# October 1st: Memorial of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church

**Gospel text (*Mt* 18:1-5):** The disciples approached Jesus and said, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?” He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.”

***“Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven”***

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Today, we celebrate the saint (1873-1897) that could be described as the "champion" of spiritual "smallness". The issue being that this has deserved her the title – quite uncommon – of "Doctor of the Church". From this "spiritual childhood" a complete refreshing and renewed spiritual theology has sprouted…

Paradoxical as it may seem, "God's greatness lies in the fact that He can make himself small" (Benedict XVI). Thus, we could say that discretion, simplicity, humility… make part of the divine DNA: “Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3). Today’s saint Doctor of the Church joined the Carmel when she was very young (aged 15) and entered the "eternal Carmel" when she was twenty-five. So small and so great! What a paradox to human eyes! But not really so from the perspective of love. If you want to love, if you want to serve, make yourself small, very small, as the Child Jesus in the manger, as Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Therese traveled the path of childhood: “I am a very little soul who can only offer very little things to the Lord.” And because she was so "little", she confided her growth to spiritual means. She decisively used to say: "Yes, it is prayer, it is sacrifice which give me all my strength; these are the invincible weapons that Jesus has given me.” Parallel and consequently she relied on spiritual direction —she did not trust in herself— and she loved obedience to her superiors.

“Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:4). A real contrast with the conceit of modernity! Perhaps for this reason, St. Therese is a "Doctor". She did have knowledge of life. A life that should bear fruit for the Creator: “Our Lord does not come from Heaven every day to stay in a golden ciborium. He comes to find another heaven, the heaven of our soul in which He loves to dwell.”