St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower

Thérèse was born on Jan. 2, 1873, in Alencon, France, to Louis Martin and Zélie Guerin. She had four sisters to greet her: Marie, Pauline, Léonie and Celine. The family life was very warm and pious. Zélie and her older daughters instructed Thérèse in the Faith very early, encouraging her to take every opportunity to do some kind deed out of love for Jesus. It might be giving a coin to a beggar or helping with a household chore.

Sadly, Zélie died when Thérèse was 4. Her father and sisters tried to compensate by showering Thérèse with attention and affection. As Thérèse admits in her autobiography, she sometimes took advantage of this and needed correction. One instance was her unkindness to the family's maid, to whom she was instructed to apologize. Thérèse would say that being corrected helped her to check self-absorption.

Family life meant getting along with each other and considering the needs of the other, as well. Thérèse marks Christmas Day in 1886 as the moment she began to make the effort against selfishness: When her father showed signs of exasperation about exchanging gifts after Mass, Thérèse was tempted to make a scene. Instead, she considered her father's feelings, composed herself and spared the family a childish tantrum.

Learn more about St. Thérèse, her life and how she is a model for Catholic children today here.