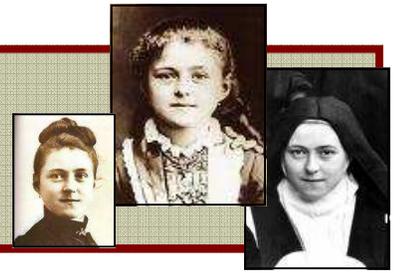


# Franciscan

## Sacrifice Beads (inspired by St. Therese of the Child Jesus)



Sacrifice Beads (also known as "Good Deed Beads" or "St. Thérèse Beads") spring from a practice from the childhood of Marie-Francoise-Thérèse Martin, better known as St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face (or St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the "Little Flower.")

Thérèse was the baby of a family that had endured the deaths of four children, and her four surviving sisters -- Marie, Pauline, Leonie, and Celine -- and her parents let her know it by babying her. Her pious father even called her "the little Queen," and so when she was young, she had a tendency toward stubbornness and precociousness. But underneath this superficial spoiling was a great spirituality, not just in little Thérèse, but in all the sisters -- all of whom ended up in the Carmelite convent. Thérèse was guided by her older sisters, and it was Marie who gave to her a set of beads on which to count the things she offered up to God. Their mother, who died of breast cancer when Thérèse was four, wrote:

Even Thérèse wants to start making sacrifices now. Marie has given each of the little ones a chaplet on which they can keep count of their good deeds. They have real spiritual conferences together. It is most amusing. Celine asked the other day: "How can God get into such a little Host?" Thérèse answered her: "It's not surprising, since Our Lord is almighty." "What does almighty mean?" "It means He can do whatever he wants." But the most charming thing of all is to see Thérèse slip her hand into her pocket time and time again and move a bead along as she makes some sacrifice.

The most typical actual "chaplet" consists a string of 10 beads, with a Crucifix at one end, symbolizing our taking up our Crosses and going the Way of Christ. On the other end nowadays is usually a medal depicting St. Thérèse, which reminds us of her "Little Way" of spirituality that's embodied in the use of the beads, and of the fact that we are all called to be Saints. They are kept in one's pocket, secretly, and when one mentally offers up something to God in union with Christ's sufferings on the Cross, one slides one of the beads toward the Crucifix. The beads are constructed such that when they are moved, they remain where they are put.

Some Sacrifice Beads consist of 15 beads, with 3 beads of a different color evenly interspersed among them, each representing one of the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. Each time 5 regular beads are moved toward the Crucifix, one of the Trinity beads is automatically moved, too, symbolizing our participation, by grace, in life of the Most Holy Trinity, and reminding us that any good we do is because of God alone. Some people use the beads simply, by just moving one toward the Crucifix for each Sacrifice, but a more challenging and fruitful way of using them is to move a bead back toward the medal for each sin one commits along the way. This is a good way of examining one's conscience all throughout the day.

At the end of the day, one "re-sets" all of the beads and places them under one's pillow to retrieve and put in one's pocket in the morning in order to begin anew, hopefully fulfilling the goal of moving all the beads toward Christ.

Though Sacrifice Beads originated with the young St. Thérèse and are most commonly used by children, they can be and often are used just as well by adults, too.

Sacrifice Beads (which don't need to be blessed by a priest) shouldn't be used in a spirit of competition with others who might be using them (though a child discussing nightly with his parents his spiritual development by use of the beads is, of course, good!). Their use is, ultimately, between God and the one making sacrifices.

### **Matthew 6:1-4**

Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an alms deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and *thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.*