that were taking place. On this day, at the Carmelite Chapel as the guest of honor, she witnessed the sermon of Father Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus and the ceremony was presided over by Bishop André Jacquemin. A special guest from the Vatican that was appointed by Pope Pius XII, Cardinal Ottaviani, Pro-Secretary of the Holy Office, delivered a message from the Pope along with giving her an autographed papal blessing. One special blessing that Celine received from Bishop André Jacquemin and Bishop Pasquet was that both of them were going to open the causes of both of her parents, Louis and Zelig Martin.

Celine eulogized on the need of a religious vocation. As she described: “Despite the often very sharp trials that have marked my path, I find, in the end, that our Lord has not failed in his promise and that in leaving all things. I have found not only the hundredfold, but I went farther, to the thousandfold in joy and interior peace.” (C) As Celine explained further, she used Therese and Pauline as examples of those virtues expressing their cheerfulness: “In their greatest difficulties, the peace of heaven inundated their souls and fortified them; true happiness was their lot in life as it is with all fervent souls. And there are a great many of them in our cloister.” (C)

At the beginning of February, Celine contemplated on the need for suffering in her life as she confided in one of her letters: “The other night I understood that it was suffering accepted with love that gave value to my life; physical sufferings like those of martyrdom. Up until now I have suffered in all sorts of ways, in mind and in heart, suffered also from difficult and ponderous work, which Saint Paul enumerates in his list of tribulations. But what crowns life is personal suffering, like that of Job, afflicted in his own body. Saint Paul ended his much tormented life by the martyrdom of blood. Our Lord has said: ‘Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?’ Suffering in itself has no value; one has only to look at the demons and those damned. But accepted with loving abandonment to God, it is a divine seal put upon our life...It seemed to me that I saw it clearly, and I thanked God effusively for allowing me to pass through this crucible.” (C)

On February 27, 1956, once again, Celine suffered from a high fever, coughing, muscle pains, fatigue and discomfort brought about by her bout with influenza. Maybe this time it will be the one to ascend her soul to Heaven unlike her last bout with influenza. But God had other plans for her and He wasn’t going to take her just yet. Her attitude this

time was very peaceful. She embraced the suffering up until August of the same year. As she stated: "I would never have wanted to ask Him (God) for suffering, but now I thank Him." (C) Celine spoke about death: "Truthfully, I fear nothing about it, and I am quite abandoned to it without being conscious of it."(C)

Celine prepared herself once again for the interrogations of the virtues of her parents. She researched all of the letters and information about her parents to prepare for the process. She believed that they were the 'ideal role models' for the family.

The cause was formally introduced in 1957. As a part of the process, Celine was asked to give a deposition of the life of her parents, being that she was the last surviving member of the family. As with everything that Celine did, she researched for hours all of the documents concerning her parents for her deposition. There were two different diocesan proceedings in the same year. The first one was for the cause of Celine's father Louis Martin. Due to the fact that she was cloistered, the proceedings were held in the parlor. This cross-examination lasted for 3 months early in the year. The next proceedings occurred at the end of that same year for two months for Celine's mother, Zelig Martin. At 88 years old, Celine persevered through the entire process and was at peace with the numerous questions that were imposed upon her.

In three separate months of the year of 1958, February, August, September, Celine continued to assist in the process of her parents and finally in her last deposition that was made on September 6, "she approved her mother's writings for printing." (C)

On October 13, 1958, Louis and Zelig Martin's remains were unearthed at the Lisieux cemetery. After they were unearthed, both of them were examined by three doctors. The only objects that remained intact outside of the bones were the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and their metal crucifix. After the examination by the doctors, their remains were placed in new coffins and then reburied behind the Apse of the Basilica of St. Therese until 2008.

The coffins that were used for her parents until 1958 were painstakingly cleared out. The bones were already buried in a new coffin and Celine along with another Carmelite nun worked unceasingly to clear out the old coffin of the remaining remnants left behind, this lasted for two months. Celine prepared each relic piece, sealed and placed it into boxes. She and her Carmelite sister worked endlessly until it was completed on December 12th.

After focusing all of her efforts on completing all her tasks concerning her parents, her health notably started to take a downward turn. On the last day that she finished her work on the remnants her parents coffins, she stated: "I have finished all that I had to do; now, the good God can take me." (C) Many of the changes that were presently occurring which were different from traditional standards that she had fought and defended throughout the years she now had gained her peace over it. As Celine stated: "I thank God for allowing me to be lovingly detached from it." (C)

Celine found a stanza in a book written by Msgr. Baunard called “Le Vieillard. In the stanza it as she put it describes herself: “I am nearing a hundred, my day draws to a close; It is more than evening, it is almost night. But, in front of me, rises in the east the dawn of a more beautiful day. Welcome, welcome! It is the white light of your face, O Christ, which in my sad heart awakens a great hope; Come down, heavenly ray, appear, my Brother Jesus, it is time for us to see each other. (C)

The Benedictine Abbey that Leonie, Celine and Therese attended in Lisieux was completely destroyed by the World War II air raids. After World War II ended, the rebuilding campaign for the Benedictine Abbey, Celine was a sponsor of one of the clocks for the Abbey. The new clocks were installed and blessed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, thus signaling to Celine that the end was near.

Earlier in her life, Celine had written to her sister Leonie about death, she stated to her sister: “During my thanksgiving, I thought of death, as I usually do and I said to myself that it was the greatest and most meritorious action of my life, an action I would perform only once. Then, I experienced an immense desire to accomplish this action as perfectly as possible, and I told myself that it would not be enough to die of love in an act of perfect love, but that I wanted it to be such a love that it breaks my bonds. I then felt certain that I would be heard. God cannot give such desires if he does not want to fulfill them. Truly, I feel totally unworthy of that grace, and my miserable life, which has been wholly external, entirely made up of earthy encumbrances, does poverty that this grace seems easier for me to obtain. I will present myself before God, not with empty hands, but with the paraphernalia of all my misdeeds. I am summoning all of my imperfections to my judgment. It is no longer necessary to speak of good actions. I have given them to God as I went along, and he has distributed them to souls...So I will arrive in the procession of all my wretchedness, and God will be so sweet to me that, not being able to stand the sight of such goodness, the bond that was still holding me here on earth will be broken.”(C)

Celine, still facing torturous nights from physical pain, and long work days added this by saying: “together with a thousand little miseries of old age, is a burden I do not often take up with a smile, but rather with a sigh. I would not want God to hear it. And yet, I look upon all my imperfections as treasures, and I summon them to appear at my judgment, for all my faults are my strength. I regret them and am sincerely humiliated by them, I think that they will draw God’s pity down upon me; and when he has pity, he also has mercy.” (C)

Due to Celine’s grave illness, she left her cell for the very last time. A room which she known for decades. She was brought to the infirmary where she would spend her last days here on earth. A place she was as familiar with as having been an infirmarian herself and the witness of many of her Carmelite sisters as well as her biological sisters’ deaths. A doctor was sent to the Carmelite monastery to give his diagnosis and it was not good. The heart muscle was functioning inadequately and the rate of her heart beats was irregular. She was on the cusp of having a major heart attack along with the complication of congested lungs. The diagnosis by the doctor brought joy to Celine; soon she would



be reunited with her Lord. Since there were repairs being made where they kept the statue of Our Lady of the Smile in the chapel, the prioress decided to bring the statue into the room where Celine was being kept. Seeing the statue brought back a lot of memories for her especially with members of her family. It was as if Our Lady herself had appeared in the flesh to pay her a visit. Later that evening, priest came to give her the Last Rites and hear her final confession.

When asked where Celine gained all of her confidences, she replied “Ah! I know well what it is; it will be on my miseries, on my defects, on my faults themselves. It will be in procession with them that I present to God, full of assurance, because then his pity will be my portion. He will save me, not because of my good works, but because of his goodness.” (C)

Retracing her journey, Celine saw where Therese opened her mind to other things. As impatient as Celine was in her youth, she gave her one hundred percent into everything that she was doing. Celine wanted to accomplish all the virtues that God had to offer her and accomplish them at that moment quickly. But Celine would learn as she journeyed through life that it was not going to be that easy. As she described it in a poem: “Yes, often, very often, falling on the way, I left a little of my wool in the bushes, and from humility, in the evening of the day I learned my lessons. Lessons without bitterness and full of hope, for if I am little, oh! How great Jesus is! I am weak; he is strong, and his super abundance makes up for my nothingness...I want you to be everything, everything to me for I love you...you are my ideal.” (C)

Celine, knowing well enough that this episode could be its last for her, she wrote: “If our Mother does not want to do a circular of me, she may say that I requested it. It would make it easier for her. If, on the other hand, she intends to do one, may it be only in order to speak of my beloved Therese. May she know it pleases me to have my faults made known in order to throw light on the incomparable virtues of my little sister. Just as, in a picture, shadows heighten its brightness, I consider myself blessed to serve in that same capacity for the glory of God and my Therese. (C)

When speaking about death, Celine felt the presence in her heart of her sister Therese: “I have a peaceful feeling that my hope will be fulfilled, that I have nothing to fear here below because I will always have the strength not to have the strength, and that to know this was the feast day gift from Heaven to the little exiled Celine.” (C)

When Celine reviewed the accounts of her life she exclaimed: “My long life is drawing to a close in a pile of zeros. It is true that I have labored much, worked, suffered; but what are these works in themselves in a creature so imperfect as I am? Rubble! It is fortunate, indeed, if my zeros are not too often blotched with ink spots! But that quite corresponds to my desire to have only a page of zeros to offer to God. For I prefer that there be nothing to reward or to praise in me. I want to be clothed solely with the works of Jesus and for my heavenly Father to judge me and love me according to them.”(C)

“The one who loses wins” was the motto that Celine lived by. She endured numerous accounts of humiliations and seeing her soul continuously stumble downward she relied on one thing ‘Love’. It is love that will be the gift which will purify any of my impurities on this earth. It will be an “authentic sanctity which will spring up from these ruins; the sanctity of Christ, who is ‘the only Saint’.” (C)

There have been false rumors for decades that Celine was continuously inundated by numerous favors because her sister was a saint, but that was not as true as people thought. As confided to one of her Carmelite sisters: “I live the life of pure faith...In the world, strangers think I am inundated with delights at the sight of the glory of our little Saint. What an illusion! I do not think I have ever been in such a spiritual desert.” (C)

The gift Celine most treasured from her sister Therese was ‘Love’. Life has no meaning without it and with love there is total abandonment of self. “A blind trust of a little child in its dear heavenly Father, which cannot work without a profound humility and which becomes, without anyone suspecting it, a natural virtue as it is in all little ones. Our Therese led us by her way; it is better even than if our last days were spent in ecstasy. I have always thought, and even desired, to have ‘my passion’ before Jesus receives us into his arms.” (C)

What words can I use to describe my soul? “Nothing, nothing from heaven’s side, not the least consolation...It is true that I have peace of heart. That’s the important thing. The greatest grace that God can give us, says Saint Paul, is not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him. That thought often comes to my mind and strengthens me in the midst of my darkness. I believe that this state of darkness is the prelude to the light into which we will soon enter.” (C)

Celine’s physical strength was incredible for her age. After the initial consultation from the doctor, it was thought that her death would be immediate. But that was not going to be the case. Her physical and psychological torments lasted for months. But as the days were drawing to an end, to her soul’s ascension to Heaven, more and more often the peace in her heart and soul was increasing. She was on her way to finally being reunited with her beloved spouse Jesus, her mother Mary and her beloved family.

Celine remarked: “Besides, the agony of death, simultaneous with it, a feeling of joy rises at the thought that I will have this witness to give to God. Yes, I think with pride on the passion that awaits me and that will precede my entrance into our homeland. It would be unfortunate indeed, I think, not to pass through death, for we can bear this witness only once, and it is precious in the eyes of God. Ah! What grace to have to prove to Him our love by bearing witness! It is like the martyrs! Up until now I have been waiting in bearing this witness to Jesus as I wished; I have not practice virtue as I would have liked; I have given witness only to my weakness and my imperfection. But, what joy! There still remains one witness to bear, and I do not want to miss that one! “Welcome sister death!” The poor man of Assisi had said.” (C)

Celine faced her impending ascension to Heaven in different phases in the last months of her life. The first phase was basically physical. There were numerous prayers said for her by her sisters and friends outside the monastery which swayed her diagnosis back and forth up until January 18, 1959. From the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, it was more of a psychological trial for her, her 'last agony'. Like Therese, in the last months of her life, the physical trial started and then came the psychological trial. It was for Celine, the final detachment from all things here on earth.

Celine made the effort to not be a burden to her infirmarian. As having been an infirmarian herself, she knew the difficulties associated with the responsibilities associated with handling those that were terminally ill. She became very serene and at many times tried to lighten the emotional strain of her caretakers by being very happy and jovial even though she was physically suffering from pain and constantly vomiting. Celine did not want to be a burden to her infirmarian and sad fully she remarked to her infirmarian: "And you are going through it with me...My God, have pity on my little infirmarians! (C)

Celine remarked: "If I fall into a comma...my death will not be very beautiful perhaps, but I think that it is now what counts, and I see that God is helping me; I feel calm and full of confidence."(C)

The prioress remarked to Celine that she can see the 'spiritual childhood' in her and Celine replied: "Perhaps little Therese wants to show in her Celine that one can remain little and simple even in extreme old age. But one must always say: 'It is you, Lord, who have accomplished all our works.' Yes, it is he alone, for I could well be caught up in the temptation to sadness as well as to fear. It is true that I have no fear at all, none at all, of God. Oh! I am going to be so happy to see him, to see his Humanity! I have desired him so much! Yet, I have much offended him; but even so, I'm afraid, and I summon all of my wretchedness to his Tribunal. I am very sure that Jesus will say to me as to the woman in the Gospel: Go, my daughter, your sins are forgiven! (C) Later that day, "Yes I believe that God wants to show how pleased he is with those who walk in the 'little way' of humility, simplicity, and confidence, and so he helps them in time of trial, for, of course, we are good for nothing. I see clearly now "that only spiritual childhood can give us true peace of heart and the grace to be like a little child in the hands of God." (C)

As the news spread throughout the world of the last surviving sister of St. Therese, Celine, was terminally ill, she received many prayers and condolences. One in particular was that of Pope John XXIII, in his message on January 1, 1959, he offered her his prayers along with a message that read: "as token of the abundant graces of peace and abandonment to God a special Apostolic Blessing." (C) She was ecstatic over the message.

On January 18<sup>th</sup>, the infirmarian discovered that there was something wrong with one of Celine's eyes. After close examination, she asked Celine if she was having any complications associated with it. Celine responded to her that she lost her eyesight. Then the infirmarian asked if she was in any pain as a result of her loss. Celine responded:

“Why, no ... it’s dead...But that doesn’t mean anything...I have given it to God. Oh! There is no need to be cross with it for lying down, because it has really worked during its life; and at present, it couldn’t do anything; so I thank God for it.” (C) In attempt to comfort Celine by one of her sisters, she reminded her that her family is making preparations to welcome her in Heaven. Celine responded: “Yes, I will be very happy about that, but what interest me the most by far is our Lord and the Blessed Virgin...to know everything about her, about her life, I cannot even think of it!”(C)

Humility was a virtue that Celine wished to master; humility was of course the entrance in entering into the ‘little way’. It was for her, the most difficult but also the most rewarding. Celine, when speaking to the prioress on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January, wanted to express this virtue to allow others that found it difficult to follow the ‘little way’ that it was possible for them to achieve.

At the latter part of January, Celine entered into the phase of her terminal illness where the psychological effects were taking place, the ‘last agony’. It became more apparent to those surrounding her on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January. On this day, after receiving the Sacred Host, Celine felt the effects of being forsaken. “When will the door open for me? Oh! My God still loves me, since he is not coming to take me? Oh! My Therese look at my distress!” (C) Celine felt a violent attack on her back, like someone was underneath her bed hitting her. She asked the infirmarian to light a candle and throw holy water on her as it appeared to her that she was being attacked by something evil.

During this time when she was going through the ‘last agony’ of her illness, she grabbed her crucifix in one hand and her rosary in the other. She would not let it leave her hands for one single minute. Every minute, she prayed constantly, periodically taking her crucifix and kissing it. Celine was never in decisive concerning her faith in God, as she could be heard saying: “Break the web of this sweet encounter. O my Jesus, I want to love you with all my heart, unto folly, with all my strength; yes, with all my strength, unto folly...” (C)

Celine, as with her sister Therese, wanted martyrdom. It was of course the ultimate sacrifice a person can make to show how much they loved God. Celine’s physical and emotional torture was not without having gone through a form of martyrdom. Celine expressed this pain through her suffering by saying: “How much it costs! I had so much desire for martyrdom, wanted the Passion. It is God who does it...He is good, the good God! Oh! He is good!” (C)

On February 3, 1959, the prioress wrote in her notes describing the suffering Celine had experienced on her death bed: “As Celine said to me: How low I am! I answered: ‘Reduced to nothing and in extreme humiliation,’ oh! Yes, that’s it exactly ---but St. John of the Cross says very precisely that that’s when the soul attains the highest state possible in this life.—Yes, but I don’t feel it!...What an identification with Jesus on Calvary! It is the most profoundly moving and enlightening thing that I have experienced in religious life. What glory awaits her!” (C)

Leading up to February 5<sup>th</sup>, she had suffered a minor heart attack. Her body swelled with fluid making it difficult for her to breathe at times. It was thought that she would not make it to the 5<sup>th</sup> but she prevailed. After experiencing a horrific episode, Celine remarked: “It is indefinable, inexpressible! How difficult it is! How long it is! How cruel it is! After the infirmarian placed a piece of ice across her lips, Celine said, I am thirsty for the waters of eternal life.” (C)

On February 5, 1959, the psychological trials ended for her. It was also her sixty-fourth anniversary of her clothing. Her symptoms subsided temporarily for her small celebration of her anniversary. Her Carmelite sisters came into the infirmary and celebrated with her. They read telegrams from all over the world asking about the state of Celine’s health. Celine remarked jokingly: “That tells you how my death will be greeted with acts of thanksgiving! But it is once again I who will greet it with the least noise.” (C) After the small celebration ended, Celine left them with these words: “My eyes are closed to the light of day, When after dinner, I stroll not away.” (C)

Celine was still suffering but it temporarily subsided on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February. Reflecting on her life, she said to the prioress: “I still suffer, but it is not the same. You cannot know. I think the devil was given a certain permission to torment me. I can’t understand why you did not hear the dull but very hard knocks he gave me... Fortunately, he can do nothing at all because the Lord is fighting for me.”(C)

Celine’s horrific symptoms still were subsided up until February 22<sup>nd</sup>. She continued to respond to the correspondence that the prioress had spoken to her from people that were concerned for her. After she had finished, she told her infirmarian about the conversation both of them had earlier in her illness: “I am only thinking of all that has happened to me in this illness. I assure you it has been very mysterious. You remember when you said to me: ‘My little Celine, perhaps God will come for you this evening! While listening to you, I said to myself, ‘now, let me see; am I Celine? Did I exist? Did I have a personality?’ If you knew how locked away I had been, far from everything! You could never have any idea of it. Oh! How strange it was! And what suffering! One cannot image it. It makes me think of a story that Therese and I used to read when we were little girls.” (C)

Two days prior to Celine’s death, her condition turned for the worst. She was suffering once again in a horrific state. But she still was coherent and observant of what was going on around her. Celine motioned her infirmarian and told her: “I believe, all the same, tat this time it’s for good. Oh! What happiness! (C) The doctors examined her once again and told the prioress that it was only a matter of hours before her soul would ascend to Heaven. She explained to the doctor that it was not necessary for him to give her anything anymore for the pain, she was at peace.

The next day, February 24<sup>th</sup>, was her anniversary of her profession. She received many telegrams congratulating her on her anniversary and also flowers were sent for the

occasion. She received her last Holy Communion and thanked the priest with her impeccable smile.

On the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>, Celine awoke with complications to her illness. The prioress said to her: “It is surely today” and Celine remarked: “Today!” (C) The last words Celine expressed by her and continuously repeated was: “Jesus!” The prioress and the community at 9:00 a.m. started the recitation of the Act of Oblation of Merciful Love. Celine, without speaking, motioned to them that she was following with them. The doctor came in to examine her but then immediately left knowing that it was time. The community came back in and saw Celine in a state of ecstasy. It lasted for 10 minutes. Her soul was already ascending, at 9:25 a.m., she breathe her last breath.

Allowing townspeople to know that Celine’s soul ascended to Heaven, they rang the bells of the Chapel monastery. Then the Basilica of St. Therese joined in and rang theirs. Later, the radio announced the death of the last surviving sister of St. Therese. Scores of telegrams inundated the monastery, one in particular from Pope John XXIII, who had presided over her jubilee.

For three days, Celine’s body was placed in the choir where several thousand people came to pay their respects including those from around the world. They wanted to see the sister that was loved so much by her sisters, especially by Therese.

On February 28, 1959, the funeral of Celine was conducted. There were many religious in attendance including several bishops along with friends and devotees of St. Therese. After the Mass, Bishop Jacquemin, spoke about the union between her and Therese and more importantly, about spiritual childhood which was expressed by Celine throughout her life.

It was decided, as it had been for Marie and Pauline, that Celine too, would be buried with her sisters inside the vault beneath the shrine chapel of St. Therese. The Carmelite Fathers carried Celine’s remains to the vault where they are interred today.

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