

15. October 2025

## THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

### “Saint Teresa of Ávila: A light for those who seek.”

Anyone interested in the inner path of following Christ will quickly come across Saint Teresa of Ávila, who was named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

Teresa was born on March 28, 1515, the third child of Don Alonso Sánchez de Cepeda's second marriage. Considered a very pious child, she was encouraged by her parents to be devout through reading appropriate books and listening to readings, especially those regarding the veneration of Mary and the legends of the saints.

In 1531, at the age of 16, her father sent her to the Augustinian convent in Ávila for further education. However, she had to leave after 18 months due to illness.

On November 2, 1535, she entered the Convent of the Incarnation of the Carmelites in Ávila, where 140 nuns lived at that time. She took her vows a year later and her final vows the following year. After taking her vows, she was filled with a feeling of inner happiness that never left her.

Illness accompanied the saint throughout her life. She was healed of a serious illness through the intercession of St. Joseph.

Teresa discovered inner prayer more intensely and began to practice it, possibly inspired by reading the writings of the Franciscan priest Francisco de Osuna. Nevertheless, her life in the convent was not yet fully focused on God. She describes this period herself as follows: *"My soul was living in a state of complete weariness. The bad habits it had acquired would not leave it in peace, even though it wanted them to."*

However, the Lord granted her a deeper conversion on the path she had already begun. She testifies:

*"It happened to me that one day, upon entering the prayer room, I saw an image that had been brought there for veneration and set up for a feast that was being celebrated in the house. The image was of Christ covered in wounds. It was so devotional that seeing Him like that shook me to my core because it clearly showed what He suffered for us. Because I had*

*hardly shown gratitude for these wounds, what I felt was so powerful that it felt as if my heart was being torn apart. In tears, I threw myself down before Him and begged Him to give me the strength, once and for all, to never offend Him again." (The Book of My Life, Chapter 9)*

As a result of this conversion, the saint's life changed, and this was noticeable to the people around her. From a sister who was more concerned with her own salvation, she became a leader who strove for the salvation of others. Under God's guidance, Saint Teresa began to unfold more and more, whose teachings and testimony of life are still a great light for seekers today.

During this inner transformation, she received a commission from the Lord to found a monastery.

*"One day after Communion, His Majesty urged me to devote all my energies to this task, making me great promises that the foundation of the convent must not be delayed, that it would be of great service to Him, that it would be called St. Joseph's, and that He would watch over us at one gate and Our Lady at the other, and that Christ would dwell among us, and that it would be a star that radiated great splendor." (The Book of My Life, 32:11)*

Today, we look with gratitude at the many monasteries she founded, hoping they won't be corrupted by the modern spirit that wants to take over monasteries and already has. May the "gatekeepers" that Teresa saw in her vision protect the Carmelite Order!

We cannot conclude this brief introduction to the saint without taking a look at her spiritual teachings. *The Interior Castle* is probably her best-known book, in which she describes the soul's path to union with God, who has His throne in her innermost being. Let us briefly consider the first three mansions of the Interior Castle.

Through prayer and contemplation, one enters the first chamber and learns to dwell with God. Self-knowledge and humility are important companions at this stage of the journey. However, there is still a lot of noise in this chamber, and worldly things intrude. Teresa names some of them: the pursuit of possessions, worries, the desire for prestige, intemperance, and busyness. So this first chamber is still quite dark.

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Those who continue to follow the call to interiority enter the second chamber. Here, one must resist the temptations of the world with perseverance. There are difficult struggles. However, with God's help and firm faith, it is possible to emerge victorious. In the third chamber, the difficult struggles of the second chamber are left behind. One rejoices in the inner life and gladly withdraws to pray. However, there is a danger of expecting special favors from God because one has overcome the struggles. Here, one must beware of spiritual pride and avoid thinking that one has already progressed far; otherwise, one will become unteachable. Humility is the wise guide here. It is important not only to let go of worldly goods and temptations but also any claim to a reward from God.

After passing through the first three chambers, preparations have been made so that, according to His choice, God can communicate supernatural things. However, these are always gifts and not merits. They will be discussed another time.

*Hear us, O God our Savior, that as we rejoice in the feast of your holy virgin Teresa, so may we be nourished by the sustenance of her heavenly doctrine and instructed by the affection of her pious devotion. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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Reflection on the Gospel of the Day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/10/13/>