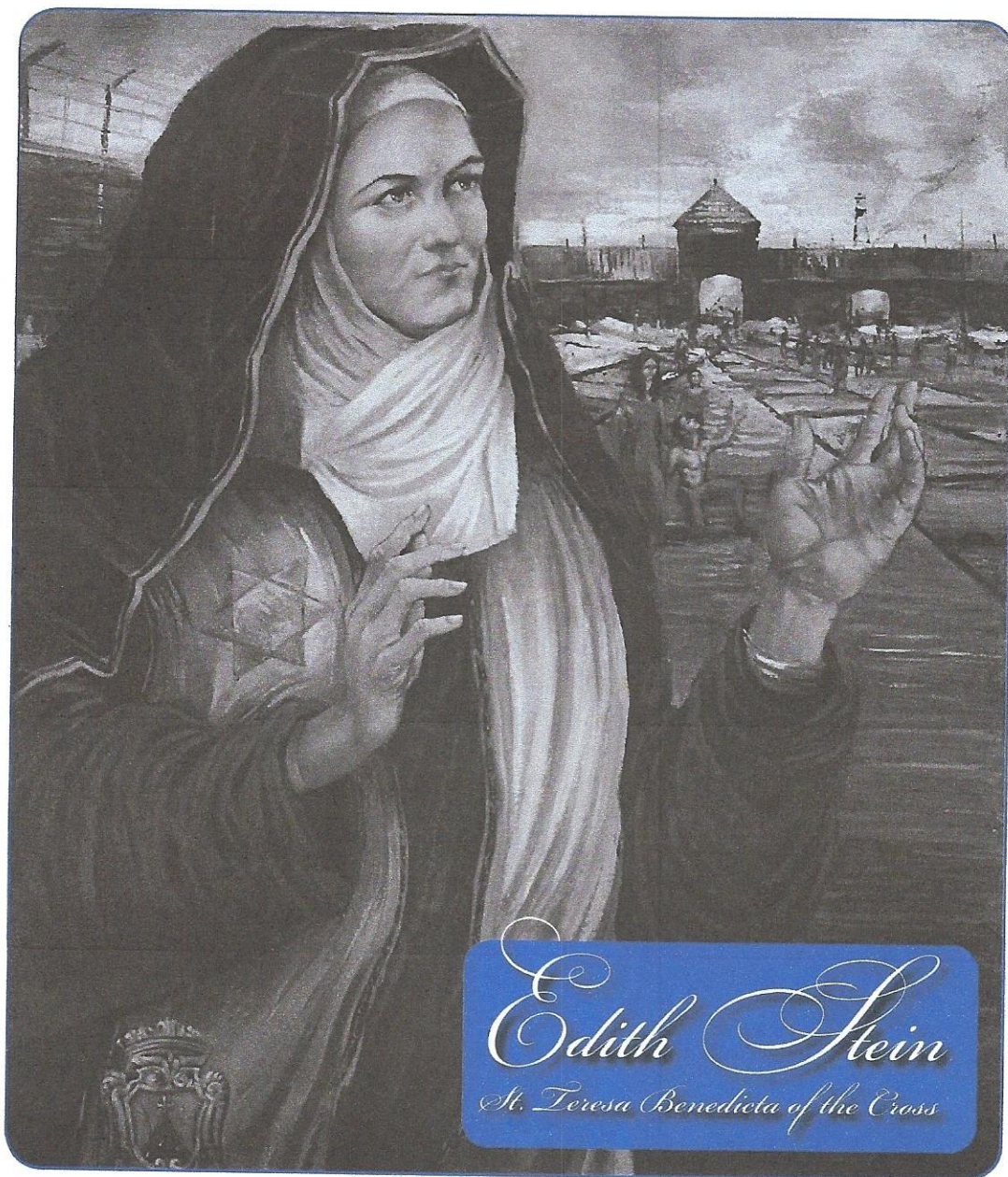


# CARMEL CLARION

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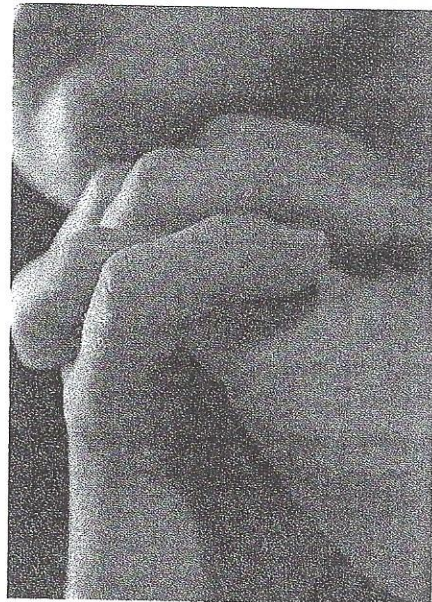
*Edith Stein*  
*St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross*

those gathered around him as well as for all to whom the fruits of the sacrifice are to flow. The sacrifice itself is a sacrifice of expiation that transforms the faithful as it transforms the gifts, unlocks heaven for them, and enables them to sing a hymn of praise pleasing to God. All that we need to be received into the communion of saints is summed up in the seven petitions of the Our Father, which the Lord did not pray in his own name, but to instruct us. We say it before communion, and when we say it sincerely and from our hearts and receive communion in the proper spirit, it fulfills all our petitions. Communion delivers us from evil, because it cleanses us of sin and gives us peace of heart that takes away the sting of all other "evils." It brings us the forgiveness of past sins<sup>7</sup> and strengthens us in the face of temptations. It is itself the bread of life that we need daily to grow into eternal life. It makes our will into an instrument at God's disposal. Thereby it lays the foundation for the kingdom of God in us and gives us clean lips and a pure heart to glorify God's holy name.

So we see again how the offertory, communion, and praise of God [in the Divine Office] are internally related. Participation in the sacrifice and in the sacrificial meal actually transforms the soul into a living stone in the city of God—in fact, each individual soul into a temple of God.

## 2. Solitary Dialogue with God as the Prayer of the Church

The individual human soul a temple of God—this opens to us an entirely new, broad vista. The prayer life of Jesus was to be the key to understanding the prayer of the church. We saw that Christ took part in the public and prescribed worship services of his people, i.e., in what one usually calls "liturgy." He brought the liturgy into the most intimate relationship with his sacrificial offering and so for the first time gave it its full and true meaning—that of thankful homage of creation to its Creator. This is precisely how he transformed the liturgy of the Old Covenant into that of the New.



But Jesus did not merely participate in public and prescribed worship services. Perhaps even more often the Gospels tell of solitary prayer in the still of the night, on open mountaintops, in the wilderness far from people. Jesus' public ministry was preceded by forty days and forty nights of prayer.<sup>8</sup> Before he chose and commissioned his twelve apostles, he withdrew into the isolation of the mountains.<sup>9</sup> By his hour on the Mount of Olives, he prepared himself for his road to Golgotha. A few short words tell us what he implored of his Father during this most difficult hour of his life, words that are given to us as guiding stars for our own hours on the Mount of Olives. "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine."<sup>10</sup>

Like lightning, these words for an instant illumine for us the innermost spiritual life of Jesus, the unfathomable mystery of his God-man existence and his dialogue with the Father. Surely, this dialogue was life-long and uninterrupted. Christ prayed interiorly not only when he had withdrawn from the crowd, but also when he was among people. And once he allowed us to look extensively and deeply at this secret dialogue. It was not long before the hour of the Mount of Olives; in fact, it was immediately before they set out to go there at the end of the Last Supper, which we recognize as the actual hour of the birth of the church. "Having loved his own...,

7 Naturally, it is a prerequisite that one is not burdened with serious sins; otherwise, one could not receive Holy Communion "in the proper spirit."

8 Mt 4:1-2.

9 Lk 6:12.

10 Lk 22:42.

he loved them to the end.”<sup>11</sup> He knew that this was their last time together, and he wanted to give them as much as he in any way could. He had to restrain himself from saying more. But he surely knew that they could not bear any more, in fact, that they could not even grasp this little bit. The Spirit of Truth had to come first to open their eyes for it. And after he had said and done everything that he could say and do, he lifted his eyes to heaven and spoke to the Father in their presence.<sup>12</sup> We call these words Jesus’ great high priestly prayer, for this talking alone with God also had its antecedent in the Old Covenant. Once a year on the greatest and most holy day of the year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest stepped into the Holy of Holies before the face of the Lord “to pray for himself and his household and the whole congregation of Israel.”<sup>13</sup> He sprinkled the throne of grace with the blood of a young bull and a goat, which he previously had to slaughter, and in this way absolved himself and his house “of the impurities of the sons of Israel and of their transgressions and of all their sins.”<sup>14</sup> No person was to be in the tent (i.e., in

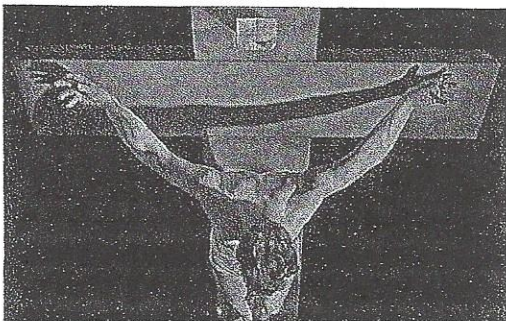
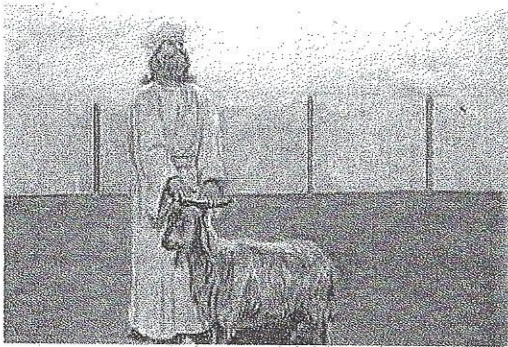
the holy place that lay in front of the Holy of Holies) when the high priest stepped into God’s presence in this awesomely sacred place, this place where no one but he entered and he himself only at this hour. And even now he had to burn incense “so that a cloud of smoke... would veil the judgment throne...and he not die.”<sup>15</sup> This solitary dialogue took place in deepest mystery.

The Day of Atonement is the Old Testament antecedent of Good Friday. The ram that is slaughtered for the sins of the people represents the spotless Lamb of God (so did, no doubt, that other—chosen by lot and burdened with the sins of the people—that was driven into the wilderness).

And the high priest descended from Aaron foreshadows the eternal high priest. Just as Christ anticipated his sacrificial death during the last supper, so he also anticipated the high priestly prayer. He did not have to bring for himself an offering for sin because he was without sin. He did not have to await the hour prescribed by the Law, nor to seek out the Holy of Holies in the temple.

He stands, always and everywhere, before the face of God; his own soul is the Holy of Holies. It is not only God’s dwelling, but is also essentially and indissolubly united to God. He does not have to conceal himself from God by a protective cloud of incense. He gazes upon the uncovered face of the Eternal One and has nothing to fear. Looking at the Father will not kill him. And he unlocks the mystery of the high priest’s realm. All who belong to him may hear how, in the Holy of Holies of his heart, he speaks to his Father; they are to experience what is going on and are to learn to speak to the Father in their own hearts.<sup>16</sup>

The Savior’s high priestly prayer unveils the mystery of the inner life: the circumincession of the Divine Persons and the indwelling of God in the soul. In these mysterious depths the work of salvation was prepared and



*The Christ of John of the Cross*

<sup>11</sup> Jn 13:1.

<sup>12</sup> Jn 17.

<sup>13</sup> Lv 16:17.

<sup>14</sup> Lv 16:16.

<sup>15</sup> Lv 16:13.

<sup>16</sup> Because the limits of this essay do not permit me to cite Jesus’ entire high priestly prayer, I must ask readers to take up St. John’s Gospel at this point and re-read chapter 17.

accomplished itself in concealment and silence. And so it will continue until the union of all is actually accomplished at the end of time. The decision for the Redemption was conceived in the eternal silence of the inner divine life. The power of the Holy Spirit came over the Virgin praying alone in the hidden, silent room in Nazareth and brought about the Incarnation of the Savior. Congregating around the silently praying Virgin, the emergent church awaited the promised new outpouring of the Spirit that was to quicken it into inner clarity and fruitful outer effectiveness. In the night of blindness that God laid over his eyes, Saul awaited in solitary prayer the Lord's answer to his question, "What do you want me to do?"<sup>17</sup> In solitary prayer Peter was prepared for his mission to the Gentiles.<sup>18</sup> And so it has remained all through the centuries. In the silent dialogue with their Lord of souls consecrated to God, the events of church history are prepared that, visible far and wide, renew the face of the earth. The Virgin, who kept every word sent from God in her heart, is the model for such attentive souls in whom Jesus' high priestly prayer comes to life again and again. And women who, like her, were totally self-forgetful because they were steeped in the life and suffering of Christ, were the Lord's preferred choice as instruments to accomplish great things in the church: a St. Bridget, a Catherine of Siena. And when St. Teresa, the powerful reformer of her Order at a time of widespread falling away from the faith, wished to come to the rescue of the church, she saw the renewal of true interior life as the means toward this end. Teresa was very disturbed by the news of the continually spreading movement of apostasy:



...As though I could do something or were something, I cried to the Lord and begged him that I might remedy so much evil. It seemed to me that I would have given a thousand lives to save one soul out of the many that were being lost there. I realized I was a woman and wretched and incapable of doing any of the useful things I desired to do in the service of the Lord. All my longing was and still is that since He has so many enemies and so few friends that these few friends be good ones. As a result I resolved to do the little that was in my power; that is, to follow the evangelical counsels as perfectly as I could and strive that these few persons who live here do the same. I did this trusting in the great goodness of God.... Since we would all be occupied in continual prayer for those who are the defenders of the Church and for preachers and for learned men who protect her from attack, we could help as much as possible this Lord of mine who is so roughly treated by those for whom He has done so much good; it seems these traitors would want Him to be crucified again...

O my Sisters in Christ, help me beg these things of the Lord. This is why he has gathered you together here. This is your vocation.<sup>19</sup>

To Teresa it seemed necessary to use:

...the approach of a lord when in time of war his land is overrun with enemies and he finds himself restricted on all sides. He withdraws to a city that he has well fortified and from there sometimes strikes his foe. Those who are in the city, being chosen people, are such that they can do more by themselves than many cowardly soldiers can. And often victory is won in this way...

But why have I said this? So that you understand, my Sisters, that what we must ask God is that in this little castle where there are already good Christians not one of us will go over to the enemy and that God will make the captains this castle..., who are the preachers and theologians, very advanced

17 Acts 9.

18 Acts 10.

19 *The Way of Perfection*, in *Schriften der heiligen Teresa von Jesus*, vol. 2, ch. 1 (Regensburg, 1907). [English translation in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, vol. 2, (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1980), ch. 1, sec. 1 and 5, pp. 41 and 42.—Tr.]

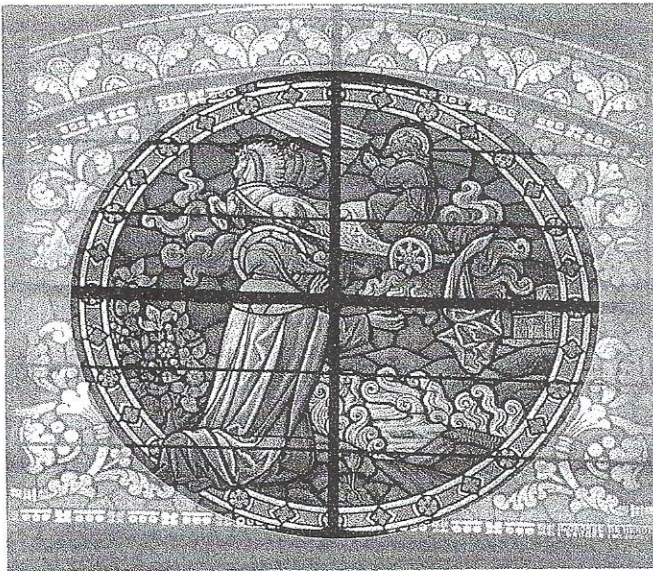
in the way of the Lord. Since most of them belong to religious orders, ask God that they advance very far in the perfection of religious life and their vocation....

These persons must live among men, deal with men..., and even sometimes outwardly behave as such men do. Do you think, my daughters, that little is required for them to deal with the world, live in the world, engage in its business..., while interiorly remaining its strangers...; in sum, not being men but angels? For if they do not live in this way, they do not deserve to be called captains; nor may the Lord allow them to leave their cells, for they will do more harm than good. This is not the time for seeing imperfections in those who must teach....

Is it not the world they have to deal with? Have no fear that the world will forgive this deficiency; nor is there any imperfection it fails to recognize. It will overlook many good things and perhaps not even consider them good; but have no fear that it will overlook any evil or imperfect things. Now I wonder who it is that teaches people in the world about perfection, not so much that these people might seek perfection..., but that they might condemn others.... So, then, do not think that little help from God is necessary for this great battle these preachers and theologians are fighting; a very great deal is necessary...

So, then, I beg you for the love of the Lord to ask His Majesty to hear us in this matter. Miserable though I am, I ask His Majesty this since it is for His glory and the good of the Church; this glory and good is the object of my desires...

And when your prayers, desires, disciplines, and fasts are not directed toward obtaining these things I mentioned, reflect on how you are not accomplishing or fulfilling the purpose for which the Lord brought you here together.<sup>20</sup>



*Cave Under  
the Altar, Stella  
Maris Carmelite  
Monastery*

What gave this religious, who had been living prayerfully in a monastery cell for decades, the passionate desire to do something for the church and the keen eye for the needs and demands of her time? It was precisely that she lived in prayer and allowed herself to be drawn ever more deeply by the Lord into the depths of her “interior castle” until she reached that obscure room where he could say to her, “that now it was time that she consider as her own what belonged to him, and that he would take care of what was hers.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, she could no longer do anything more than “with zeal be zealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts” (words of our Holy Father, Elijah, which have been taken as a motto on the shield of the Order).

Whoever surrenders unconditionally to the Lord will be chosen by him as an instrument for building his kingdom. The Lord alone knows how much the prayer of St. Teresa and her daughters contributed to protect Spain from dissenting from the faith, and what power it exerted in the heated battles regarding the faith in France, the Netherlands, and Germany.

Official history is silent about these invisible and incalculable forces. But they are recognized by the trust of the faithful and the carefully balanced judgment of the church after extensive investigations. And our time is more and more determined, when all else fails, to hope for ultimate salvation from these hidden sources.

20 *The Way of Perfection*, ch. 3. Both of these passages are regularly read in our Order on Ember Days [in Edith Stein’s time—Tr.].

21 *Interior Castle*, Seventh Dwelling Place, ch 2, sec. 1. [Also contained in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kavanaugh and Rodriguez, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1980)—Tr.]